



## RESOLUTION ON THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to pay little attention to its obligations under international human rights law. The freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly remain severely repressed in Iran.

Despite President Rouhani's promises<sup>1</sup> to provide greater space for cultural freedom, Iran's cultural landscape remains closely monitored and closed. Censorship remains common, with books denied permission for publication, media receiving regular instructions about what can and cannot be published and access blocked to hundreds of websites, including foreign news sites and human rights organisations. Access to social media including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter has been regularly blocked since the disputed 2009 presidential election.

In June this year, the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on cultural rights and freedom of expression condemned the imprisonment of artists in Iran for their expression and creativity as entirely unacceptable, reiterating that 'artistic expression is simply not a crime.' While PEN welcomes the release of Iranian filmmaker Mostafa Azizi in April 2016, still other artists and filmmakers have continued to suffer for their artistic expression for such crimes as 'spreading propaganda against the system'.

Writers, journalists, musicians, and artists face harassment, threats or arrest for their expression. In 2015, Iran accounted for 30 per cent of all cases on the Middle East and North Africa section of PEN International's Case List. Of the 61 writers listed, 16 were in prison, while a further eight were detained, held solely for their peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression. Among this number are writer and poet Arzhang Davoodi and author Hesameddin Farzizadeh, both sentenced to death in separate cases in connection with their freedom of expression. Iran continues to hold the dubious title of one of the highest rates of execution – over 900 individuals were executed in 2015, according to Amnesty International<sup>2</sup>.

Detainees are often subjected to ill-treatment, including prolonged periods of solitary confinement. At least 75 per cent of cases monitored in 2015 had been placed in solitary confinement, some for months on end. In a letter to PEN International, imprisoned Iranian journalist and human rights defender Narges Mohammadi explained the mental and physical suffering that such practices inflict on inmates, often amounting to torture.<sup>3</sup> The use of prolonged solitary confinement contravenes the Islamic Republic of Iran's obligations under Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

Many groups within society, including women, ethnic and religious minorities and LGBTIQ individuals are discriminated against and are not able to freely express themselves. A vaguely-worded dress code imposed upon the population violates

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<sup>1</sup> <http://muftah.org/iranian-president-speaks-artistic-freedom/#.V6RvDfkrLvg>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/04/alarming-surge-in-recorded-executions-sees-highest-toll-in-more-than-25-years/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pen-international.org/05/2016/letter-from-imprisoned-iranian-journalist-narges-mohammadi-to-the-pen-membership/>

individuals right to express themselves, with those who are deemed not comply with the code facing prosecution for 'bad dressing'.

**The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 82nd World Congress in Ourense, Galicia (Spain), 26th September to 2nd October 2016, calls on the Islamic Republic of Iran to:**

- Overturn the death sentences imposed on Arzhang Davoodi and Hesamaddin Farzizadeh and release them immediately and unconditionally, along with all other writers, including journalists, bloggers, songwriters and filmmakers, who are held solely in connection with the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression;
- Abolish all forms of censorship and allow the free dissemination of information in line with international human rights standards;
- End the practice of prolonged solitary confinement and other forms of torture and other ill-treatment, in accordance with Iran's international human rights obligations;
- Sign and ratify the Convention Against Torture without reservations;
- End the repression of and discrimination against ethnic minorities, including by allowing them to express themselves freely in the language of their choice, both orally and in writing and to have their culture valued, and their literature promoted and distributed, including by facilitating mother-tongue education where appropriate;
- Ensure that the right to freedom of expression in Iran is fully respected in law and practice as provided for under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.