

Background Guide Topic Three:
Implementing human rights in Iran

Introduction

On June 13, 2009, the results of the Iranian Presidential Election were broadcast. The incumbent, President Ahmadinejad, was declared to be victorious over Mir-Hossein Mousavi by a large margin. These results were immediately followed by massive protests throughout Iran, the largest of which occurring in the capital city of Tehran. Demonstrations of this size have not been seen since the 1979 revolution.¹ On the day following the election, protesters claimed corruption in the counting of the votes and demanded a recount. While some of these demonstrations escalated to violence and damage to property, the majority of the protests were verbal and essentially peaceful.²

The reaction of the government was immediate. Iranian police and the *Basij*, a paramilitary group founded and directed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, moved into the streets to crack down on the protests. Using violent force on both rioters and peaceful demonstrators, police suppressed protests which persisted through the weekend and well into the following weeks. According to Iranian government officials, the police and military officially arrested and detained upwards of 4000 citizens³, killed 36 during the protests,⁴ and have executed seven prisoners in connection to the protests in as of May 2010.⁵ There are still at least ten prisoners who await the death penalty, whose crimes include "undermining national security", "enmity against Allah" and "insulting high government officials."⁶

Following the suppression and arrests after the election, the government of Iran has maintained strict control over news outlets, and many opposing newspapers, magazines and blogs have been shut down.

¹ Frontline: "A Death in Tehran," PBS, Tehran, Iran, 17 Nov 2009

² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2010: Events of 2009*, 495-500, Mar 2010

³ "Iran admits 4000 June detentions," BBC News – Middle East, 11 Aug 2009
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8195586.stm>

⁴ "Iran officials say 36 killed in post-vote unrest," Agence France-Presse (AFP), 9 Sep 2009
<<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j8GPoWmrf2qerPWQNHb8Z9eGjT3Q>>

⁵ "Protester in Danger of Execution as Iran Flouts Human Rights Standards," The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHRI), 4 Mar 2010
<<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/03/protestor-danger-execution/>>

⁶ "Political Executions Indication of Government's Insecurity," The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 9 May 2010
<<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/05/iran-political-executions-indication-of-governments-insecurity/>>

This sort of action is nothing new in Iran, since the passing of the press laws in the early 2000s.⁷ In the following decade Iran has consistently ranked as one of the worst countries for freedom of expression.⁸

International reaction to the post-election crackdown has been strongly opposed, but there has yet to be any sort of action or consequence imposed on the Iranian government. Over the years numerous resolutions have been passed by the UN expressing "deep concern" over the human rights situation in Iran.⁹ Iran has consistently ignored the Human Rights Council and claimed that the perceived violation of human rights is simply a Western view. The administration holds that Iranian penal code is derived from Shari'a law and will not always comply with international human rights norms.¹⁰

The issues related to the post-election protests are only the most recent development in the long history of human rights violations in Iran. Aside from the deteriorating situation of freedom of expression, there have been multitudinous examples of more physically evident human rights violations, such as torture of prisoners, rape and murder committed by the police, military and *Basij*, and child executions. Both Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHR) state that at least 14 children have been arrested and executed in Iran since 2005 and over 100 are awaiting execution.¹¹ Ahmadinejad has explicitly stated that no one under the age of eighteen has been executed in Iran under his regime. In response to the constant allegations of human rights violations against his administration, the President has dismissed the accusations and stated that "the human rights situation in Iran is relatively a good one," and that the people "like the government."¹²

History

To fully understand the current situation regarding human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, it is

⁷ "Iran," International Press Reference Online, Apr 2002, <<http://www.pressreference.com/Gu-Ku/Iran.html>>

⁸ "Press Freedom Index 2009," Reporters Without Borders, Mar 2010 <http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=1001>

⁹ "Resolutions/Regular Sessions," The United Nations General Assembly, May 2010 <<http://www.un.org/documents/resga.htm>>

