



## Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group

A project of the Blue Mountains Family Support Service Inc.

ABN 48 765 203 957

PO Box 197 KATOOMBA NSW 2780

Email: [secretary@bmrsg.org.au](mailto:secretary@bmrsg.org.au)

Phone: (02) 4782 7866

# Iran after the 2013 election: implications for refugees

## Update October 2013

*Prepared for Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group by  
Gillian Appleton*

This paper updates an earlier paper of February 2013, much of which remains relevant as background to the current situation. The paper collects material from a range of sources, which has been edited or summarised, with website references provided for further information. Direct quotations are in this typeface throughout the paper.

Both of these papers are available on our website:

[bmrsg.org.au/research-material/iran/](http://bmrsg.org.au/research-material/iran/)

This document is published and distributed by BMRSRG under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0) license Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0) license. This means that:

- Attribution - You must give appropriate credit (author and publisher), provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
- ShareAlike - If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

## Summary

An intensification of the crackdown on dissidents before Iran's June 2013 election, involving dozens of arbitrary arrests and other human rights abuses, led to the expectation that conservative forces would continue to prevail. The election of Hassan Rouhani as President, replacing the hardline Mahmoud Ahemedinajad, surprised Western commentators and was widely hailed as a victory for a 'moderate'. After his election, a number of dissidents were released, notably prior to his visit to the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2013, a practice also adopted by Ahmedinejad before his annual trips. Ultimate power in Iran remains with the deeply conservative Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is responsible for national security and Iran's nuclear program. Hopes for change were raised during the term of the last reformist president, Mohammad Khatami, and during the Green Movement, but proved illusory.

The overwhelming body of evidence points to a continuation of flagrant breaches of human rights since the election, including scores of deaths by execution.

**Human rights breaches** cover every kind of *systemic and systematic violation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights*. They are continuing and widespread and include:

- **Continued curtailment of freedom of expression, religion and assembly**
- **Denial of fair public trial**
- **Violation of Women's rights**
- **Gender discrimination**
- **Mistreatment of ethnic and religious minorities**
- **Oppression of political activists**
- **Interference with electoral processes**
- **Intimidation do law associations**
- **Repression of human rights defenders**
- **Torture (physical and psychological), amputations, flogging, increased application of the death penalty (including in public, and for political prisoners), arbitrary detention and unfair trials, punitive prison conditions.**

**Iran's minority groups** face particular human rights issues that are rarely noticed or reported outside the country. The following are documented:

- **Cultural assimilation**
- **Land confiscation**
- **Forced migration**
- **Prohibition and criminalization of use of native languages**
- **Resettlement of Persian populations**
- **Extra-judicial killings**
- **Enforced disappearances**
- **Militarization of their homeland**
- **Restrictions on political participation**
- **Political intimidation**
- **Economic discrimination**
- **Disproportionate targeting for offences**
- **Environmental mismanagement and destruction**

*The most acute concerns facing all minority groups in Iran are arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and the death sentence. The judicial system in Iran is notoriously unjust and unreliable, with a much higher rate of persecutions towards minorities.*

*Minorities are especially vulnerable because they are distrusted by the authorities, and they are often accused of being separatists and terrorists when they try to speak out.*

Marino Busdachin, General Secretary, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation



*Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Iran face serious persecution both from the ruling system and broader society, especially by hardline conservatives. Some risk horrific punishments, including the death penalty and heavy jail sentences, others are bullied and forced into exile.*

The Guardian, 10 October 2013

**Reuters (10 October) reported that returnees to Iran face bleak prospects whether they are willing or unwilling. There is no guarantee of safe return, whether they are government critics or not. The judiciary, dominated by conservatives and answering to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei rather than Rouhani, can question those returning and pursue charges. A judiciary spokesman said in July that Iranians who left could come back but may face prosecution.**

## IMPORTANT RECENT REPORTS

### UN Secretary General

<http://shaheedoniran.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/A-68-377-Secretary-Generals-report-on-IRAN.pdf>

Some months after the Iranian election, and following his visit to Tehran in August, the UN Secretary General on 10 September 2013, released a report expressing continuing concern about human rights situation in Iran.

*During the reporting period, concerns about torture, amputations, flogging, increased application of the death penalty (including in public, and for political prisoners), arbitrary detention and unfair trials continued to be raised by United Nations human rights mechanisms. Freedom of expression and assembly remained curtailed, with further erosion of democratic space for political activities prior to the presidential elections of June 2013, and an intensified crackdown on journalists, human rights defenders and women's rights activists. Discrimination against minority groups persisted, in some cases amounting to persecution.*

### The UN Special Rapporteur

<http://shaheedoniran.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/N1350031.pdf>

Subsequently, on 4 October, the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, although denied access to the country, issued a report. For a detailed analysis of the post-election situation in Iran, this report is mandatory reading.

In his introduction, the Special Rapporteur wrote:

*Tensions between various aspects of the country's laws and its human rights obligations, along with the capricious application of those laws, remain causes of the lack of progress. As a result, gender discrimination, as well as systemic and systematic violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, continue to characterize the human rights situation in the country.*

He presents evidence of flagrant breaches of human rights in these areas:

- Freedom of expression, access to information and association, including jailing of journalists and blocking access to the internet
- Administration of justice, including prison conditions and executions
- Women's rights
- Freedom of religion
- Treatment of ethnic minorities



The report also considers the effect of existing international sanctions on Iran's economic and social welfare.

For comment and summaries see also <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/24/iran-human-rights-record-condemned-un>

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-10-23/spate-of-iran-executions-after-rouhani-election-alarms-un.html>

<http://www.reuters.com/do/emailArticle?articleId=USBRE99M1IC20131023>

## THE JUNE 2013 ELECTION – NOT FREE, NOT FAIR

### Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/24/iran-threats-free-fair-elections>

*Imprisonment of Opposition, Media Crackdown, Impunity Mar Prospects*

May 24, 2013

In May 2013, Human Rights Watch set out aspects of the electoral process which ensured the process was deeply flawed.

*Serious electoral flaws and human rights abuses by the Iranian government undermine any meaningful prospect of free and fair elections on June 14, 2013. Dozens of political activists and journalists detained during the violent government crackdown that followed the disputed 2009 presidential election remain in prison, two former presidential candidates are under house arrest, and authorities are already clamping down on access to the internet, having arbitrarily disqualified most registered presidential and local election candidates.*

*As the elections approach, authorities have tightened controls on information by severely cutting back internet speeds and blocking proxy servers and virtual private networks that Iranians use to circumvent government filtering of websites. The authorities have also gone after government critics, summoning, arresting, and jailing journalists and bloggers, while preventing opposition figures and parties aligned with Iran's reformist movement from participating in the elections by banning or severely restricting their activities.*

.....

*The June 14 elections for Iran's next president will take place alongside voting to fill more than 200,000 seats on city and village councils, with only officially approved candidates on the ballot in all cases. The registration period for presidential candidates closed on May 11. On May 21 Iranian state television announced that the Guardian Council had finished vetting more than 680 registered presidential candidates and accepted a final list of eight men. Well-known and prominent figures disqualified by the Guardian Council included a former president, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's adviser Rahim Mashaei, former Intelligence Minister Ali Fallahian, and former Foreign Affairs Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.*

*The week before, authorities had disqualified several hundred candidates who had registered to run as city and village council election candidates. Some local council candidates have appealed their exclusion, but Iran's electoral law makes no provision for appeals by disqualified presidential candidates. The Guardian Council does not, as a matter of practice, publicize the reasons why candidates are disqualified.*



*Between May 7 and 11, 686 candidates, including about 30 women, registered as presidential candidates. After the registration period closed, the Guardian Council, an unelected body of 12 religious jurists, began vetting the candidates, using a mix of criteria- some that are clear, such as those relating to age and educational qualifications, but others that are vague or open to interpretation and enable authorities to make sweeping and arbitrary decisions. **The council has consistently ruled out female candidates because the constitution requires that the president be chosen from "pious and political men" despite debate among Iranian constitutionalists about whether it was intended that the term "men" should be given an exclusively male connotation (our emphasis).** On May 16, Iran's semi-official Mehr News Agency reported that Mohammad Yazdi, a clerical member of the Guardian Council, had said that the "law does not approve" of a woman in the presidency.*

*According to article 115 of the Iranian constitution, the president must be 'elected from among pious and political men'.....*

*Authorities have also intensified restrictions on information, increasingly blocking internet sites considered objectionable, aggressively slowing down internet speeds, and summoning for questioning, harassing, and arresting journalists and bloggers. Dozens of journalists and bloggers are currently in prison, according to [Reporters Without Borders](#) and the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#).*

## Amnesty International

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/iran-escalates-crackdown-on-dissent-ahead-of-elections>  
11 June 2013

In June, Amnesty in a new briefing noted the clampdown on dissidents ahead of Iran's presidential election.

The organisation's seven-page briefing documented dozens of arbitrary arrests and other human rights abuses in the run-up to election day. Those targeted included journalists, political activists, trade unionists, students and advocates of greater rights for Iran's religious and ethnic minorities.

Amnesty described the escalation in repression 'as an outrageous attempt by the Iranian authorities to silence critics ahead of the presidential election'.

Amnesty listed a number of specific cases, including:

- At least five journalists arrested in relation to their work, an apparent attempt to suppress freedom of speech since March.
- A number of political activists and trade union representatives arrested and harassed by the authorities
- On June 1, some members of presidential candidate Hassan Rouhani's campaign team arrested and held in solitary confinement at Tehran's Evin Prison following a rally during which members demanded the release from house arrest since 2011 of former presidential candidates and opposition leaders, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi.
- Members of ethnic and religious minorities targeted with prison sentences - including members of Iran-based Azerbaijani advocacy group, Yeni Gamoh, and Iranian-American Christian pastor, Saeed Abedini.

## An Iranian Human Rights Lawyer (reported on the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre website, 14 June 2013)

[http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/english/news/inside-iran/1000000325-an-iranian-human-rights-lawyer%E2%80%99s-perspective-on-the-forthcoming-presidential-election.html?print#.Umr\\_GiRJPZt](http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/english/news/inside-iran/1000000325-an-iranian-human-rights-lawyer%E2%80%99s-perspective-on-the-forthcoming-presidential-election.html?print#.Umr_GiRJPZt)

*In principle, elections are a tool for civic participation in the political and social affairs that affect them. Such participation must take place in a specific context in order to be unquestionable. As long as lawyers, judges and prosecutors lack access to reliable professional organizations and NGOs, they will exist only in a rarified world isolated from society. Legal professionals can't simultaneously develop productive relations with the general population and the government until they have strong [civil society] organizations and professional associations to rely on. [In Iran today] they are isolated from the general population and yet they can't voice their concerns to the authorities. How can they get close to any of the presidential candidates in such a situation? And how can candidates even stay informed about the problems facing legal professionals, professors and scholars? Hence it is impossible to say that any one candidate represents lawyers as a group. Of course this issue reflects on the candidates as well. Until now, none of them have uttered a word about the problems faced by lawyers.*

....

*Unfortunately, because of the current weakness of the [national and provincial] bar associations and other relevant professional organisations, their votes go unseen and their opinions always go unheard. Because of their unique expertise on various social and legal issues, [they] can play a role in determining the outcomes of elections. But because of the pressure that has been exerted on bar associations, especially in recent years- pressure that has taken the form of prison sentences for some lawyers - a very cautious and conservative atmosphere has taken hold in the legal community.*

## EXPECTATIONS OF ROUHANI AS PRESIDENT

**Human Rights Watch (19 July 2013)** <http://www.hrw.org/print/news/2013/07/19/watching-signs-reform-iran>

*In the face of punishing international sanctions and a growing consensus that hard-line policies are no longer paying off, Iranian voters last month elected a president committed to easing tensions with the international community and digging their economy out of a deepening hole. In the West, the main question is whether he will make the concessions needed to reach a deal over his country's nuclear program.*

*It's unclear what Hassan Rouhani can achieve in the short term on the nuclear issue, which is largely controlled by Iran's supreme leader, not its elected president. Progress on that issue, though, is far from the only test of Mr. Rouhani's commitment to change.*

*Many Iranians [are] wondering what the Rouhani presidency can really bring to reflect statements made during his campaign, which departed sharply from the radical sloganeering against personal liberties that marked the last eight years. In the run-up to the election and since his victory, Mr. Rouhani has repeatedly referred to freedom and liberty, including the need to free political prisoners, the importance of national reconciliation, and the "de-securitization" of public space. After his victory, thousands of Iranians took to the streets to celebrate. You Tube videos that circulated showed crowds in various cities chanting pro-democracy slogans and demanding greater freedom. The security forces, remarkably, stood on the sidelines.*

*Of course, with the candidates pre-approved and the pre-election environment highly restricted, the election was neither free nor fair. Mr. Rouhani's past does not suggest that he will undertake*

major reforms. He is a moderate cleric and regime insider. He held high-ranking office at the Supreme National Security Council during the harsh crackdown against student protests in 1999, and was publicly silent when security forces responded brutally to the 2009 post-election protests.

Yet Mr. Rouhani's calculated and nuanced references to personal freedoms suggests he is sensitive to the long, dark shadow cast by the disputed 2009 presidential elections. Despite many legal and political barriers, what Mr. Rouhani does and says on human rights matters. This will be particularly important when it comes time for him to get the supreme leader's sign-off on members of his Cabinet, who will play a decisive role in restricting — or respecting — the rights of the Iranian people.

Human Rights Watch listed the following steps that Rouhani should take 'if he is sincerely committed to — and capable of — pursuing reform':

- **Free political prisoners**
- **Respect media freedoms.**
- **Expand academic freedom**
- **Unshackle independent organizations such as the Bar Association**

In Sept 2013 HRW presented a full human rights agenda for the new president.

<http://www.hrw.org/print/news/2013/08/02/iran-human-rights-agenda-new-president>

### **Signs of Change? The Guardian (26 July 2013)**

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/26/signs-of-change-iran-rouhani-inauguration>

*[The release of a married couple, journalists Bastani and Amr-Abadi, after four years in prison] is one of a number of small signs of change after the election in June of President Hassan Rouhani, a veteran pragmatist who ran on an ambitiously reformist platform. With a week until Rouhani's inauguration, such signs have fuelled hope that a peaceful "Iranian spring" could be on the way, reversing the intensifying repression of the last eight years under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.*

*Yet those hopes are tempered by bitter experience. Green shoots of civic freedoms and human rights were even more apparent under the last reformist president, Mohammad Khatami, and at the peak of the 2009 opposition Green movement, only to be emphatically quashed by conservatives in the regime and security forces.*

*There is even greater caution in the west about the possibility of a better relationship with Tehran and perhaps even a deal to defuse the long and dangerous standoff over Iran's nuclear aspirations. National security and the nuclear programme in particular are very much the preserve of the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. But optimists hope that the intense economic pressures on Iran - amplified by severe US and European sanctions - that helped carry Rouhani to victory will drive the regime towards a historic compromise.*

*Rouhani has not yet formed a government, so the hopes and doubts swirling around his presidency are based mostly on speculation. However, Iranians report that since the election there has been a distinct thaw in the air.*

### **Al Monitor, September 2013**

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/iran-frees-political-prisoners-rouhani-unga.html>

Al-Monitor is a media website which provides original reporting and analysis by prominent journalists and experts from the Middle East and offers in-depth analysis. In September it reported cautiously on hopes raised by Rouhani's election.



*State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said in a statement emailed to reporters: "We welcome today's reports that the Iranian government has released several prisoners of conscience, including human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh. President Rouhani pledged repeatedly during his campaign to restore and expand freedoms for all Iranians, and called for expanded political and social freedoms, including freedom of expression. In the months ahead, we hope he will continue to keep his promises to the Iranian people."*

*The statement went on, "The United States will continue to urge the Iranian government to take steps to improve the country's human rights situation. Accordingly, we renew our call today for Iran to release all prisoners of conscience in its custody."*

*Since Rouhani assumed the presidency on Aug. 4 and appointed a largely technocratic cabinet, the government has taken other steps to alleviate the repressive atmosphere Iranians have endured for years and especially since 2009.*

*Iran last week reopened the House of Cinema, an organization representing directors and performers in the country's celebrated film industry. Officials have also announced that sex segregation at universities will end and that professors fired or forced into retirement for their Reformist political views will be reinstated.*

*However, not all signs are positive. The dreaded "fashion police" who harass and arrest women for not wearing conservative hijab are reportedly back on the streets after a two-month respite. And Facebook and Twitter — briefly available on Monday, Sept. 16 to Iranians without government filtering — is apparently back behind a cyber Berlin Wall .*

*[The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran] in a statement emailed to journalists, called for the "immediate release of all prisoners of conscience, including two Iranian-Americans currently imprisoned in Iran for political reasons, Amir Hekmati [a former US Marine] and Christian pastor Saeed Abedini," a convert from Islam.*

*The group also urged Rouhani to allow the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, to visit the country. Shaheed has issued two reports harshly criticising Iran for its treatment of political dissidents and religious minorities as well as the high number of executions in Iran relative to the country's population.*

*"One of President Rouhani's main goals for this trip is to reduce international tensions. He cannot achieve this goal without fully addressing the pressing human rights situation in Iran today".*

## **POST-ELECTION REALITY CHECK**

The reports in September and October 2013 of the UN Secretary General and the Special Rapporteur, cited at the beginning of this paper, served to dash early hopes that there would be significant improvement in Iran's human rights. Other sources confirmed this.

In August 2013 following Rouhani's inauguration, Human Rights Watch reported on his proposal to appoint a highly questionable justice minister.

### **Human Rights Watch, 8 August 2013: Investigate Proposed Justice Minister's Role in Killings**

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/08/08/iran-withdraw-cabinet-nominee-implicated-abuses>

*Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani, should immediately withdraw his nomination of Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi for the post of justice minister, Reporters Without Borders, the International*



*Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, and Human Rights Watch said today. Rouhani presented the list of his nominees for cabinet posts to the Iranian parliament during his inauguration ceremony on August 4, 2013.*

*Pour-Mohammadi served as interior minister during former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's first term, from 2005 until 2008. He was deputy intelligence minister from 1990 to 1999, and a deputy intelligence minister from 1990 to 1999. Rights groups have implicated him in abuses that may constitute crimes against humanity, including the executions of thousands of political dissidents in 1988 and the assassinations of several prominent dissident intellectuals in 1998. As justice minister he could play a role in influencing investigations into human rights abuses.*

*Human Rights Watch, in a 2005 report, "Ministers of Murder," documented Pour-Mohammadi's direct role in the extrajudicial executions of thousands of political prisoners. In the summer of 1988, Pour-Mohammadi, then a top deputy to the intelligence minister, sat on a commission charged with interrogating thousands of political prisoners and ordering many of them to the gallows. The death sentences were issued after revolutionary courts had already tried, convicted, and sentenced the vast majority of these people to prison on national security charges following unfair trials.*

*"Throughout his election campaign, Rouhani repeatedly promised to uphold the rights of the Iranian people and to address serious rights violations," said Joe Stork, acting Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "The choice of Pour-Mohammadi for justice minister sends a terrible message regarding the new president's commitment to respecting Iran's international legal obligations."*

### **Daily Telegraph (UK) 17 August 2013**

Christopher Booker in the UK's influential conservative paper, the Daily Telegraph, drew attention to aspects of Rouhani's past and the realpolitik of Iran's role in the Middle East which should give Western nations food for thought. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/10248682/The-West-is-deluded-about-the-Middle-East-just-look-at-Iran.html?fb>

*[N]owhere is the West's inability to grasp the realities of Middle Eastern politics more obvious than in its self-deceiving attitude to the most powerful and menacing regime of all, the theocratic dictatorship that rules over Iran. Quite apart from its ruthless oppression of its own people, the Tehran regime has a finger in pretty well every nasty pie in the region - as chief backer of the Assad regime in Syria and pro-Palestinian terror groups such as Hizbollah; as the shadowy presence behind the corrupt al-Maliki regime in Iraq; and even supposedly as an ally of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.*

*Yet again, recently we saw the West's endless gullibility over Iran in the response of politicians and media to the election as president of Hassan Rouhani, hailed as a "moderate" and a "reformer" who might open the door to better relations between Iran and the West, not least over the ever-vexed issue of Iran's ambition to become a nuclear power.*

*What so many in the West seem unable to grasp is that Rouhani, like his predecessor Ahmadinejad, is just a creature of the real power in Iran, centred in the country's "Supreme Leader", the Ayatollah Khamenei. Rouhani may have been one of eight candidates (out of an original 800) allowed to stand in a horrendously rigged election by the Supreme Leader, but for more than 20 years he has been a key apparatchik of the regime, serving at the heart of its military, security and intelligence system.*



*As far back as the 1980s Rouhani was deputy commander-in-chief of Iran's armed forces, before serving for 16 years as secretary of its Supreme National Security Council. In 1999 he led the ruthless suppression of a major student uprising, in obedience, as he said, to a "revolutionary order to crush mercilessly and monumentally any move of these dissidents". Between 2003 and 2005 he led those famous and futile nuclear negotiations, boasting (as was revealed by The Sunday Telegraph in 2006) of how he had fooled the West by "taking advantage of talks with Britain, Germany and France to forge ahead with the secret atomic programme". No sooner was he elected in June than he made clear that there is no way Iran will halt its nuclear programme.....*

*Since Rouhani's election, thousands more Iranians have been imprisoned and scores hanged, many publicly, as a warning to any other potential dissidents. Yet this is the man we are told is a "moderate" and a "reformer". As the head of the NCRI, Mrs Maryam Rajavi, in June, told a rally of 100,000 Iranian exiles in Paris that their country cannot be described as moving towards "moderation" until its people have been given freedom of speech and the right to form political parties, all political prisoners are freed, it stops its "war-mongering meddling in Syria and Iraq" and abandons its wish to become a nuclear power. But the mullahs cannot allow any of this to happen, she went on, because it would bring their downfall.*

In another sign that little if anything had changed in Iran, sources reported that executions were continuing unabated.

### **Foreign Affairs Committee, National Council of Resistance of Iran, 28 August 2013**

<http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/human-rights/14462-iran-143-executed-since-june-election-rouhani-government-rejects-visit-by-un-human-rights-monitor>

*The Iranian regime hanged a group of five prisoners on August 26 in the city of Qom. Additionally, 26 more prisoners were hanged in six groups between August 19 - 22 in the cities of Arak, Urumiyeh, Karaj and Mashhad. Also, the regime's henchmen hanged one prisoner in Isfahan and three others in Ahwaz during the same period.*

*Moreover, a recent report has revealed the execution of three prisoners on August 15 in the newly built prison, The Greater Tehran Prison, situated on Hassan-abad road to Qum where a number of elements of mullahs' judiciary are stationed in the prison to try prisoners in the prison itself.*

*So far, the number of executions since sham presidential elections in June has reached to at least 143 with 40 taking place after Hassan Rouhani has assumed office.*

*On Tuesday, Hassan Rouhani's government turned down a request by Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, to visit the country.....*

*Since two years that Ahmed Shaheed has been designated as the United Nations Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, the ruling mullahs have not allowed him to visit the country and have described his reports as "baseless allegations" and his resources as "terrorists and anti-revolutionaries".*

In another Daily Telegraph column, Christopher Booker (7 September 2013) drew attention to the brutal massacre of unarmed Iranian dissidents.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10293773/We-wring-our-hands-over-Syria-but-not-the-massacre-of-52-Iranians.html?fb>



*Last Sunday, while the eyes of the world were on the brouhaha that had followed the killing of 1,400 Syrians with poison gas, rather less attention was paid to an incident in neighbouring Iraq, where hundreds of Iraqi and Iranian troops burst into the remains of the once-neat little desert town of Ashraf to murder 52 unarmed Iranian dissidents in cold blood - many of them were handcuffed and shot in the back of the head....*

*No sooner had the last US forces left Iraq in 2009, having given each Ashraf resident a personal guarantee of safety, than the tragedy, engineered by their enemies in Tehran, began to unfold. In a first assault on Ashraf, 47 were killed and hundreds injured.*

*Last weekend, deliberately taking advantage of the international focus on Syria, Iran's Supreme Leader - Assad's chief backer in the region - gave orders for another murderous assault on Ashraf, organised by Qassem Suleimani, commander of Iran's Quds force, which is responsible for acts of terror across the Middle East. As Qassem reported in Tehran two days later, in a speech in which he said "we support Syria to the end", the latest Ashraf operation had been a great success.*

## **PROSPECTS FOR PEOPLE RETURNING**

**International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH):** Arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of human rights defenders continue

22 July 2013

[http://www.fidh.org/en/asia/iran/iran-arbitrary-detention-and-judicial-harassment-of-human-rights-defenders-13709?debut\\_artz=10#pagination\\_artz](http://www.fidh.org/en/asia/iran/iran-arbitrary-detention-and-judicial-harassment-of-human-rights-defenders-13709?debut_artz=10#pagination_artz)

*The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), condemns the continuing repression of human rights defenders in Iran.*

*According to information received on July 21, 2013, Branch 2 of the Islamic Revolution Court of Shiraz sentenced four dervishes' rights activists for "establishing the Majzooban Noor illegal group with intent to undermine the national security, and spreading propaganda against the system".....*

*Furthermore, according to information received on July 13, 2013, seven other dervishes' rights activists were sentenced to lengthy prison terms by Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court of Tehran for "establishment of the Majzooban Noor illegal group with intent to undermine the national security, spreading propaganda against the system, insulting the Leader, and complicity in disrupting the public order". All seven, who have been in pre-trial detention since September 2011, refused to attend the trial sessions in protest to being deprived of due process, and refused to submit any bill of defence....*

*Although they consider the sentences as unfair, on July 17, 2013 the defendants declared that they would not appeal as they "have lost almost all hope for enjoying fair and legal investigation" after being denied their right to a fair trial on a number of occasions.*

**Pressure against human rights defenders continues**

18 October 2013

<http://www.fidh.org/en/asia/iran/14149-iran-pressure-against-human-rights-defenders-continues>

*While international relationships between Iran and western countries have been warming up, progress on human rights remains to be seen. Dozens of human rights defenders continue to serve prison sentences and dozens of others are awaiting court decisions in retaliation for their human rights work. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against*

*Torture (OMCT), was recently informed that the six-year sentence against Mr. Mohammad Seifzadeh, a prominent human rights lawyer and founding member of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC), had been confirmed by an appeal court.*

*Late September 2013, Branch 54 of the Appeals Court upheld a sentence of six years' imprisonment earlier imposed on Mr. **Mohammad Seifzadeh** on February 20, 2013 by Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court on charges of "collusion to take action against the national security" and "spreading propaganda against the system".*

*The February 20 sentence came shortly before he was due to be released on March 25, 2013 at the end of a two-year sentence he was serving for similar charges. ....*

*In protest against the illegality and bias of the Islamic Revolution Court, Mr. Seifzadeh refused to attend the trial that resulted in the first instance sentence in question. Although he had similar concerns about the integrity of the Appeals Court, he attended its session out of respect for his family's opinion. ....*

*The Observatory urges the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Mohammad Seifzadeh as well as all human rights defenders presently detained in the country, to put an end to any kind of harassment against them and to guarantee in all circumstances their physical and psychological integrity, in line with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights instruments ratified by Iran.*

### **Reuters, 10 October 2013**

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/10/us-iran-dissidents-insight-idUSBRE99902X20131010>

In this report, Reuters quotes from interviews with a number of Iranian exiles, including journalists, writers, a former employee of a foreign embassy in Tehran, all of whom were planning to return, 'spurred by signs of openness by the government of President Hassan Rouhani'.

*The hopes of..... exiled Iranians are shared in part by Western officials searching for a breakthrough in a decade-long dispute over Iran's nuclear program. The officials are trying to work out how much of Iran's apparent new openness is tone and how much is substance.*

*In the turbulent months after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election in 2009, Iran's hardliners accused the opposition of plotting to overthrow the government with the help of the United States and Israel. Aides to opposition candidates were jailed.*

*Fearing they too would be detained, hundreds of campaign staffers, reporters, and lawyers left Iran and settled in Turkey, Dubai, Europe and the United States. Others had left in the years before during a broad move to suppress dissent.*

*Now, Iranians who want to go back have a tough decision to make: return and face limits on their work and movement and possible outstanding criminal charges, or remain in isolation far from their homes and families.....*

*But there is no gurantee government critics will be safe if they return. The judiciary, dominated by conservatives and answering to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei rather than Rouhani, can question those returning and pursue charges.*

*Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei said in July that Iranians who left could come back but may face prosecution.*

One journalist, who returned in August, still faces charges related to his criticism of officials and interviews with foreign media, has been banned from leaving and called in twice for questioning, and is not yet allowed to work inside Iran.

A writer/satirist predicted he would face restrictions upon returning, such as his passport being confiscated, and even be forced to serve a short prison term.

A female journalist said she contacted a judiciary official and parliament member, who both advised her she could be prosecuted if she returned.

### **Washington Free Beacon, a project of the Centre for American Freedom**

<http://freebeacon.com/activists-call-for-greater-scrutiny-of-iran-human-rights-civil-liberties-abuses/>

#### **Daniel Wiser, 7 October 2013, *Activists Call for Greater Scrutiny of Iran Human Rights, Civil Liberties Abuses***

*Numerous organizations and activists have called for closer scrutiny and condemnation of Iran's human rights and civil liberties abuses ahead of the latest round of negotiations on the country's nuclear program.*

*As new President Hassan Rowhani (sic) garners heightened media coverage for his purported efforts to reach a rapprochement with the West and alleviate crushing economic sanctions, those groups say many of the Iranian government's abuses against its own people persist.....*

*Freedom House, an organization that advocates for civil liberties, human rights, and democratic change, estimates that about 800 Iranian dissidents remain behind bars as political prisoners. The group rated Iran "Not Free" in its Freedom in the World 2013 report...*

*Iranian officials have also instituted sweeping measures to curtail online communication and the media.*

*Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media sites, which were used extensively by democratic activists to disseminate on-the-ground coverage of the 2009 post-elections crackdown, are blocked...*

*The Committee to Protect Journalists also reported in May that Iran has detained 40 journalists, the second-highest total in the world, in an attempt to "silence independent coverage of public affairs."*

*The U.S. Treasury Department imposed additional sanctions last year on Iranian individuals and entities that it said were responsible for the widespread reports of human rights violations since 2009.*

Patrick Christy, senior policy analyst for the Foreign Policy Initiative, was quoted as saying of the recent release of political prisoners: 'In some ways it looks like it was just done as a publicity stunt'.

