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The European Students' Union ESU calls for boycott of Iran

Urgent request to save those recently arrested and sentenced to death in Iran

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Dear fellow Europeans and supporters of human rights,

Over the last 7 months the world has been witness to the gross injustices committed by the Iranian government against peaceful protesters. We, the European Students' Union, have been active in raising awareness of the suppression of people's liberties in Iran and have as such been one of many organizations throughout Europe that have shown active solidarity with the Iranian democratic movement.

However, the violence is escalating with ruthless crackdowns against peaceful protests, extremely harsh and cruel treatment of political prisoners (including rape and torture) and the recent arrest of over 80 students. What has taken place in the last 2 weeks has placed a far greater number of innocent lives in jeopardy and therefore requires immediate action and deserves special attention.

The purpose of this letter is first of all to reiterate the importance of supporting Iran's recent struggle for freedom, equality and democracy and, second, to kindly ask you to support them in a number of simple ways in order to protect them from more human rights violations and death.

We would like draw your attention to the following facts:

- Government reports state that at least 8 people were killed and at least 1,300 people have been arrested during protests after the 19th of December (the death of dissident cleric Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri). Many were killed and arrested on the holy day of Ashura (December 26th, 2009). Arrests of political dissidents in Tehran and other provinces continue. Among those who being arrested are student activists, women, youth, workers, children's rights activists, mothers, and former political prisoners.
- Former prisoners have reported experiences of brutal rape and the frequent use of torture in Iran's prisons. These descriptions have increased dramatically over the last few weeks proving that the human rights situation in Iran is reaching its lowest point ever.
- Over 80 students from different universities across Iran were arrested on the 27th of December. Among them was the prominent student activist, Bahareh Hedayat, who is the spokeswoman for the student union Office for Strengthening Unity.
- Mohseni Ejee, the Iranian Prosecutor General, has announced that at least three protesters will be sentenced to death. He warned that more political prisoners will be executed soon. The

Parliament Speaker, Ali Larijani, and some other officials have also threatened that authorities will take vigorous actions against every kind of protest. The Judicial System of Iran, as well as security and judicial forces of the Supreme Leader, have confirmed the order of execution for those arrested on Ashura and political prisoners.

- The Committee of Human Rights Activists in Kurdistan announced that the Iranian regime has recently executed a Kurdish man who has been in prison since 2007. This was done without following the standard legal procedures and officials have since refused to hand over the body to his family.

Human rights and democracy are for all the people of the world. A lot more needs to be done to achieve this in every corner of the world, particularly in places where people have little or no possibilities for voicing their concerns. Lack of access to media and the suppression of communication with the rest of the world have resulted in late recognition of many crimes. In other words, atrocities often occur when governments, organizations and individuals act too slowly.

However, limited information and communication can not be used as an excuse in relation to the situation in Iran. Images, videos, accounts and reports about the ruthless crackdowns and human rights violations have found their way into all forms of media. We, as citizens of free and democratic countries, have the responsibility to respond to their pleas for help – pleas directed at all of us.

It is unacceptable that they are not enjoyed by all and we request that you join us to help change the situation. Please show solidarity with the people of Iran. One way to do this is by asking the governments of Europe, your local council, community organizations, human rights groups, educational institutions, student organizations and other members of our democratic civil society to play a more involved role in supporting the democratic grassroots movement. In light of the scale of the recent atrocities and the continuous pleas of the people we argue that:

- 1) Governments must not remain silent about human rights abuses and should discontinue diplomatic and economic relations with the Iranian regime.
- 2) Human rights groups and community organizations need to take a more active role in pressuring the Iranian regime to respect human rights.
- 3) Academics from all disciplines must recognize the fact that their voices are among the most important and influential and that their peers in Iran desperately need their solidarity.
- 4) Student organizations of all kinds need to prepare activities which will raise awareness of the plight of their fellow students in Iran and assist them in realizing their goal of a free and democratic Iran.

Time is running out for the victims of the government crackdown and we sincerely urge you to act quickly.

For more information, please contact the ESU Executive Committee on ec2009@esu-online.org