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IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL”

**Written statement* submitted by the International Federation of Human Rights
Leagues (FIDH), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[28 February 2007]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Islamic Republic of Iran

Harassment of union leaders, human rights activists, journalists, bloggers and any persons having an independent or differing opinion has been continuing in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Repression has been increasing over the past months in particular against women's rights groups, trade union members, as well as religious and ethnic minorities. Lawyers have also been increasingly targeted for defending cases perceived as sensitive by the authorities.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

Since the beginning of this year, executions have been on the rise in Khûzistân, a neighbouring region with Iraq where the **Arab minority** is living. Protests asking for increased autonomy (right to publish in Arabic, etc) had taken place in the region in April 2005. Violent clashes had opposed protesters to the police, resulting in a number of injured. Since then, bombings occurred in Ahwaz and other cities in the region. The Iranian authorities replied to those attacks through massive condemnations to death of men belonging to the Arab minority.

On 9 November 2006, the Iranian Supreme Court confirmed the death sentences for "Mohareb" ("being at war with God") against ten persons belonging to the Arab minority. The trial of the ten men had however been held in secret, access to their lawyers had been denied during the pre-trial phase, and six lawyers who had been defending them had been arrested and subsequently freed on bail, in blatant violation of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

Three of the ten men were executed in mid-December. In spite of a call launched by three UN independent experts to stop the execution of the remaining seven sentenced to death "following a secret, grossly unfair trial", four of them were executed in late January. The last three, Majed Alebooghasbish, 30, Ghasem Salamat, 41, and Abdol-Reza Sanvati, 34, were executed on February 14, 2007.

On 13 February 2007, eleven members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards have been killed after a car bomb hit their bus in Zahedan, capital of the Sistan-Baluchestan province which borders both Afghanistan and Pakistan in South eastern Iran. The **Baluch ethnic minority** is living in that province, which is among the poorest in Iran. Iran's Fars news agency said "a group called Jundallah [Allah's brigade, a Sunni group] under the leadership of Abdolmalek Rigi, [head of] the eastern rebels in the country... took responsibility for this terrorist act." On 15 February, the UN Security Council condemned the "terrorist attack" against the bus. On 19 February 2007, Nasrollah Shanbe-Zehi, sentenced to death by a local branch of the revolutionary court, was hanged in public at the site of the bombing for his alleged role in the attack.

FIDH and LDDHI vigorously denounce such executions, which follow blatantly unfair trials. Under such circumstances, it is totally impossible to know whether those persons really participated in terrorist acts, or were simply political activists asking for more autonomy or for the independence of the province. No crime, whatever its gravity, can justify such a denial of the fair trial guarantees, which constitute a non-derogable right, even "in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation" (Art. 4 of the ICCPR as interpreted by the UN Human Rights Committee). Our organisations fear that

Iran may currently be executing political prisoners – and not the real authors of violent attacks, which would be an extremely worrying move.

On 14 June 2006, Mr. **Saleh Kamrani**, lawyer in Tehran, disappeared. He has reportedly been detained in the Evin prison, without charges, and subsequently released. Before his arrest, Mr. Kamrani had defended political prisoners arrested after they had protested against the publication in May 2006, in a pro-government newspaper, of a comics which had offended many **Turk-Azeri citizens**. He had already been victim of harassment in the past because of his activities in favour of the defence of ethnic minorities.

Women's Rights

A campaign on women's rights launched last August by local groups in Iran has been repeatedly targeted by the authorities. The on-line campaign is asking for the elimination of all forms of legal discrimination against women in the Iranian legislation, and for the legislator to review and amend existing laws, so that they conform with the government's commitments to international human rights conventions. The "For one million signatures" website was shut down several times since its launch, and the campaigners had to reopen it on new domains.