¹⁰ Littman, David G., "Islam at the Human Rights Council," New English Review, May 2010 <http://www.newenglishreview.org/custpage.cfm/frm/63288/sec_id/63288>

¹¹ "Iran and Saudi Arabia: Laws That Treat Children as Adults," Human Rights Watch (HRW), Sep 2008 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/crd0908/2.htm#_ftn14>

¹² "Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on the Threat of US Attack and International Criticism of Iran's Human Rights Record," Democracy Now: The War and Peace Report, 25 Sep 2008 <http://www.democracynow.org/2008/9/25/iranian_president_mahmoud_ahmadinejad_on_the>

necessary to return to the roots of the issue, dating back to the Iranian revolution. In 1979 Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy and established the Islamic Republic. The Revolution was the culmination of the popular sentiment in Iran that the current monarchy was a puppet power of the West and a contamination of Islam. Also relevant was the economic situation in Iran in during the 70's, which was fraught with inflation and shortages. During the entire year of 1979 there were protests and strikes all across the country, resulting in the overwhelming of the monarchy's security forces and the flight of Shah Mohammad Reza.

The ideology behind the Islamic Revolution is key in understanding the following 30 years of Iranian history. The revolution materialized the common Iranian feeling that Iran was becoming too Westernized and needed to return to focusing on Sharia Law. One author described the Revolution as a "religious movement with a religious leadership, a religiously formulated critique of the old order, and religiously expressed plans for the new. Muslim revolutionaries look to the birth of Islam as their model, and see themselves as engaged in a struggle."¹³ Without a doubt, the man behind the new Iranian ideology was Ayatollah Khomeini, who became Supreme Leader of the Republic after the revolution. Because the new nation was established essentially as a theocracy, Khomeini declared that obedience to the government was synonymous to obedience to God.

This is all said to clarify that the Iranian view of Human Rights is quite different from the generally-accepted "Western" interpretation.¹⁴ While the Iranian monarchy originally voted in favor of the United

¹³ Lewis, Bernard, "Islamic Revolution," The New York Review of Books, 28 April, 1988
<<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1988/jan/21/islamic-revolution/?page=1>>

¹⁴ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The United Nations, 10 Dec 1948
<<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>>

Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) when it was drafted, the Islamic Republic of Iran ceased to find it binding due to contradictions with Sharia law. The Iranian representative to the UN made this very clear at the 36th session of the UN General Assembly in 1981 and again at the 39th session in 1984.¹⁵ Specifically, the representative declared that his country "recognizes no legal tradition apart from Islamic law ... Conventions, declarations, resolutions or decisions of international organizations which are contrary to Islam have no validity in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which represented a secular understanding of the Judeo-Christian traditions, could not be implemented by Muslims and did not accord with the system of values recognized by the Islamic Republic of Iran. [The government of Iran] would therefore not hesitate to violate its provisions, since it had to choose between violating the divine law of the country and violating secular conventions."¹⁶

It is for this reason that the Republic of Iran ratified the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) in 1990.¹⁷ The CDHRI was seen as the official Islamic response to the UDHR. The CDHRI was heavily criticized by independent observers and Human Rights NGO's upon its drafting, but the United Nations has tended to remain passive on this respect, mainly because the ratifiers would take any criticism as an affront to sacred Sharia Law. However, the fact remains that the Republic of Iran is responsible for numerous violations of human rights before and after the creation of the Cairo Declaration, violations that contradicted both the UDHR and the CDHRI.

Within the first five years following the Islamic Revolution, Amnesty International reports that almost 9000 people were executed by the new regime for political opposition. However many of these executions were carried out in secret, so it is difficult to determine the precise number of deaths.¹⁸

These extreme violations of human rights did not gain international attention until 1988, during the nationwide executions of political prisoners. These executions were carried out in secret as well, but

¹⁵ U.N. General Assembly, 56th Session, 15th Meeting of the Fourth Committee (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/NGO/15), New York, 4 July 2003 <[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridocda.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.Sub.2.2003.NGO.15.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridocda.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.Sub.2.2003.NGO.15.En?Opendocument)>

¹⁶ U.N. General Assembly, 39th Session, 65th Meeting of the Third Committee (A/C.3/39/SR.65), New York, 7 December 1984

¹⁷ World Conference on Human Rights, 4th Session, *The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam* (A/CONF.157/PC/62/Add.18), 9 Jun 1993 <[http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridocda.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.CONF.157.PC.62.Add.18.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridocda.nsf/(Symbol)/A.CONF.157.PC.62.Add.18.En?Opendocument)>

¹⁸ Amnesty International (AI), "Iran: Violations of Human Rights 1987-1990" (AI Index MDE 13/21/90), Chapter 1.2, May 2010 <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/021/1990/en/5c32759d-ee5e-11dd-9381-bdd29f83d3a8/mde130211990en.html>>

due to the extremely large number (Amnesty International has the names of at least 2000 people killed between July 1988 and January 1989) they were unable to be completely hidden from the world.¹⁹ The majority of the people executed belonged to the socialist group People's Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI), a terrorist group that had killed many Iranian soldiers at the end of the Iran-Iraq war during Operation Mersad. However Amnesty International states that "Most of the executions were of political prisoners [who] could have played no part in the armed incursion [and] were in no position to take part in spying or terrorist activities. Many of the dead had been tried and sentenced to prison terms during the early 1980's, many for non-violent offenses such as distributing newspapers and leaflets ... Many of the dead had been students in their teens or early twenties at the time of their arrest."²⁰ While the majority of those killed were supporters of the PMOI, hundreds were simply members of unrelated opposition groups. The orders to commence the executions were given directly by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, but the Republic of Iran continues to officially deny that these executions took place.

Following the death of Khomeini in 1989, the number of political executions carried out by the Iranian government dropped dramatically but did not disappear. Of particular note is the Iranian government's treatment of members of the Bahai faith since the 1980's, which the United Nations has described as "an unabated pattern of persecution"²¹ (A/RES/54/177). Amnesty International has reported that at least 200 Bahai have been murdered by the State since the 1979 revolution. In almost every United Nations resolutions concerning Iran since the 1980's, concern has been expressed over the discrimination and human rights violations against members of the Bahai religion.²² The Iranian government's treatment of Bahais is in direct contradiction with not only the UDHR but also the UDHRI, which explicitly states that member countries may not discriminate based on religion.

However, the 1979 Iranian constitution does not include Bahai on its list of protected religions.²³ Over the last few decades, the Iranian government has repeatedly explained that their treatment of the Bahai people is purely coincidental, and that they are arresting, torturing and executing these people because they are threats to national security.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ U.N. General Assembly, 54th Session, Resolution 54/177, *Human Rights Situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (A/RES/54/177), 24 February 2000

<<http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/70ef163b25b2333fc1256991004de370/fedf3a8776e53fe3802568a80059bc62?OpenDocument>>

²² "Resolutions/Regular Sessions," The U.N. General Assembly, May 2010 <<http://www.un.org/documents/resga.htm>>

²³ Constitution of Iran, International Database of Constitutions, May 2010 <http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00000_.html>

Another major human rights issue that has a long history in Iran is freedom of expression. The 1985 Press Law prohibits "discourse harmful to the principles of Islam" or "public interest", points that are also referred to in Article 24 of the 1979 constitution.²⁴ The Iranian government has never been hesitant to act upon these laws, and one instance that gained major international attention was the government's response to the 1999 Student Protests. The unrest began with peaceful demonstrations against the banning of a leading pro-reformist university newspaper, Salam. However on the second night of protests the government riot police raided campus housing and killed a student, sparking riots by hundreds of students and resulting in the deaths of at least three, the arrest of over a thousand and the torture of many while in prison. At least three of the designated "ring-leaders" were sentenced to death.²⁵ According to Human Rights Watch, over seventy students simply disappeared.²⁶

In 2003 the United Nations Special Rapporteur noted that the Iranian penal code regarding freedom of expression leaves a lot of room for interpretation, such as criminal charges like "insult against Islam." This is one of the points of contention between the CDHRI and the UDHR, because the former states in article 22 that "Everyone shall have the right to express his opinion freely *in such manner as would not be contrary to the principles of the Shari'ah*."²⁷ The Special Rapporteur noted that the current wording of the Iranian constitution is similar to the CDHRI in that it promotes self-censorship.²⁸ This issue was exemplified in the 1989 Satanic Verses Controversy, in which a man named Salman Rushdie wrote a novel so controversial that Ayatollah Khomeini demanded his life. Rushdie had to plead asylum in Great Britain, where he remains to this day.²⁹ The attempts kill Rushdie over the following years prompted the United Nations to mention him in several resolutions, calling for the Iranian government to retract its threat on his life.

²⁴ "The Iranian Legal Framework and International Law," Human Rights Watch, May 2010
<<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/iran/Iran99o-03.htm>>

²⁵ "Six Days that Shook Iran," BBC News – Middle East, 11 Jul 2000 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/828696.stm>

²⁶ "New Arrests and 'Disappearances' of Iranian Students," Human Rights Watch, 29 July 1999
<<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/1999/07/29/new-arrests-and-disappearances-iranian-students>>

²⁷ World Conference on Human Rights, *CDHRI*, 9 Jun 1993

²⁸ U.N. General Assembly, 60th Session of the Commission on Human Rights, *Civil and Political Rights, Including the Question of Freedom of Expression* (E/CN.4/2004/62/ADD.2), 12 January 2004
<<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G04/101/86/PDF/G0410186.pdf?OpenElement>>

²⁹ "Iran Adamant over Rushdie Fatwa," BBC News – Middle East, 12 Feb 2005
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4260599.stm>

The latter half of the 1980's marked the beginning of international uproar over human rights in Iran. Every single year since 1985 the United Nations General Assembly has passed a resolutions titled "The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran," beginning with resolution A/RES/40/141. A good example of the content of these resolutions can be found in resolution A/RES/47/146 from 1993, which regrets Iran's refusal to cooperate with the Special Representative on Human Rights, condemns its high number of executions as "excessive," and calls upon Iran to comply with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party.³⁰ This is just one example on many resolutions throughout the 1990's that reflect the same basic concepts. They continue into the 2000's as well, an example of which is resolution A/RES/58/195 passed in 2003, which repeats essentially the same concerns and demands that the previous resolutions have given.

Current Situation

Many of the world's most prominent human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI) and the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHRI), maintain that the situation in Iran took a turn for the worse upon the arrival of President Ahmadinejad's regime in 2005.³¹ His predecessor, President Khatami, was seen as the first reformist president since the revolution 26 years prior, and even though human rights abuses continued under his presidency, his policies were viewed as a step toward reforming Iran's controversial human rights policy. However, the election of President Ahmadinejad in 2005 brought Iran back to Islamic ideals set forth by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in the 70s and 80s. 2005 was a turning point for human rights in Iran, returning the country to high levels of government control and an enforcement of Sharia law not seen for over a decade.

As was stated in the previous History section, the majority of United Nations resolutions concerning the human rights situation in Iran have been essentially the same over the past two decades. A new resolution is necessary year after year due to the Iranian government largely ignoring the grievances outlined each year by the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. One can examine any

³⁰ U.N. General Assembly, 47th Session, Resolution 47/146, *Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (A/RES/47/146), 22 March 1993

<<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/168/91/IMG/N9316891.pdf?OpenElement>>

³¹ "Rights Crisis Escalates Faces and Cases From Ahmadinejad's Crackdown," The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHRI), 20 Sep 2008

<<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2008/09/iran crackdown/>>

of the resolutions passed over the years to understand the basic points of concern, but the most recent pre-2009-elections resolution is from the 71st Plenary meeting in December 2008. In this resolution (A/RES/63/191), SOCHUM expresses deep concern over numerous areas of HR violations, a selection of which are reproduced below.

"[The UN General Assembly] expresses its deep concern at serious human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran relating to, inter alia:

- (a) Torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including flogging and amputations,
- (b) The continuing high incidence of executions carried out in the absence of internationally recognized safeguards, including public executions and executions of juveniles,
- (e) Increasing discrimination and other human rights violations against persons belonging to religious, ethnic, linguistic or other minorities, recognized or otherwise, ... in particular, attacks on Baha'is and their faith in State-sponsored media, increasing evidence of efforts by the State to identify and monitor Baha'is, preventing members of the Baha'i faith from attending university and from sustaining themselves economically, and the arrest and detention of seven Baha'i leaders without charge or access to legal representation;
- (f) Ongoing, systemic and serious restrictions of freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of opinion and expression, including those imposed on the media, Internet users and trade unions, and increasing harassment, intimidation and persecution of political opponents and human rights defenders from all sectors of Iranian society...
- (h) Persistent failure to uphold due process of law rights, and violation of the rights of detainees, including the systematic and arbitrary use of prolonged solitary confinement;" ³²

³² U.N. General Assembly, 63rd Session, Resolution 63/191, *Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (A/RES/63/191), 24 Feb 2009
<<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/482/25/PDF/N0848225.pdf?OpenElement>>

These particular sections of the 2008 resolution portray the most relevant grievances to the following year's election protest crackdown by the Iranian government. The December 2009 resolution concerning the human rights situation in Iran (A/RES/64/176) essentially reiterates the same concerns as the year before (as has been the case for decades), but also includes a section relating to the June protests, which is reproduced below:

"[The UN General Assembly] also expresses particular concern at the response of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran following the presidential election of 12 June 2009 and the concurrent rise in human rights violations including, inter alia:

- (a) Harassment, intimidation and persecution, including by arbitrary arrest, detention or disappearance, of opposition members, journalists and other media representatives, bloggers, lawyers, clerics, human rights defenders, academics, students and others exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and association and freedom of opinion and expression, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries;
- (b) Use of violence and intimidation by Government-directed militias to forcibly disperse Iranian citizens engaged in the peaceful exercise of freedom of association, also resulting in numerous deaths and injuries;
- (c) Interfering in the right to a fair trial by, inter alia, holding mass trials and denying defendants access to adequate legal representation, resulting in death sentences and lengthy jail sentences for some individuals;
- (d) Reported use of forced confessions and abuse of prisoners including, inter alia, rape and torture;
- (e) Escalation in the rate of executions in the months following the election;
- (f) Further restrictions on freedom of expression, including severe restrictions on media coverage of public demonstrations and the disruption of telecommunications and Internet technology and the forcible closure of the offices of several organizations involved in the investigation of the situation of

persons imprisoned following the election;"³³

In addition to this resolution, the office of the Secretary General of the United Nations issued a statement in regard to the post-election crackdown, in which Ban Ki-Moon called for the Iranian authorities to “respect fundamental civil and political rights, especially the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of information,” and also urged “an immediate stop to the arrests, threats and use of force. The secretary general reiterates his hope that the democratic will of the people of Iran will be fully respected.”³⁴

At this point it is necessary to delve further into the details of the June 2009 election protests and the aftermath. The basic overview has been provided in the above Introduction, and therefore the next few paragraphs will attempt to detail the current state of detained protesters, the situation regarding press freedom, and the Iranian government's actions over the months since June 2009.

