

Newsbulletin April 2009

Victory of the International Efforts against violations of humanrights in Iran New and strong condemnation of the Iranian dictatorship



General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 February 2009

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly about the situation of Human Rights in Iran,
The 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
- c) Persons in prison, who continue to face sentences of execution by stoning
- d) Arrests, violent repression and sentencing women exercising their right of peaceful assembly, a campaign of intimidation against women's human rights defenders and continuing discrimination against women and girls in law and in practice
- e) Increasing discrimination and other human rights violations against persons belonging to religious, ethnic, linguistic and other minorities, like against Christians, bahais, kurds and ...
- f) Ongoing systematic and serious restrictions of freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of opinion and expression
- g) Severe limitations and restrictions on freedom of religion and belief
- h) Persistent failure to uphold due process of law and rights

Iranian New Years fire festival turns into anti-government protests



NCRI, 18 March –Despite heavy security preparations for the last Wednesday of the year (Fire Festival) turned into widespread demonstration of the Iranian people's hatred of the ruling clerics. Throughout the capital, citizens paid no heed to repeated orders of the mullahs' suppressive police using loud speakers to disperse scores of youths participating in the celebrations. The participants, two by two, and hand in hand, in turn jumped over bonfires

marking the arrival of the Iranian New Year beginning March 21. Loud noise of fire crackers and on occasions concoction grenades could be heard from blocks away. Last Wednesday of every year is a nightmare for the mullahs' regime in Iran since men, women and children turnout in thousands to celebrate the traditional Fire Festival throughout the country. In other cities citizens turned out to celebrate and often clashed with the security forces. More than 20 local residents were arrested by the police in Karaj, some 40 kilometers west of the capitol. In Kurdish city of Sanandaj, the mullahs' regime arrested a number of youth celebrating the Fire Festival.

Iran: Over 450 toddlers spend time in prison with their mothers



later in their adulthood, Aftab Yazd said.

NCRI – 27 March: The regime-run website Aftab Yazd said that more than 450 infants live with their mothers in the mullahs' regime prisons. "According to Prison Organization regulations, children up to three stay with their mothers in prisons. However, there are many cases that toddlers stay with their mothers way over that age. The prolonged incarceration causes such children all sorts of problem," the website said. Aftab Yazd added that "2,300 other children under 15 were sent to orphanages because their mothers were in prison." The Iranian prisons are without nurseries to look after the infants. The children get used to the prison conditions to the point they would go back to prison as criminals

Britain 'very concerned' over Iranian Bahai charges



LONDON (AFP), 16 february — Britain expressed concern Monday over charges laid against seven members of the banned Bahai religion in Iran, accusing Tehran of targeting religious minorities. The charges, which include "espionage for Israel, insulting religious sanctities and propaganda against the Islamic republic", were brought last week. Junior foreign minister Bill Rammell said he was "very concerned" over the charges, which he noted could attract the death penalty. "The Iranian government appears to be increasingly using vaguely worded charges of this nature to target human rights defenders and religious minorities," Rammell said in a statement. "It is hard not to conclude that these people are being held solely on account of their religious beliefs or their peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association."

Man 'secretly' stoned to death in Iran



NCRI, London, 11 March – A man was 'secretly' stoned to death in a prison in the northern Iranian city of Rasht. The man is identified as Vali Azad, 30. The stoning sentence was carried out in a remote part of the yard of Lakan Prison in the presence of a few prison officials. A local judge, identified only by his last name Kashani, presiding over the 11th branch of the revolutionary court in the northern province of Gilan had handed down the sentence. The authorities have refused to turn over the corpse to Azad's relatives. In January Iran's Judiciary confirmed that two men in Mashhad were stoned to death in December, while a third convicted man escaped while the punishment was being carried out.

Amnesty International on Monday urged Iran to suspend stoning sentences pending for eight women. The human rights organisation said that "as many as eight women are at imminent risk of being stoned to death". Article 104 of regime law states, that the stones used should "not be large enough to kill the person by one or two strikes, nor should they be so small that they could not be defined as stones".

Iranian authorities destroy Sufi holy site in Isfahan



Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 18 February - A house of worship of the Gonabadi dervishes in Isfahan has reportedly been destroyed by the Iranian authorities. The reason for the destruction -- which reportedly took place shortly after midnight on February 18, it comes amid growing pressure on dervishes, who practice the Sufi tradition of Islam, and other religious minorities in Iran. The dervish house of worship, or hosseinieh, was located next to the tomb of the great poet and dervish Naser Ali at the historical Takht-e Foulad cemetery,

where a number of respected Iranian figures are buried. Dervishes gathered there to pray, meditate, read Sufi poetry, and perform religious ceremonies. Some 200 members of the security forces, police, and plainclothes agents arrived. The dervishes' mobile phones were taken away to prevent them from informing others of the raid, and they were detained and transferred to a police station.

Abdol Saleh Loghmani, one of the Isfahan dervishes, told RFE/RL that the security forces cut off water and electricity to the area, and destroyed the walls around the poet's tomb with a bulldozer.

"They also destroyed the library where [religious] books were kept. They demolished the big hall where we had our Monday and Friday ceremonies and also our Sunday dawn meetings. They took away all the carpets and other property," he said.

He said the five people were detained, but they were released after the authorities completed the demolition. He that added authorities then dispersed the dervishes who, after hearing the news about the destruction, had gathered around the site.

Crackdown On Minorities

Sufis in Isfahan and elsewhere in Iran see the raid as just one part of a campaign by conservatives against the Gonabadi dervishes. The crackdown has included arrests, court summons, and accusations in the media that Sufism is a deviation from true Islam.

A Sufi house of worship was demolished in the city of Qom in 2006; another was partially destroyed in Borujerd in 2007; and a Sufi prayer house in Kish was forced to close late in 2008.

Some Sufis have faced arrest, been sentenced to lashings, or been forced to pledge not to attend Sufi ceremonies.

Mostafa Azmayesh, the author of several books on Sufism and the representative of the Gonabadi dervishes outside Iran, told RFE/RL that what he describes as "hidden pressure" on dervishes is also growing.

Authorities "have said that dervishes are not allowed to be buried in Beydokht [the main birthplace of leaders of the Gonabadi dervishes] anymore," he said. "There is a [cemetery] there that belongs to the Gonabadi branch, and some dervishes write in their testaments that they want to be buried there -- but the Beydokht municipality has banned it."

Sufis observe Islamic beliefs, but they also believe in pursuit of the truth through mysticism. Some conservative clerics consider Sufism a danger to Islam.

Dervishes believe that what they describe as their sect's growing popularity is one of the reasons behind the growing state pressure. They say many Iranians are fed up with the official state interpretation of Islam and are attracted to alternative approaches.

Azmayesh says it is clear that there is growing state intolerance toward religious minorities in Iran.

"These demolitions...demonstrate the oppression and crimes that are being committed against the religious minorities in Iran -- when they treat dervishes that are Shi'ite Muslims in this manner. It's not clear what [authorities] do to the other [Iranian citizens] who are the followers of other religions," he said.

Rights groups say respect for religious freedom has deteriorated in Iran since hard-line President Mahmud Ahmadinejad took power some four years ago.