



## RESOLUTION ON THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to violate its obligations under international human rights law, mainly through restricting the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Many reports issued by international organizations working on freedom of expression and other human rights topics have shown the alarming nature of the situation in Iran<sup>1</sup>. The Iranian government has continued its policy of silencing voices of dissent. It continues to enforce the death penalty including carrying out executions on minors. Women, LGBTQI individuals, disabled people and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities are severely discriminated against and subjected to a variety of human rights violations<sup>2</sup>. People can't freely express themselves or peacefully assemble<sup>3</sup> to promote their rights. Many Baha'i leaders, among them writers such as Mahvash Sabet, have been arbitrarily detained and harassed due to their beliefs and religious affiliations<sup>4</sup>. There was also repression of a series of protests across Iran, which started on 28 December 2017, in contravention of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly<sup>5</sup>.

PEN International has been campaigning on behalf of many writers arrested under charges related to freedom of expression, including:

- Author and poet Dr. Sedigheh Vasmaghi who was held in Evin prison from 22 October to 4 November 2017. She was brought for interrogation after her return from Sweden. Vasmaghi, such as many other activists, was brought before Branch 28 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, which is responsible for protecting the Iranian political regime. The judge mentioned Vasmaghi's opposition to the practice of stoning, which is a method of capital punishment for those found guilty of adultery<sup>6</sup>.
- Poet Mohammad Bamm was arrested by members of the Iranian security forces on 31 December 2017 before being subjected to a period of enforced disappearance during which he was tortured. For the first 28 days, Bamm was held in solitary confinement in Ahvaz Prison

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, the Committee to Protect Journalists, *On the table: Why now is the time to sway Rouhani to meet his promises for press freedom in Iran*, 24 May 24, 2018, 24 p, available on : [https://cpj.org/reports/cpi\\_iran\\_web.pdf](https://cpj.org/reports/cpi_iran_web.pdf) and Human Rights Watch's World Report 2018 on Iran: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/iran>

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, Iran: Three Child Offenders Executed, 7 February 2018, available on: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/07/iran-three-child-offenders-executed>

<sup>3</sup> See PEN International statement on Iran: <https://pen-international.org/news/freedom-of-expression-during-protests-should-be-respected>

<sup>4</sup> See PEN International, *Iran: PEN welcomes release of poet Mahvash Sabet after more than a decade in prison*, 21 September 2017, available on: <http://pen-international.org/news/iran-pen-welcomes-release-of-poet-mahvash-sabet-after-more-than-a-decade-in-prison>

<sup>5</sup> See PEN International, Iran: Freedom of expression during protests should be respected, 5 January 2018, available on: <https://pen-international.org/news/freedom-of-expression-during-protests-should-be-respected>

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see PEN International, Iran: writer and poet arrested upon return to Iran, 2 November 2017, available on : <http://pen-international.org/news/iran-writer-and-poet-arrested-upon-return-to-iran>

before being transferred to the public section of the prison. He was denied access to his lawyer or his family. Bamm was only released on bail 19 March 2018. Bamm has been accused of causing harm to public order and security, participating in the leadership of illegal demonstrations and inciting people to take part in them, and insulting the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Access to information continues to be severely restricted. Censorship applies in all aspects of political, social and cultural life<sup>7</sup>. On 25 May 2018, agents of the Iranian security forces raided the venue for the ceremony of the Iranian Writers' Association and prevented the 50th anniversary of the conference. The ceremony was scheduled to take place at a private house in Tehran as the authorities do not allow the Iranian Writers' Association to hold public meetings.

Iranian activists face prosecution under vaguely-worded and overbroad provisions within the penal code, which includes charges such as '*Moharebeh*' (waging war against God) and 'spreading corruption on Earth', often used to arrest and detain writers, and political actors expressing their views through peaceful means. Consequently, an increasing number of writers have been forced into isolation or have inevitably turned to exile, in fear of detention, torture and violent persecution by state institutions. Many publishers and bookstores have changed their jobs or functions because of threats, censorship and imprisonment.

#### **The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International urges the Iranian government to:**

- Release all writers, journalists and bloggers who are are detained for peacefully exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression;
- Abolish all forms of censorship and guarantee the right to freedom of expression according to international human rights law;
- Repeal or amend all laws that violate Iran's obligations under international law
- Abolish the death penalty and put an end to torture and other inhuman treatment, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances;
- Guarantee gender equality and abolish laws and policies which discriminate against women;
- Respect the rights of LGBTQI people and ethnic and religious minorities. Stop repression and discrimination against minority groups and allow them to express themselves freely - including by using their mother tongue, promoting their cultural values and disseminating their literature;
- Sign and ratify without reservations the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

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<sup>7</sup> See Human Rights Watch, Iran: Assault on Access to Information, 2 May 2018, available on: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/02/iran-assault-access-information> See also Freedom of expression during protests should be respected, *op. cit.*