In April 2010, Iranian judiciary officials confirmed that eleven people were on death row for participating in the 2009 protests. Not including those eleven, five other political prisoners were secretly executed in early May.³⁵ However the number on death row dropped to ten in May when the judiciary reversed the *Moharebeh* charge (taking up arms against God) against one protester. It was decided that his crime of throwing three rocks during the protests did not warrant a death sentence, and he was instead sentenced to three and a half years in prison.³⁶

Iranian officials defend the the death sentences on the other ten prisoners, maintaining that they are terrorists and a danger to national security.³⁷ However human rights organizations like ICHRI have suggested that, "government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Revolutionary Guard commanders are

³³ U.N. General Assembly, 64th Session, Resolution 64/176, *Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (A/RES/64/176), 26 Mar 2010

<<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/472/39/PDF/N0947239.pdf?OpenElement>>

³⁴ “End Iran violence, UN chief urges,” BBC News - Middle East, 23 June 2009

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8114085.stm>

³⁵ “Political Executions Indication of Government’s Insecurity,” ICHRI, 9 May 2010

³⁶ “Student’s Death Sentence for Throwing Rocks Reversed,” The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 17 May 2010

<<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/05/student’s-death-sentence-for-throwing-rocks-reversed/>>

³⁷ “Leading Demonstrators Must Be Executed, Ayatollah Khatami Demands,” The Times Online, 27 Jun 2009

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6583797.ece?token=null&offset=0&page=1>

manipulating the Judiciary ... to intimidate the general public from launching fresh protests, showing it would put their lives at risk."³⁸

Since the June protests, the Iranian government has arrested and detained over 30 journalists and photographers for political dissension. A number of foreign journalists were expelled from Iran and prohibited from reporting on the events, and in some cases Iranian official media and authorities accused foreign journalists of inciting unrest. Foreign journalists were prohibited from observing protest demonstrations and other important events. Websites and phone lines were blocked on several occasions between June and September, preventing the circulation of information on the elections and the post-elections situation in the country. Foreign news broadcasts were kept from Iranian citizens on certain days. Private social networking websites were used against individuals to persecute them and their associates. The authorities shut down sites including Facebook for periods of time during during Fall 09 and into early 2010. Mobile telephone networks were also shut down on election day, which was meant to prevent sharing election-monitoring information.³⁹

There is a great threat to Iranians who decide to publicly speak out against the government's actions, and self-censorship of magazines, blogs, and even social conversation is widespread due to fear of repercussions. ICHRI reported that even public figures like 2009 presidential candidate Mir-Hossein Moussavi have been threatened "with prosecution because he had publicly questioned the credibility of evidence leading to the executions."⁴⁰ In a report released in March 2010, Reporters Without Borders (RWB) labeled Iran as one of the three "Enemies of the Internet," for its increased efforts to censor the Internet and jail dissidents.⁴¹

Before concluding this section, it is necessary to point out that the government of Iran under President Ahmadinejad has taken several steps to improve it's lamentable human rights situation. In July 2009, due to the amount of international uproar concerning the post-election arrests, the President authorized

³⁸ "Two More Baseless Death Sentences Rubber Stamped by Appeals Court," The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 30 April 2010

<<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/04/more-death-sentences/>>

³⁹ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2010: Events of 2009, 495-500, March 2010

⁴⁰ "Student's Death Sentence for Throwing Rocks Reversed," ICHRI, 17 May 2010

<<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/05/student's-death-sentence-for-throwing-rocks-reversed/>>

⁴¹ "Web 2.0 Vs Control 2.0," Reporters Without Borders, 18 Mar 2010

<<http://en.rsf.org/web-2-0-versus-control-2-0-18-03-2010.36697.html>>

the release of 140 political prisoners, and delivered a call for "Islamic mercy" to be shown to the remaining detainees.⁴² In addition, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei personally intervened in the situation and facilitated the closing of Kahrizak Detention Center, a prison notorious for prisoner abuse and deaths.⁴³ Twelve prison officials were charged with crimes including murder, and the prison was re-opened one month later after being renovated to fulfill national prison standards. On 2 June 2010 Khamenei pardoned 81 political prisoners in relation to the 2009 post-election protests. Following this act, organizations such as ICHRI called for the release of the remaining 450 prisoners, whose arrest they believe to be equally arbitrary.⁴⁴

