

Iran: the case of Shirin Ebadi

European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2009 on Iran: the case of Shirin Ebadi

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Iran, in particular those concerning human rights,
 - having regard to the third interparliamentary meeting between the European Parliament and the Majlis (Parliament) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, held in Brussels on 4 and 5 November 2008, and the report thereon,
 - having regard to the declaration issued by the Council Presidency on behalf of the European Union on 22 December 2008 on the closure by the Iranian police of the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) led by the lawyer and 2003 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi,
 - having regard to the statements issued by the Council Presidency on 31 December 2008 on the threats against Shirin Ebadi,
 - having regard to the statement issued by the United Nations' Secretary-General on 3 January 2009 on the harassment and persecution of Shirin Ebadi and on her safety and security,
 - having regard to the previous resolutions of the UN General Assembly, in particular Resolution 63/191 of 18 December 2008 on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran,
 - having regard to the report by the UN Secretary-General of 1 October 2008 on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted on 9 December 1998,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to all of which Iran is a party,
 - having regard to the Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the general human rights situation in Iran has continued to deteriorate since 2005 in all areas and respects, in particular as regards the exercise of civil rights and political freedoms, despite the fact that Iran has undertaken to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms under the various international instruments in this field,
- B. whereas on 21 December 2008 Iranian police and security officials closed the CDHR, led by Shirin Ebadi, as it was preparing to hold a celebration marking the 60th anniversary of the UDHR,

- C. whereas on 29 December 2008 Shiran Ebadi's office in Tehran was searched and documents and computers were removed; whereas on 1 January 2009 hostile crowds demonstrated outside her home and office, chanting slogans against her, tearing down the sign on her law office and marking the building with graffiti,
 - D. whereas there is increasing evidence that the Iranian authorities' persecution of Shirin Ebadi has intensified because of her contact with UN human rights officials and their use of information provided by her centre in a UN report of 2 October 2008 on the situation of human rights in Iran,
 - E. whereas Shirin Ebadi received death threats after she had decided to take on the defence of the seven-member leadership of the Baha'i faith, who had been collectively arrested in May 2008; whereas the CDHR had also protested against the authorities barring students from universities,
 - F. whereas in August 2008 Iran's official news agency (IRNA) spread false information that Shirin Ebadi's daughter Narges Tavasolian had converted to the Baha'i faith, an allegation which can have serious consequences, since Baha'i believers are harshly persecuted in Iran,
 - G. whereas the members of another renowned human rights centre in Iran, the Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan (HROK), are being just as severely harassed by the authorities and are under constant threat of arrest; whereas in particular its founder Mohammad Sadiq Kaboudvand has been sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on the charge of 'acting against national security by establishing the HROK',
 - H. whereas the Government and authorities of Iran have an affirmative obligation to protect human rights advocates; and whereas the above-mentioned UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus in 1998, stipulates that States 'shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities [of human rights defenders] against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action' as a consequence of their legitimate efforts to promote human rights,
1. Strongly condemns the repression, persecution and threats against Shirin Ebadi and the closure of the CDHR in Tehran and expresses its grave concern at the intensified persecution of human rights defenders in Iran; points out that the raid by Iranian security forces on the Tehran CDHR is part of a broader attempt to silence Iran's human rights community;
 2. Expresses its serious concern that the continuing persecution, threats and attacks against Shirin Ebadi are not only endangering her safety and security, but also putting all Iranian civil society activists and human rights defenders in danger;
 3. Underlines that the closure of the CDHR is not only an attack on Shirin Ebadi and human rights defenders in Iran, but an attack on the entire international human rights community of which she is an influential and leading member;
 4. Urges the Iranian authorities to put an end to the repression, persecution and threats against Shirin Ebadi, to ensure her safety and security and to authorise the re-opening of the CDHR; calls on the Iranian authorities to allow the CDHR, the HROK and other human rights associations to function unhampered;

5. Calls on the Iranian authorities to meet their international human rights commitments, and more specifically to respect the right of peaceful assembly enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights signed and ratified by Iran;
6. Reiterates its concern regarding the persecution and imprisonment of citizens in Iran who engage in the defence of human rights and who campaign against the death penalty, which frequently results in their being charged with so-called activities against national security; calls also on Iran to end the harassment, intimidation and persecution of political opponents and human rights defenders, by inter alia releasing persons imprisoned arbitrarily or on the basis of their political views, and to end impunity for human rights violations;
7. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the three stonings which took place in the city of Mashhad in late December 2008, as confirmed by the spokesman for the judiciary, and calls on the Iranian authorities to honour the proclaimed moratorium and to urgently introduce legislation to abolish this cruel punishment;
8. Expresses serious concern at the deteriorating health of Mohammad Sadiq Kaboudvand since his imprisonment; considers him a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release and for him to be given medical care;
9. Deeply deplores the method of suspension which is still being used against students in order to penalise them for organising open public debates, and calls on the authorities to release those who were arrested on the occasion of the last annual National Student Day, 6 December 2008, at the University of Shiraz;
10. Appeals to the Iranian authorities to live up to the government's requirement to respect religious minorities and promptly release the Bahia' leaders Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rasaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Vahid Tizfahm, as they have been imprisoned solely on the basis of their belief;
11. Urges the Council and Commission to continue their examination of the human rights situation in Iran and to submit to it in the first half of 2009 a comprehensive report on the matter and to continue to raise specific cases of human rights abuses;
12. Emphasises that the possible future conclusion of a Cooperation and Trade Agreement between Iran and the EU depends also on a substantial improvement in the human rights situation in Iran;
13. Calls on the Council Presidency and the Members States' diplomatic representatives in Iran urgently to undertake concerted action with regard to the above-mentioned concerns;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Human Rights Council, the Head of the Judiciary of Iran and the Government and Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran.