



DEBATE PACK

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Human Rights in Iran

Westminster Hall

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1.1 Introduction

Many observers hoped that the combination of the Rouhani government in Iran and the successful conclusion of the deal on Iran's nuclear programme would lead to a warming of Iranian relations with Western countries and an improvement in the human rights situation inside Iran. While there has been some limited progress on matters such as investment by Western companies, no political transformation has taken place in the country. Hard-line factions in the judiciary and the intelligence and security forces, resentful at having failed to prevent the nuclear deal, are using all the levers at their disposal to maximise their influence. That means fighting against any loosening of political and religious repression.

1.2 Judicial process and the death penalty

Far from slowing down on executions after the election of a moderate government, Iran is reported to have accelerated. [According to Amnesty International](#), the authorities executed nearly 700 people between 1 January and 15 July 2015. Departing from usual practice, the executions did not even stop in the month of Ramadan. Amnesty drew attention to the judicial process in Iran, which it said is not impartial:

... death sentences in Iran are particularly disturbing because they are invariably imposed by courts that are completely lacking in independence and impartiality. They are imposed either for vaguely worded or overly broad offences, or acts that should not be criminalized at all, let alone attract the death penalty. Trials in Iran are deeply flawed, detainees are often denied access to lawyers in the investigative stage, and there are inadequate procedures for appeal, pardon and commutation.

Detainees are often subjected to torture, [according to Human Rights Watch](#).

1.3 Freedom of speech

Broad national security offences are often used against journalists to silence them in Iran, and the country remains one of the most repressive to journalists in the world: 169th out of 180, according to the [NGO Reporters without Borders](#). Four bloggers and three journalists were imprisoned in 2016. Kurdish reporters and others from minority groups that the Iranian authorities find challenging are the most likely to face arbitrary arrest and detention.

Human rights lawyers are also vulnerable to arrest and increasingly harsh prison sentences. Free trade unions are also banned.

1.4 Women

Women are subjected to various forms of discrimination and the authorities do not do enough to prevent violence – there is no law against domestic violence, for example. The legal age for marriage is 13 for a girl, although girls even younger can be married even younger than this if their father or grandfather decides and is given court

clearance. In one year there were more than 40,000 marriage registrations where the girl was aged between 10 and 14 years, [Human Rights Watch reported](#).

1.5 Iranian government

The Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif [denied](#) in 2015 that people were jailed for their opinions in Iran:

We do not jail people for their opinions. The government has a plan to improve [and] enhance human rights in the country, as every government should. And I believe we have an obligation as a government to our own people to do that. But people who commit crimes, who violate the laws of the country, cannot hide behind being a journalist or being a political activist. People have to observe the law.

1.6 UK government

The UK government says that it is working hard to improve the human rights situation in Iran. It summarised its actions in the [2015 Human Rights and Democracy report](#):

The UK continues to lead international efforts to encourage Iran to improve its human rights record. We continue to raise individual cases with the Iranian government, in addition to concerning trends such as the increase in use of the death penalty, juvenile executions, and continued persecution of religious minorities. The UK has also helped to maintain the listing of over 70 individuals under the Iran human rights sanctions regime.

The UK helped secure adoption of the UN General Assembly Third Committee Resolution on the human rights situation in Iran. The UK co-sponsored the Canadian-led resolution, assisting in drafting and agreeing the text. The resolution was passed by 76 votes.

FCO Human Rights and Democracy Programme projects supporting HRDs [human rights defenders] and creating platforms to support freedom of expression helped strengthen the foundations for change in country. We welcome the renewal of the mandate for the UN Special Rapporteur in Iran [Ahmed Shaheed]. We will continue to support this mandate and hope that Iran uses the opportunity to engage with the UN.

2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of recent press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

The Hill

[Happiness is still ground for punishment in Iran](#)

Mark Williams

17 June 2016

Mail Online

[Iranian authorities suspend their national goalkeeper for six months for 'wearing SpongeBob SquarePants trousers'](#)

Cameron Phelps

9 June 2016

The Independent

[Iranian students get 99 lashes for attending mixed graduation party](#)

Caroline Mortimer

27 May 2016

Freedom House

[For Iran's Hard-Liners, Contact with Baha'is Means Guilt by Association](#)

Bret Nelson

26 May 2016

International Business Times

[Man to be blinded by having acid poured into his eyes after committing crime in Iran](#)

Harriet Sinclair

5 May 2016

Christian Post

[Iran Religious Persecution Increasing Despite Nuclear Deal, USCIRF Reports](#)

Stoyan Zaimov

4 May 2016

The Economist

[Human rights in Iran are still atrocious](#)

24 March 2016

The Guardian

[Iran: seven key human rights challenges facing President Rouhani](#)

Saeed Kamali Dehghan

4 March 2016

The Guardian

Tehran court jails three Iranian journalists for spreading propaganda

Saeed Kamali Dehghan

27 April 2016

International Business Times

Iran: UK politicians demand harder line on country's human rights record

Harriet Sinclair

12 February 2016

Foreign Policy

Every Man in an Iranian Village Was Executed for Drug Offenses

Siobhán O'Grady

26 February 2016

3. Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Islamic Republic of Iran - in-year update December 2015

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

21 April 2016

There was little change in the human rights situation in Iran between July and December 2015. In some respects, the situation has worsened, despite President Rouhani pledging to improve the rights and freedoms of the citizens of Iran when he was elected.

Iran's use of the death penalty continued to be a serious concern. There were an estimated 966 executions in 2015, the highest number of executions in over 10 years. Iran continues to use the death penalty for juvenile offenders, in direct contradiction to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Iran is a signatory. Iran also routinely uses the death penalty for crimes not internationally recognised as "most serious", for example drugs-related offences.

In December, a bill was presented to the Iranian parliament that, if approved, would reduce the punishment for non-violent drug-related crimes from death to life imprisonment. This is a promising development and has been welcomed by human rights organisations around the world. According to reports, approximately 65% of executions in Iran in 2015 were for drug-related offences; if the proposed bill is approved, this could significantly reduce the number of executions in Iran.

On freedom of expression, the crackdown on use of social media came to a head in November when the cyber unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) arrested over 170 individuals, accusing them of publishing "obscene" content on instant-messaging mobile apps. Reports of some of the arrests cited "facilitating users' access to obscene content via groups on mobile networks, publishing obscene Iranian and foreign content in text and visual format, encouraging people to commit offences, and publishing texts that insulted national figures".

Despite this attempt to control the social media activities of Iranian citizens, in October President Rouhani told a meeting of the Supreme Council of Virtual Space that "facilitating public access to virtual space and social media should be a priority, even as we resist the misuse of this information exchange". Intelligence Minister, Mahmud Alavi, also reportedly warned against violating people's privacy while speaking at a conference in Tehran. He said "We have no right to stick our noses into peoples' private life". He also reportedly underlined the importance of security in society, and said that, in the pursuit of security and progress, the intelligence apparatus should not sacrifice either.

Iranian authorities continue to arrest and detain human rights defenders and political prisoners by the hundreds; many on vague political charges such as "propaganda against the regime".

There continue to be grave concerns over access to, and the independence of, lawyers in Iran. Article 48 of the revised Code of Criminal Procedures (effective as of June 2015) formally provides defendants the right to request “the presence of a lawyer at the onset of detention”. However, a note to Article 48 allows for exceptions. For example, if the accused is detained on suspicion of committing offences such as organised crime or crimes against national security (of which human rights activists are frequently convicted), they may be prohibited from accessing a lawyer for up to a week after arrest.