It is also worth noting that the June 2009 election protests were not the first major demonstrations against Ahmadinejad's government, though they were assuredly the largest. 2006 saw numerous student protests against the current regime's crackdown on reformist groups and political dissent at Iranian universities. Interestingly, the president specifically ordered police to allow the demonstrations to take place, and expressed happiness that the demonstrating students had the freedom to participate in such protests.⁴⁵ It is in this context that further confusion lends itself to the regime's suppression of the 2009 election protests, though many human rights organizations have suggested that the contrast between the government reaction to the 2006 student protests and the 2009 election protests has to do with the greater threat to regime security in the latter case, as well as the enormous increase in participants.

The human rights violations committed by the Iranian government in 2009 (or in any year before) have not been thoroughly addressed in such a way that these atrocities are abated. At this point in time (May 2010) the first anniversary of the election protests is approaching, and there are numerous Iranian citizens still imprisoned for their participation, a number of whom are facing death. Government restrictions on freedoms of expression and religion continue, and despite the international outrage

⁴² Worth, Robert F., "Reports of Prison Abuse Anger Iranians," New York Times Online – Middle East, 28 July 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/29/world/middleeast/29iran.html?_r=2>

⁴³ Hafezi, Parisa, "Iran's Khamenei orders closure of detention center," Reuters World News, 2 Aug 2009 <<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE56R1J620090728?sp=true>>

⁴⁴ "Leader's Pardon of 81 Political Prisoners Show Arbitrary Nature of Prosecutions," International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 3 June 2010 <<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/06/leader's-pardon-of-81-political-prisoners-show-arbitrary-nature-of-prosecutions/>>

⁴⁵ Fathi, Nazila, "Iran President Facing Revival of Students' Ire," New York Times Online – Middle East, 21 Dec 2006 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/21/world/middleeast/21iran.html>>

recently kindled by the post-election crackdown, nothing has yet been done.

Directive

The human rights situation in Iran has always sparked controversy, but events of recent years have brought Iran to the forefront of international debate. The most recent controversy involves the 2009 election protests, an affair that resulted in a massive suppression by the government against those demonstrating. At least 4000 citizens were detained because of their participation in the post-election protests, and dozens of government critics and human rights lawyers were held without charge. Many of these people were tortured and threatened while being held. Perhaps of most concern is that the government itself confirmed at least 36 people killed in relation to the protests. Iranian officials hold that the killings and detentions were necessary to prevent a suspected attempt at coup-de-tat.

In addition, freedom of expression in Iran has severely deteriorated in recent years, and the crackdown on the 2009 election protests yielded further violations. Prominent human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch (HRW) report that numerous journalists and news editors have been arrested for expression critical views of the current regime, and various newspapers have been shut down due to publishing dissenting views. Along with the media, outspoken human rights organizations in Iran have been repeatedly threatened and even forced to cease operation. According to the Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RWB), Iran regularly ranks as one of the worst countries for freedom of expression.

Delegates need to be well aware of the many past UN resolutions concerning the human rights situation in Iran, as well as the various reports published by NGO's like HRW and the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHRI), both of whom have reputations of objectivity and well-documented reports. It is of *particular importance* that delegates are familiar with the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) as well as the standard Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The CDHRI was written as a response to the UDHR, and is widely seen as the major human rights declaration for Islamic nations. Delegates should seek to create a lasting solution for the human rights situation in Iran while remaining within the bounds of the UN GA3. As always, delegates should approach the issue not as individuals but as representatives of their respective nations.