

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN IRAN TODAY

Notes for remarks by Hon. David Kilgour, J.D.

Co-chair, Canadian Friends of a Democratic Iran,

**Media Conference (Charles Lynch room) and at Public Rally
(Parliament Hill)**

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Systematic and widespread human rights abuses in Iran continue. At least 3,000 executions, including public hangings, were carried out during Hassan Rouhani's first presidential term. According to international human rights organizations, more than 400 executions have occurred in Iran already in 2017. Other regime misdeeds include gross violations of the rights of women and religious/ethnic minorities, as well as the torture of prisoners, including political ones.

More than a dozen political prisoners in Gohardasht prison in Karaj recently went on a hunger strike to protest over the conditions they are enduring in a maximum-security ward.

They were recently transferred to a newly opened section where conditions are described as "suffocating". They are held in cells with windows covered by metal sheets, and deprived of access to clean drinking water, food and sufficient beds. They were not allowed to take their personal belongings and even medications with them. They are also barred from having family visits and denied access to telephones.

The appalling human rights situation in Iran continues in part because the officials responsible for gross abuses have not been held accountable. This is despite the reality that the regime's human rights record has been condemned at the U.N. General Assembly every year since 1980.

1988 MASSACRE

In 1988, more than 30,000 political prisoners were massacred during a few months, following a written decree by Iran's then Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The "Death Committee" whose members were appointed by Khomeini approved all the death sentences after trials that in some cases lasted only a few moments. The perpetrators of these crimes today hold key positions in the current government, including being ministers, and enjoying full impunity.

Ahmad Jannati, the head of Tehran's 'Assembly of the Experts' in a recent interview regarding the "trials" of political prisoners, admitted: "We were instructed to become judge(s), but we were beginners, zero kilometres...we didn't know anything about judgeship and we had not studied law. We weren't educated, but we were familiar with the revolution and Islamic issues."

Canada's Parliament adopted unanimously a motion on June 5, 2013, honouring the memory of the 1988 victims and establishing September 1st as a day of solidarity with political prisoners in Iran. The motion noted that the 1988 massacre constitutes a crime against humanity.

The founding instruments of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and various U.N. resolutions require that crimes against humanity be investigated wherever they occur. They do not expire with time. The responsible international community, including the UN General Assembly, should take action against this particular crime in order to stand up against the continuation of human rights abuses.

Canada's government should act through its representatives in all the relevant U.N. bodies (the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran, etc) to advocate the formation without delay of an independent committee to investigate the 1988 massacre.

The committee should, among other things, collect all documents related to these deaths, along with the names of the victims and perpetrators, in seeking justice for all.

Thank you.