In October 2015, Siamak Namazi, a United States-Iranian dual national who was visiting his family was arrested in Iran. During his arrest Namazi’s family home was allegedly ransacked, property confiscated, and Namazi taken to Evin prison. To date, government authorities have failed to provide any public information regarding the reason for and circumstances of Namazi’s arrest. In early 2016, it was reported that Namazi’s 80-year-old father had also been arrested without charge.

Women do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men in Iran, and 2015 saw a number of debates between various factions of the regime about the rights of women.

In November, leading Iranian actress Sadaf Taherian fled to the United Arab Emirates after facing harsh criticism for sharing her photos on social media without wearing the traditional Islamic hijab. Iranian regime officials have reportedly described Taherian as “mentally unbalanced”, calling her an “offender” against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Meanwhile, the Iranian Ministry of Culture has banned her from acting, demanding she “repent”. The debate on Islamic dress continues, with clear divides between different elements of the regime.

Two proposed Bills which were making their way through the Iranian Parliament in 2015 caused outrage both inside and outside Iran. Human rights groups said the Bills would set Iranian women back decades and reduce them to “baby-making machines”. The Bills had been drafted after the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, described family planning as an imitation of Western lifestyles, and requested that Iran’s population be doubled.

The Bill to Increase Fertility Rates and Prevent Population Decline aims to ban all surgeries intended for permanent contraception, except in cases where there are threats to physical health. The Bill would also decrease funding for birth control programmes which provide subsidies for modern contraceptives.

In November, the Iranian Parliament voted in favour of the Comprehensive Population and Family Excellence Plan. This Bill instructs “all private and public entities to prioritise, in sequence, men with children, married men without children and married women with children when hiring for certain jobs”. The Bill would also tighten divorce laws, which are already heavily in favour of men, and aims to reform divorce law so that establishing peace between couples takes precedence over divorce, even suggesting that the judiciary grants

“bonuses to judges in divorce cases that lead to peace [reconciliation] between the married couple”.

2015 also saw Iran appoint its first female ambassador abroad since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. In November, Marzieh Afkham, former spokeswoman to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, took up her posting as Ambassador to Malaysia.

The Iranian Constitution formally recognises three religions other than Islam: Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Minority religions, and even non-Shi'a Muslims, face persecution and harassment in Iran. Followers of non-recognised religions, such as the Baha'i faith, are persecuted particularly severely. On 15 November, 20 Baha'is were reportedly arrested across Iran, and 23 businesses belonging to Baha'is were shut down. As of the end of December, over 80 Baha'is were reportedly detained for the peaceful practice of their faith.

On prison conditions, reports emerged in August that prisoners at the new detention facility in Tehran faced “dreadful” conditions, including sexual harassment, violence and lack of primary facilities. According to reports on the Kaleme website, the prison, which is due to take in all prisoners from Tehran Province in the near future, is notorious for “prevalent distribution of narcotics, activities of organised gangs, sexual harassment of young detainees and extortion of newcomers”. Monthly inspections of prison sections are carried out with “extreme violence”, with guards beating the inmates with batons and breaking their personal belongings. Prisoners often have no access to fresh air and sunlight, and experience adverse hygienic conditions, according to the reports.

Iran - Human Rights Priority Country
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
21 April 2016

2015 saw the welcome engagement of Iran with the rules-based international system, reaching a potentially historic agreement that will impose strict limits and inspections on Iran's nuclear programme. However, Iran's human rights record continued to cause great concern. President Rouhani pledged to improve the rights and freedoms of the citizens of Iran when he was elected in 2013. He also promised reforms on discrimination against women and members of ethnic minorities, and on greater space for freedom of expression and opinion. However, there has been little evidence of positive change.

In some cases, the situation in Iran appears to have worsened. The high number of executions is of particular concern. The UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran believes that between 966 and 1,025 people were executed in Iran in 2015, a substantial increase on 2014 and the highest number in over a decade. The majority of those executed were convicted of drug-related offences. The majority of newspapers, TV and radio are government-controlled, and the internet and social media sites are heavily restricted. Journalists, bloggers and

human rights activists are regularly arrested and detained. In November, over 170 individuals were arrested for messages they published on social media apps.