*Christy told the Washington Free Beacon that the United States should seize the opportunity to bring up human rights any time it sits down with Iran.....*

*Additional concerns have been raised about the Iranian government's treatment of religious minorities. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's annual 2013 report lists Iran as a tier 1 country of particular concern, meaning that it has engaged in "particularly severe" violations of religious freedom.*

*Iran, ruled as an Islamic Republic since its 1979 revolution, continues to arrest and execute regime opponents for committing the capital crime of "warring with God."*



*One religious group that has faced acute persecution is the Baha'i community, Iran's largest religious minority with about 300,000 members.*

### **Oilprice.com, 15 October 2013**

<http://oilprice.com/Geopolitics/International/US-President-Must-Address-Human-Rights-Abuses-in-Iran-to-Enhance-His-Negotiating.html>

#### **US President Must Address Human rights Abuses in Iran to Enhance His Negotiating**

**By Mansour Kashfi**

*While the Supreme Leader and his men are on a quest for construction of nuclear weapons, the critical issue for Iranian people is daily abuse of human rights in Iran by the theocratic regime. It has been over thirty four years since the Islamic regime has come to power in Iran. Since 1979 more than 8 million Iranians have fled their homeland. It is without question evidence of a horrid regime when 8 million of its subjects abandon their homes, families, and everyday lives to pursue a potentially futureless, nomadic existence in order to maintain their basic rights as human beings. Iranians escape their homeland in the hopes of protecting their identities, maintaining self-respect, and saving themselves and their children from inhuman religious fanatics. The free world should not forget that 8 million educated and professional Iranians used the classic method of protest- they voted with their feet.*

*While the Islamic Republic officially derives its legitimacy from Islamic laws, in practice its hold on power is reinforced through intimidation, terror, imprisonment, and execution. Criticism of the terrorist government is unlawful, making one subject to immediate arrest and in most cases execution. Those who question or intentionally ridicule the views of Islamic clergymen are labeled as enemies of God and Islam with links to the "Great Satan" (America) and Zionism (Israel), and they risk confiscation of their property and execution by the regime. Young boys and girls, and even pregnant women, are not spared from the wrath of the regime's revolutionary courts and firing squads.*

*Practically any basic human rights that are recognized in the civilized world are denied in the Islamic Republic. Denial of a fair public trial, denial of freedom of speech, denial of freedom of assembly and association, denial of freedom of religion, denial of freedom of political participation, denial of principles of international law and conduct, and invasion of homes and privacy of the people are the basic criteria of the Islamic Republic. In recent years, under the supposed "moderate" era of President Khatemi, there had been numerous dissidents, writers, publishers and even poets that were arrested, tortured, condemned, and executed on false charges that would be the equivalent of merely expressing opinions. Amnesty International recently published a "File on Torture" on Iran. It described physical and psychological torture, saying that "the number of reports of torture and ill treatment received...makes it clear that these violations of human rights are continuing, widespread, and in most places, systematic."*

*Furthermore, under the rule of the Islamic regime since 1979, Iran as a member of the Charter of the United Nations and other international communities has systematically violated nearly every provision of these institutions and the universal declaration of human rights. There are governments in today's world against whom charges of gross violations of human rights are lodged. However, these governments at least try to contest the charges brought against them, which means they acknowledge the validity of these laws. But the Islamic officials have openly opted to*

*ridicule the concept of universal human rights; they brand the principle of human rights as a tool of western imperialism.*

*From the Middle East to Western Europe and the United States, the reign of terror is felt. Tragic terrorist acts, including those against American Marines in Lebanon, bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, car bombing of American installations in Saudi Arabia, attack of the World Trade Center in New York, and terrorist acts on two occasions in Argentina against innocent Jewish people, among others, can be considered standard manifestations of the policies adopted by the Islamic Republic of Iran - policies that nurture terrorism and implement it indiscriminately. Officials of the Islamic regime applauded the heroism of the "martyrs" of these terrorist acts. To them and their few but fanatical followers in neighboring Islamic countries, terrorism is a legitimate political tool, justified by a higher cause. Alarmingly, Mr. Rouhani was head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council when most of these terrorist acts took place. And yes, the Islamic government in Iran uses terrorism as an integral aspect of its foreign policy.*

*Therefore, reaching an agreement only over Iran's nuclear program, as President Obama desires, by no means challenges the fundamental problem here, which is the Islamic government's sponsorship of international terrorism and their domestic human rights abuses that are daily and systematically carried out. Washington must put equal emphasis on and simultaneously negotiate both the human rights issue and the nuclear program with Islamic officials.*

Mansour Kashfi, Ph.D., is President of Kashex International Petroleum Consulting and is a college professor in Dallas, Texas. He is also author of more than 100 articles and books about petroleum geology worldwide. [mkashfi@tx.rr.com](mailto:mkashfi@tx.rr.com)

## **Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation: Oppression of Minorities**

Briefing paper, Minority Rights in Iran, March 2013 (?) available at <http://unpo.org/article/14039>

*Recent evolutions in the Iranian political landscape have shown little hope for improvements in the already dire situations faced by ethnic and religious minorities in Iran. .... Iran is home to a sizeable amount of minorities, equaling, if not surpassing, the population of Persian origin. In a state where political representation of minorities is completely disregarded, their basic rights denied and their history and cultural riches repudiated, the defense of human and minority rights in Iran by international powers and organizations is paramount.*

*In Southern Azerbaijan (North-Western Iran), concerns remain regarding the arrest, detention and sentencing of five activists for "establishing an illegal organization to undermine the State's national security". They are detained in Teheran under extreme conditions and have attempted to raise awareness internationally through a hunger strike, despite their unstable medical conditions. They were detained ahead of this year's elections and were sentenced to 9 years in prison.*

*Lake Urmiya, which lies in an area where a majority of Azeris live, has lost 70% of its water mass in the past decade and environmental risks are enormous for the surrounding ecosystems and populations.*

*Al-Ahwaz (Southern Iran), an area populated by an Arab majority, suffers from a total blackout enforced by the Iranian government. Information trickling out suggests overcrowded prisons, where there is limited access to food, water and medical care, no presence of lawyers and frequent use of torture. The situation there makes it particularly hard for human rights activists to work. Despite its soil being rich in oil, the local population lives precariously, with high rates of unemployment and little access to higher education - in short they do not reap the benefits of their*

land. What is more, their language is sidelined in favor of Farsi, which, in turn, increases discrimination when it comes to hiring workers or accepting students in university.

Also in North-Western Iran, the Iranian Kurds, numbering close to 10 million (15% of Iran's total population), have been living under Iran's proclaimed jihad against the Kurdish people since 1979, which has led to military and economic repression in the region until today. As for other minorities in the country, their language is forbidden in schools and in the media, making it difficult for Kurdish history, culture and traditions to survive from one generation to another. Alongside this cultural repression, the Iranian state also operates religious repression against the Kurds who are a majority of Sunni Muslims

A persistent occurrence of extrajudicial killings has weakened the force of political activism in Iranian Kurdistan, where human rights defenders have been targeted, killed and forcibly disappeared. Others have been sentenced with outrageously long periods of imprisonment on bogus charges, such as "enmity with God", with no access to legal assistance.

