

WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY AND IRAN

Hon. David Kilgour
Public Demonstration on Parliament Hill
8 December 2012
Ottawa

The Third Committee of the U.N. General Assembly recently passed a Canada-sponsored resolution, condemning the Iranian regime's systematic rights violations, including torture, execution of juveniles and many charged with "enmity against God", the systematic rape of political prisoners, the ban on freedom of assembly and expression, violence/ discrimination against women, religious and cultural minorities, and lack of rule of law.

Many Iranians are imprisoned because one or more of their family members live in Camps Ashraf/Liberty in Iraq. Their crime is advocating for the Iranian opposition group, the PMOI, traveling to Camp Ashraf, or fundraising for it.

Today, we urge the Government of Canada to refer systematic human rights violations across Iran to the Security Council and to bring the leaders of this profoundly undemocratic regime before the International Criminal Court.

Has the religious tyranny in Iran shied away from any crime against humanity in the past three decades? During this period, an estimated 120,000 political prisoners, a vast percentage of them members and supporters of PMOI, were executed. Hundreds of thousands of political prisoners were tortured; arbitrary executions are continuing. In November alone, an estimated 100 people were executed.

Nasrin Sotoudeh

Mrs. Sotoudeh, mother of two children and a lawyer, is serving a six year sentence for allegedly "spreading propaganda and conspiring to harm state security". She is a renowned human rights lawyer who defended many political prisoners. She won Europe's Sakharov prize for human rights.

Gholamreza Savadjani

Mr. Savadjani is a political prisoner charged with espionage and cooperation with Simay-e-Azadi TV in 2007. He was first sentenced to 3 years prison; this was changed to six years.

Kobra Amirkhizi

Mrs. Amirkhizi was arrested in 2008 at Tehran's airport while trying to travel to Iraq to visit her two children, sister and brother in Ashraf. Two of her brothers were also arrested. She is suffering in Evin prison various problems of the back, eye and knee due to torture and prison conditions.

U.N. Human Rights Initiatives

The UN Human Rights Council has voted for the first time to appoint a special investigator to monitor Iran's performance under international rights instruments. The resolution, co-sponsored by governments from every region of the world, passed 22 to 7. The regime has not allowed the UN Special rapporteur on Iran or any other rapporteur into the country.

The Human Rights Council noted Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's report, expressing "serious concern" about Tehran's human rights record: "...increased executions, amputations, arbitrary arrest and detention, unfair trials, and possible torture and ill-treatment of human rights activists, lawyers, journalists and opposition activists." Deploring the persecution of minorities, including Arabs, Armenians, Azeris, Balochs, Christians, Jews, Kurds and Baha'is, Ban noted the continued execution of Kurds on various charges.

Arab Uprisings

Paul Salem, director of the Middle East Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, observed about events in the Middle East and North Africa: "There are new revolutions and heroes to look up to ... and Iran is passé ... Iranian officials, as well as leaders of Iran-backed Hezbollah ...have taken a selective approach to the uprisings, cheering the movements in Egypt and elsewhere as an 'Islamic awakening,' while rebuking unrest in Syria as a plot by Israel and the West." Ahmadinejad demanded UN intervention for the UK riots, but not for the tragedy unfolding across Syria.

Institutionalized Misogyny

In 2010, Amnesty International observed: "(Iran) ...discriminates against women from top to bottom. Women are absent in any of the senior, decision-making posts..." The winds of change in the Arab uprisings for equality, freedom and democracy affect Iranian women and girls. Neda Agha Soltan became a symbol of Iran's long history, culture and principled people. Her murder by a militia sniper in a Tehran traffic jam on June 20, 2009 still haunts the world. Another victim was Zahra Kazemi, an Iranian-Canadian journalist arrested in Tehran in 2003 while photographing regime thugs beating up young protesters, who was later found dead in hospital after her torture and rape in prison.

Ahmadinejad

Since Ahmadinejad took office in 2005, he has crushed dissent, imprisoned protesters, tortured prisoners and escalated the execution rate.

Nuclear Weapons

Having concealed its enrichment program for 18 years, Iran still insists that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful. It does not require nuclear energy for industrial purposes when it has vast reserves of oil and natural gas. The UN Security Council has already imposed four rounds of sanctions for its refusal to freeze its enrichment program. Six governments are negotiating with Iran over its nuclear program.

Nuclear proliferation is uniquely troubling because the regime threatens Israel with nuclear destruction. Consumed with hatred of Jews, it could use nuclear weaponry.

Sanctions

Irwin Cotler, Canadian Member of Parliament and chair of the International Responsibility to Protect Coalition (IRPC), warns that Iran is on an “execution binge”, a “wholesale assault on the rights of its own people...It now leads the world in per-capita executions, many of which are in secret, taking place after arrests, detentions, beatings, torture, kidnappings, disappearances, and brief trials in which no evidence is presented.”

International sanctions must be both enforced and internationalized. We cannot engage in negotiations with Iran to suspend uranium enrichment and combat the nuclear threat while simultaneously ignoring, marginalizing and sanitizing its other threats to world peace.

Conclusion

Responsible governments, NGOs and individuals should, with the IRPC:

- call for the creation of a special tribunal by the Security Council to deal with atrocities by Tehran officials. This request has already been sent to the 192 member countries of the International Bar Association.
- Urge the U.N. to adopt a resolution regarding the issue of women’s and girls’ rights in Iran.
- call for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to:
 - convene a special session to discuss women’s rights in Iran
 - send a special rapporteur, and
 - act in its capacity to stop the repression of women,
- call for the disqualification of Iran’s membership at the CSW.

In short, we must stand in robust solidarity with the struggle for human dignity everywhere across Iran. The regime is determined to acquire nuclear weapons, systematically and massively violate the dignity of its own people, and incite genocide against Israelis.

Thank you.