Women do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men in Iran and continue to face discrimination. For example, married women need the consent of their husbands to leave the country and can be banned from travelling abroad if their spouses do not sign the paperwork needed to obtain or renew a passport. In September, one of Iran's best female football players, Niloufar Ardalan, was refused permission by her husband to travel to Malaysia for a tournament.

While some religious minorities are formally protected in the constitution, the reality is that many non-Muslims face discrimination and attempts by Muslims to change their faith may lead to criminal prosecution. For example, there are regular reports of the arrest of members of Christian "house churches" and in 2015 a number of Baha'i-owned businesses were reportedly closed by the authorities for observing non-sanctioned holy days.

The UK continues to lead international efforts to encourage Iran to improve its human rights record. We continue to raise individual cases with the Iranian government, in addition to concerning trends such as the increase in use of the death penalty, juvenile executions, and continued persecution of religious minorities. The UK has also helped to maintain the listing of over 70 individuals under the Iran human rights sanctions regime.

The UK helped secure adoption of the UN General Assembly Third Committee Resolution on the human rights situation in Iran. The UK co-sponsored the Canadian-led resolution, assisting in drafting and agreeing the text. The resolution was passed by 76 votes.

FCO Human Rights and Democracy Programme projects supporting HRDs and creating platforms to support freedom of expression helped strengthen the foundations for change in country. We welcome the renewal of the mandate for the UN Special Rapporteur in Iran. We will continue to support this mandate and hope that Iran uses the opportunity to engage with the UN.

4. PQs

Iran: Human Rights **14 Jun 2016 | 39592**

Asked by: Margaret Ritchie

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Iranian counterpart on the protection of Iranian human rights activists in that country.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We repeatedly call on the Iranian Government to guarantee the human rights of all Iranians and will continue to do so. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond) most recently raised the issue with Foreign Minister Zarif when they met on 17 May.

Iran: Human Rights **08 Jun 2016 | 39446**

Tabled by: Martyn Day

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterparts in the Iranian government on violations of human rights through executions, torture and arbitrary arrests in that country.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK regularly raises our human rights concerns with the Iranian authorities, both in London and Tehran, and will continue to do so. Iran's human rights record remains a serious cause for concern, particularly its use of the death penalty, torture, treatment of prisoners (including appropriate access to medical care) and restrictions on the freedom of religion and belief. We continue to urge Iran to abide by its international commitments to ensure all Iranians enjoy the rights and freedoms they are entitled to.

Iran: Capital Punishment **02 Jun 2016 | HL224**

Asked by: Lord Maginnis of Drumglass

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Iranians have been executed since the visit of the Foreign Secretary to Iran and the re-opening of the UK embassy in Tehran last year, and what assessment they have made of whether that figure indicates any improvement in the human rights position of Iranian citizens.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran believes that between 966 and 1,025 people were executed in 2015. The UK repeatedly calls on Iran to bring an end to the use of the death penalty.

Iran: Baha'i Faith**02 Jun 2016 | 38149****Asked by: George Howarth**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to the government of Iran on the imprisonment in 2008 of seven Bahá'í leaders in that country.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK regularly raises our concerns at the treatment of the Baha'í community in Iran. We call on the Iranian Government to end all persecution of individuals on the basis of their faith and to fulfil its international and domestic obligations to allow freedom of religion to all Iranians.

Iran: Human Rights**02 Jun 2016 | 38148****Asked by: Charlotte Leslie**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the human rights situation in Iran.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The human rights situation in Iran continues to cause great concern, in particular its use of the death penalty and the restrictions on freedom of expression and belief. Although President Rouhani pledged to improve the rights and freedoms of the citizens of Iran when he was elected, we are yet to see concrete improvements.