In West Balochistan, (South-Eastern Iran), a total of 5 million Baloch people strive to survive under Iran's military rule. The Baloch endure regular military operations and governance by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, leaving no space for their own culture, language or religion to develop. Seventy-six percent of the Baloch live in extreme poverty and are victims of forced migration and land confiscation in favor of resettled Persians sent to the region. There have been several reports of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, whereby people are detained with no disclosure of their whereabouts nor acknowledgment of their detention by the authorities.

#### **Main issues facing Iran's minorities:**

- Cultural assimilation
- Land confiscation
- Forced migration
- Prohibition and criminalization of use of native languages
- Resettlement of Persian populations
- Extra-judicial killings
- Enforced disappearances
- Militarization of their homeland
- Restrictions on political participation
- Political intimidation
- Economic discrimination
- Disproportionate targeting for offences
- Environmental mismanagement and destruction

#### **Speech before the Delegation for Relations of Iran Marino Busdachin, UNPO General Secretary**

European Parliament 26 September 2013 (unpo paper 687 (2) available at [unpo.org](http://unpo.org))

*A systematic assimilation policy from Teheran threatens the continuation of the languages and customs of minority groups in the country. While it is unclear if Farsi is indeed spoken by a small majority of the country - or even less than this - Farsi is the official national language; it is forbidden to use other languages in formal or public places or as a language of instruction. ....*

*The rate of unemployment among minorities is high, especially considering that the regions they*



*inhabit are rich in natural resources. Al Ahwaz boasts one of the richest oil fields in Iran, West-Balochistan is rich in gas and oil, and Iranian Kurdistan provides a large part of Iran with water. The local populations in each of these regions, however, do not benefit from the highly profitable extraction of these resources. Often, minority groups in Iran have become victims of ecological and social disasters left in the wake of careless oil mining and other industrial and hydro-electric projects, a situation exacerbated by the Iranian government's increasing confiscation of land and property.*

*Another reason for the high level of unemployment reported among minority groups is the use of an ideological selection test for jobs in government and, sometimes, in the private sector. This test requires candidates to pledge allegiance to Shia Islam, which effectively excludes the majority of Baloch, Turkmen and Kurds, who are Sunni Muslims. Furthermore, Teheran's highly centralised development policy has led to a wide socioeconomic gap between the centre and the periphery, the latter inhabited largely by minority groups.*

*Minorities are increasingly being denied state employment in Iran, and are therefore also underrepresented in political positions. .... This lack of representation in government means that minorities have very little influence as to the decisions which affect them...*

*The most acute concerns facing all minority groups in Iran are arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and the death sentence. The judicial system in Iran is notoriously unjust and unreliable, with a much higher rate of persecutions towards minorities. Especially in Al-Ahwaz, prisons are overcrowded. There are reports of 300 inmates sharing only five toilets and sleeping in the toilets and corridors because there is no room in the cells. There is also limited access to clean drinking water, food and medical care. Suspects are not allowed to meet with a lawyer until the preliminary investigation, which means they don't receive any legal assistance during the interrogation period. There are reports of torture being used to extract false confessions, which are then recorded and televised to frame suspects as terrorists. Human rights lawyers who speak out against this practice are in danger of being stripped of their licenses and arrested. Some have been sentenced to prison for up to 18 years.*

*Minorities are especially vulnerable because they are distrusted by the authorities, and they are often accused of being separatists and terrorists when they try to speak out.*

.....

*The human rights situation in Iran is particularly grave and requires increased and continued attention on the part of the European Union and other relevant international bodies. The latest UN resolution on human rights in Iran, denouncing persecutions against Arabs, Azeris, Balochis, and Kurds, as well as secret group executions of the Ahwazi Arab minority is a welcome step, but further action is urgently needed. Amid debates about the nuclear threat posed by Iran, we must not lose sight of the urgent need for improvements in minority and human rights in the country.*

### **The Guardian, 10 October 2013**

Saeed Kamali Dehghan, **Revolutionary guards raid hall in city of Kermanshah where group was dancing, taking away at least 17 people**, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/10/iran-arrests-network-homosexual-satanists>

*Iran's revolutionary guards have announced the arrest of "a network of homosexuals and satanists" in the western city of Kermanshah, close to the country's border with Iraq, prompting fresh alarm over the treatment of gay people in the Islamic republic.*

*The news website of the revolutionary guards in Kermanshah province, home to the country's Kurd ethnic minority, reported on Thursday that their elite forces had dismantled what it claimed to be a network of homosexuals and devil-worshippers.*

*A number of foreign nationals, including Iraqis, were also among those detained, the report said, adding that eight of the group were married to each other.*

*The group were picked up from one of the city's ceremony halls, which they had rented for a birthday party. The guards' website said they were dancing as the raid ensued.*

*The revolutionary guards claimed the group had been under surveillance for some time but did not specify how many people were arrested.*

*Authorities in the Islamic republic have previously likened homosexuals to satanists in an apparent attempt to further smear them in the eyes of the country's religious conservatives....*

*Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Iran face serious persecution both from the ruling system and broader society, especially by hardline conservatives. Some risk horrific punishments, including the death penalty and heavy jail sentences, others are bullied and forced into exile....*

*Until recently same-sex sodomy was punishable by death but a new amendment to the penal code, approved in 2012, has brought new changes. Under the new penal code, in effect, the person who played an active role will be flogged 100 times if the sex was consensual and he was not married, but the one who played a passive role will still be put to death regardless of his marriage status. Punishment for mosahegheh (lesbianism) is 100 lashes for all individuals involved, but it can lead to the death penalty if the act is repeated four times.*

*In recent years, it appears that the government and the police has maintained the policy of ignoring gay people but the revolutionary guards and the informal voluntary Basij religious militia, who are independent of the government but close to the country's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have been active tracking down gays and punishing them....*

*In September 2007, Iran's former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad famously denied homosexuals existed in the Islamic republic. "In Iran we don't have homosexuals like in your country," he told a jeering audience at Columbia University in New York during his UN visit.*

## Summary of Current Human Rights Issues in Iran

The League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (2 August 2013) provided the following valuable summary of the current human rights situation <http://www.fidh.org/en/asia/iran/iran-resolutions-on-human-rights-violations-13754>