In addition, on January 27, 2007, **Ms. Mansoureh Shojaei**, **Ms. Sedigheh Taghinia** (alias Tal'at Taghinia) and **Ms. Farnaz Seifi**, three journalists at the forefront of the campaign, were arrested at the Imam Khomeini Airport, and prevented from leaving the country. They were on their way to India to participate in a journalism workshop. They were transferred to the 209 section of the Evin Prison, in Tehran, and subsequently released on bail the next day. A hearing should take place in March on the basis of unknown charges.

Human rights defenders and trade unionists

In the Evin prison, the pressure against political prisoners is on the rise. In November 2006, dangerous prisoners condemned for ordinary crimes have been transferred to the Evin prison in order to provoke and beat political prisoners. Among the victims, Nasser Zarafchan, lawyer and human rights defender, has been beaten on November 13, 2006.

Mr Nasser Zarafchan was arrested in August 2002 and sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in connection with statements made about the regime's role in the murder of intellectuals in 1988. He has been denied access to medical treatment following severe illness and his requests for medical leave have been blocked by the Chief Prosecutor of Tehran. He remains in detention despite his deteriorating health.

On 16 July 2006, the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced **Mr Abdolfattah Soltani**, lawyer and founding member of the DRHC, to 5 years imprisonment on charges of disclosing classified information, in connection with his role as defence lawyer in the case of Ms. Kazemi, an Iranian-Canadian photographer who died in 2003 following torture and ill treatment in custody. Mr Soltani had called into question the fairness and independence of the trial following her death. He had been freed on a 100 000 euros bail in March 2006, after spending more than seven months in prison. His appeal is still pending.

Dozens of journalists, webloggers and students are regularly brought before courts, although most of them are freed on bail. In January 2006, e.g., **Mr Arash Sigarchi**, journalist and blogger, was sentenced to three years in prison for "insulting the Supreme

Guide” and “propaganda against the regime” and imprisoned several days later. He is still in prison.

The members of the Tehran Workers’ Union and of the Suburb Bus Company’s Union (*Sherkat-e Vahed*) are being increasingly repressed. On 19 November 2006, **Mr. Mansoor Osanloo**, President of the trade union, and **Mr. Ebrahim Madadi**, Vice-president, were arrested by plainclothes police officers, who refused to show any warrant. Mr. Osanloo had already been in jail from December 2005 to August 2006. He was eventually released on 19 December 2006, after he paid a bail of 150 millions toman (125.000 euros). Mr. Osanloo’s trial will take place in March.

In Iranian Kurdistan, on 13 November 2006, a Revolutionary tribunal condemned **Mahmoud Salehi** Spokesperson of the organisational committee to establish trade unions and former Chairperson of the Saez Bakery Workers’ Union, and **Jalal Hosseini**, member of the Saez Bakery Workers’ Union, to heavy prison sentences (respectively 4 and 2 years imprisonment) for having organised a sit-in on the occasion of the 1st May 2006 celebrations. They appealed their sentence and are currently free on bail. Those two trade unionists had already been condemned to respectively five and three years imprisonment in November 2005 on the charge of association with the banned political association Komala (Kurdish nationalist organisation). Because they had participated in the same sit-in, **Mr. Mohsen Hakimi**, member of the Iranian Writers’ Association, was condemned to two years in prison on 27 November 2006; and **Mr. Borhan Divargar**, member of the Saez Bakery Workers’ Union, was also condemned to two years in prison on 17 October 2006. Their appeal is still pending. They are currently free.

FIDH and LDDHI urge the Human Rights Council to adopt a resolution on the human rights situation in Iran and to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Iran. FIDH and LDDHI call on the Iranian authorities:

- To immediately and unconditionally free all those arbitrarily detained;
- To guarantee the physical and psychological safety of all those detained;
- To conduct effective investigations into allegations of violations of human rights;
- To put an end to discrimination against minorities, and women's groups;
- To implement fair trial guarantees;
- To adopt an immediate moratorium as a first step towards the abolition of the death penalty;
- To implement the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms and treaty bodies;
- To ratify CAT, CEDAW and the Statute of the ICC, without incompatible reservations.
