



Death penalties in Iran: Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani's lawyer in Parliament

[DICO] Commission: Subcommittee on Human Rights

Iran's rulers are the worst human rights offenders, Mohammed Mostafei, lawyer to Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, who was sentenced to death in Iran on adultery charges under Sharia law, told Parliament's Human Rights Subcommittee on Thursday.

"The rulers of the Islamic Republic of Iran are the worst human rights offenders", stressed Mohammed Mostafei. Stoning to death, mass and political executions and amputations, even of juveniles, are taking place in Iran, he said, adding that human rights defenders, political activists, professors, lawyers and everyone who is against the government's policies could be arbitrarily arrested.

Fact-finding mission to Iran

Mr Mostafei advocated sending a fact-finding mission to Iran to observe and assess the situation. He underlined that western countries could play a very important role in promoting human rights and that this was their duty, too. He believed human rights issues were more pressing than Iran's nuclear programme. The West should help in putting an end to censorship, help Iranians to get internet access and pave the way for those seeking asylum, he said.

Protecting Iranian refugees

Marietje Schaake (ALDE, NL), believed the EU should not only offer asylum to refugees, but also provide shelter to Iranians fleeing their country. She also raised the issue of whether the UNHCR refugee agency in Turkey needs more capacity to cater for Iranians.

Informing public opinion about "the non-necessity of the death penalty"

Barbara Lochbihler (Greens/EFA, DE), chair of Parliament's Iran delegation, said the upcoming launch of a Euronews Farsi language news channel was important. It is very useful to have documentaries that demonstrate "the non-necessity of the death penalty", she added.

Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D, PL), asked about long-term trends with regard to Iran respecting human and political rights.

In his reply, Mr Mostafei said that national wealth from natural resources enables the Iranian government to recruit and maintain police and other forces and equip them with modern technology, and so suppress opposition in the country. He stressed there were some positive signs, but added that human rights continue to be neglected in Iran. Instead of the economic sanctions imposed on the people of Iran, political sanctions were needed, Mr Mostafei added.

Previously, on 8 September, Parliament's President Jerzy Buzek welcomed the announcement by the Iranian authorities that the death sentence of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani had been suspended. Prior to this, MEPs had unanimously adopted a resolution strongly condemning the sentence.

Press release

Iran continues to find itself in the group of very few countries, together with Afghanistan, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Nigeria, which still practice stoning.

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