Iran: Baha'i Faith**26 May 2016 | 37315****Asked by: Gavin Shuker**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department has made representations to the Iranian government on the imprisonment of seven Bahá'í leaders.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK regularly raises our concerns at the treatment of the Baha'í community in Iran. We call on Iran to cease harassment of all religious minorities and to fulfil its international and domestic obligations to allow freedom of religion to all Iranians.

Iran: Christianity**26 May 2016 | 37156****Asked by: Gavin Shuker**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Iranian government on the imprisonment of Ebrahim Firouzi and other Christians in that country.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I discuss many issues with my Iranian counterpart. Restriction of freedom of expression, religion and belief continue to cause concern. I have repeatedly called on the Iranian government to end all persecution of individuals on the basis of their faith, and to guarantee the human rights of all Iranians, regardless of belief

**Iran: Baha'i Faith
23 May 2016 | 37291**

Asked by: Mark Durkan

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department has made representations to the Iranian government on the continued detention of seven Bahá'í leaders.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK regularly raises our concerns at the treatment of the Baha'i community in Iran. We call on Iran to cease harassment of all religious minorities and to fulfil its international and domestic obligations to allow freedom of religion to all Iranians.

**Business of the House
21 Apr 2016 | 608 c1073**

Asked by: Jim Shannon

Before Christmas, this House debated and agreed a nuclear agreement with Iran. One of the conditions was that human rights, including religious freedom, would be preserved and protected. In January 2016 a revolutionary court in Golestan province in Iran reportedly sentenced 24 Baha'is to a total of 183 years in prison in connection with the peaceful exercise of their faith. Another 80 Baha'is were reportedly detained on 31 December 2015. The Government said that followers of the Baha'i cult enjoy citizens' rights pursuant to the country's laws, and that allegations presented to the contrary in the report were baseless. Clearly, that is not the case. May we have a statement or a debate on the subject?

Answering member: Chris Grayling | Leader of the House

It was the view of the Government that it would be better for us to engage with Iran to try and address the nuclear issue, but by engaging we can also try and influence Iran on human rights matters. Of course there are human rights concerns, and of course the Foreign Office and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would always raise concerns on human rights matters with countries where such concerns existed, but I think the Government are right to say that we are better to engage than stand away from Iran, in the hope that we can influence improvement there.

Gulf States: Human Rights

07 Mar 2016 | HL6357

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last raised the issue of human rights with the governments of (1) Saudi Arabia, and (2) Iran.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We regularly raise our concerns over human rights in Saudi Arabia with the Saudi Arabian government, and did so most recently on 22 February. We repeatedly call on the Iranian government to guarantee the human rights of all Iranians and will continue to do so. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), most recently raised the issue with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif when he visited the UK on 5 February.

Iran and Pakistan: Drugs

09 Feb 2016 | 25121

Asked by: Diane Abbott

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information she holds on the number of drug traffickers who have been sentenced to death in (a) Iran and (b) Pakistan following conviction resulting from counter-narcotics activities supported by the UK in those countries.

Answering member: Karen Bradley | Home Office

The Government provides counter-narcotics assistance to a range of international partners, including Pakistan. The Government does not provide counter-narcotics assistance to Iran. There is no evidence to suggest that any drug traffickers have been sentenced to death in Pakistan where the conviction has resulted from counter-narcotics activities supported by the UK government.

All our work is the subject of comprehensive and ongoing assessments of human rights risks, in line with Overseas Security & Justice Assistance (OSJA) guidance. This helps ensure that counter-narcotics assistance provided to countries which retain the death penalty is congruent with UK human rights principles. The Government strongly opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. UK Ministers have and will continue to urge countries, including Iran and Pakistan, to repeal the death penalty and take action to ensure human rights are safeguarded.

Iran: Religious Freedom

05 Feb 2016 | 25470

Asked by: Gregory Campbell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will discuss freedom of religion with his Iranian counterpart.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I discuss many issues with my Iranian counterparts. I have repeatedly called on the Iranian Government to end all persecution of individuals on the basis of their faith, and to guarantee the human rights of all Iranians, regardless of belief, and I will continue to do so.