### Resolution on the serious and systematic human rights violations in Iran

*Considering that the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran has been drastically deteriorating in the past three years:*

- *The UN Secretary General and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran have issued annual reports depicting the worsening conditions of human rights in Iran;*
- *The UN General Assembly's annual resolutions on Iran have denounced the violations of human rights with ever-growing majority;*
- *The government has totally ignored the recommendations made during the 2010 UPR and utterly failed to fulfil even the recommendations it agreed to.*

*Considering that the death penalty is frequently and extensively used:*

- *Islamic Republic of Iran ranks first per capita execution worldwide and second to China in regard to absolute number of executions. In the past three years, at least 553 (2010), 634 (2011) and more than 544 (2012) executions have been recorded. Minors are executed for crimes allegedly committed when they were below 18 years of age. Executions in public and secret executions are common;*
- *Death sentence is imposed for more than 20 categories of offences, including for non-serious offences, such as drugs-related and economic offences; as well as ambiguously worded offences such as moharebeh (waging war on God) and corruption on earth, mostly for political prisoners;*
- *Strangulation is the most frequently used inhuman method of execution; stoning is another cruel method stipulated in law and practised; several persons are facing the sentence of death by stoning;*
- *Thousands of prisoners are on death row.*

*Considering that due process is systematically disregarded and denied:*

- *Defendants, notably in political cases, are arrested without arrest warrant, are held for long periods in solitary confinement and denied access to family and lawyer and to fair trial;*
- *Death-row drugs-related offenders do not have the right of appeal.*

*Considering that freedoms of conscience and conviction, expression, assembly, and association are practically non-existent:*

- *Hundreds of journalists have been forced to flee the country and around 52 journalists, writers and bloggers are in prison at present; Newspapers are frequently closed;*
- *Peaceful assemblies have been attacked and their participants have been detained; literary gatherings have been banned;*
- *Various organisations, including the Journalists Association, Writers Association as well as dissenting peaceful political parties have been banned and their activists are serving long-term prison terms;*
- *Independent unions of workers and teachers have been attacked and their activists are in prison serving long-term sentences;*
- *Film makers have been sentenced to imprisonment for their work;*

- *And the book publishing industry is under very strict and harsh control and subjected to heavy censorship that is driving many publishers into bankruptcy.*

**Considering that human rights defenders**, including human rights lawyers, women's rights activists, unionists attempting to organise independent labour unions, student activists, journalists and writers, minority rights defenders have faced severe persecution, been victims of harsh repression and sentenced to long term imprisonment sentences. Among them:

- *Four members of the FIDH league member, Defenders of Human Rights Centre, Messrs Mohammad Seifzadeh, Abdolfattah Soltani, Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, and Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh (co-recipient of European Parliament's Sakharov prize for freedom of thought in 2012) are currently serving imprisonment sentences of 8, 13, 9 and 6 years, respectively, while the last three have been banned from practising law for 10 years; Mr. Mohammad Sadiq Kaboudvand, president of Kurdistan Human Rights Organisation, has been serving an 11-year prison sentence since 2007.*

**Considering that women's rights** are regularly violated:

- *Women are regarded half the men before the law in numerous instances; age of criminal responsibility for women is 9 lunar years; the draft Family Protection Law will further ease polygamy and reduce the already very limited rights of women;*
- *The police and other security forces frequently use force and violence as well as statutory measures and fines to force a strict dress code on women;*
- *Extensive measures have been taken to segregate women from men in universities and government departments and ban women from a large number of university courses;*

**Considering that ethnic communities** have been consistently repressed:

- *They have been deprived of the right to learn, to teach and publish books and newspapers in their own languages;*
- *They have faced extensive political and economic discrimination;*
- *Their political and cultural activists have faced stronger repression and, in particular the Arabs, Kurds and Baloch communities, have been victims of proportionately higher number of executions.*

**Considering that religious minorities** have suffered from severe persecution:

- *The constitutionally recognised religious minorities, in particular Sunni Muslims, dissenting Shiites including Sufi dervishes, Christians, and other minorities have suffered from severe repression and scores of their followers have been detained and sentenced to harsh prison sentences;*
- *Prayer centres of dervishes have been attacked and demolished; several dervishes, including four lawyers, have been in pre-trial detention since September 2011;*
- *Churches of Christians have been closed; several Christians including some pastors are serving prison sentences;*
- *Followers of the non-recognised Baha'i faith have been deprived of their social rights; more than 100 of the followers are in prison and many of them are serving long-term prison sentences.*

**Considering that free elections** are consistently prevented:

- *Elections are open only to hand-picked candidates under highly discriminatory legislation; hundreds of candidates have been barred from standing in elections;*

- *Women have not been permitted to stand in presidential elections;*
- *In the wake of the millions-strong demonstrations in 2009, thousands of people who protested vote-riggings were arrested, tortured, and imprisoned; several lost their lives in detention centres and the perpetrators enjoy impunity;*
- *Two 2009 presidential candidates, former Prime Minister Mir Hossein Mousavi and former parliament speaker Mehdi Karroubi, as well as Mr. Mousavi's wife Ms. Zahra Rahnava, have been under house arrest since February 2011.*

**The 38th FIDH Congress Expresses its strong support for all Iranian human rights defenders; urges the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to:**

- *Respect all its obligations under the international human rights law, and in particular:*
- *Stop immediately the execution of juveniles and public executions;*
- *Stop immediately imposing the death penalty for political charges;*
- *Establish a moratorium on the death penalty, with a view to abolish it completely;*
- *Respect and guarantee equality for women before the law and in practice;*
- *Respect and guarantee freedom of expression, thought, conscience and conviction, assembly and association, as well as minority rights;*
- *Guarantee fair and free elections;*
- *Guarantee for all prisoners, the application of due process, access to proper medical care, their families and lawyers and their right to fair trial in conformity with international standards;*
- *Release all prisoners of conscience;*

**Urges the United Nations, the European Union and the national governments to:**

- *Call on the Iranian government to release all prisoners of conscience, including human rights defenders;*
- *Call on the Iranian government to cooperate with and ensure prompt access by UN special procedures;*
- *Take effective steps to remedy and prevent corporate behaviour that may constitute complicity for human rights violations perpetrated in the Islamic Republic of Iran and, in particular, ban the export of all items used for repression of protesters, eavesdropping and other equipment used to control the population's access to internet and other media.*