Resolution on Iran: the case of Shirin Ebadi

2009/2508(RSP) - 15/01/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following a debate which took place during the sitting of the same date, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Iran: the case of Shirin Ebadi. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/ALE and GUE/NGL groups. Parliament strongly condemns the repression, persecution and threats against Shirin Ebadi, lawyer and 2003 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, and the closure of the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights CDHR in Tehran on 21 December 2008. It expresses its grave concern at the intensified persecution of human rights defenders in Iran, pointing 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.

Parliament recalls that on 29 December 2008 Shiran Ebadi's office in Tehran was searched and documents and computers were removed. Subsequently hostile crowds demonstrated outside her home and office. It notes that 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. She 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. The resolution 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.

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. The Iranian authorities are urged 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. Parliament calls on the Iranian authorities to allow the CDHR, the Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan (HROK) and other human rights associations to function unhampered. The Iranian authorities must meet their international human rights commitments.

Members reiterate their 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. They call 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.

The resolution 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.

Parliament also expresses serious concern at the deteriorating health of Mohammad Sadiq Kaboudvand since his imprisonment. It considers him a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release and for him to be given medical care.

It goes on to state that it 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. Parliament also 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.

The Council and Commission, for their part, are asked 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. Members emphasise 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.

They call on the Council Presidency and the Members States' diplomatic representatives in Iran urgently to undertake concerted action with regard to the above-mentioned concerns.