**Iran: Capital Punishment
05 Feb 2016 | 24561**

Asked by: Martyn Day

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will urge the Iranian authorities to commute immediately the death sentences of the juvenile offenders identified in the report, *Growing up on death row: the death penalty and juvenile offenders in Iran*, published by Amnesty International on 26 January 2010.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have made clear to Iran, as we do with all countries, our opposition to the use of the death penalty in all circumstances, and will continue to urge them to put an immediate moratorium on their use of the death penalty, whether for juvenile or adult offenders.

**Saudi Arabia: Executions
01 Feb 2016 | 768 c1580**

Asked by: Lord Elton

My Lords, the Minister said that we deplore executions for political reasons in all countries. Have our representations been equally private and powerful with Iran?

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

My Lords, of course, our diplomatic relationship with Iran has only recently resumed, and it is important that we are able to nurture it. Iran will be under no misunderstanding about the strength of opinion of the British Government—indeed, of all British Governments in recent decades—that the death penalty is wrong in principle, wrong in practice and can undermine a successful society.

**Iran: Baha'i Faith
07 Jan 2016 | 20714**

Asked by: Mike Kane

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of protection of the civil and economic rights of the Bahá'í community in Iran; and what representations have been made to him on the violation of that community's human rights in that country.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The treatment of Baha'is remains of serious concern. We have repeatedly expressed our concern at the harassment faced by Baha'is in Iran, including the sentencing of seven Baha'i leaders to 20 years in prison. We continue to urge the Iranian Government to ensure that all Iranian citizens are able to practise their faith freely, as required by international conventions. I met with an Interfaith Delegation on freedom of religion or belief in Iran on 1 December, during which representations were made to him on the plight of the Baha'i community in Iran.

5. Other Parliamentary material

Statements

Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015

Philip Hammond

21 Apr 2016 | HCWS684

I have today laid before Parliament a copy of the 2015 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report on Human Rights and Democracy (CM 9245).

The report focuses on significant human rights country and policy developments overseas in 2015. It sets out how the Government's three human rights themes (democratic values and the rule of law; strengthening the rules-based international system; and human rights for a stable world) operate in practice, and includes reports on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's 30 Human Rights Priority Countries: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Libya, Maldives, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

We have also published today the July-December 2015 updates on our previous 27 priority countries online (www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2015/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2014#chapter-iv-human-rights-priority-countries).

The full report can be read at www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2015.

Debates

Iran (UK Foreign Policy)

06 Nov 2014 | 587 cc995-1039

Iran (Joint Plan of Action)

26 Feb 2014 | 576 cc134-158WH

Human Rights: Iran

16 Jan 2013 | 556 cc990-998

Baha'i Community (Iran)

24 Oct 2012 | 551 cc308-318WH

Iran (Human Rights)

11 Jan 2012 | 538 c109-31WH

Early Day Motions

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

EDM 1410 (session 2015-16)

Jim Shannon

26 April 2016

That this House has considered the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; and expresses its concern at the continuing systematic discrimination, harassment and targeting of Bahá'ís and Christians in that country.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DEATH PENALTY REPORT

EDM 1347 (session 2015-16)

Greg Mulholland

11 April 2016

That this House notes the publishing of Amnesty International's annual review on the death penalty; celebrates the decline in death sentences recorded in 2015, which dropped from at least 2,466 in 2014 to at least 1,998 in 2015; is however deeply concerned that at least 1,634 people were executed in 2015, a rise of 54 per cent from 2014 and the highest number Amnesty International has recorded in 25 years; further notes the report states the actual number is likely to be much higher, as it does not include China, where the extent of the use of the death penalty is a state secret; notes that Belarus, the only European country to use the death penalty, and Vietnam, also provide no data and that little or no information was available in countries such as Syria and Yemen; recognises that excluding China, almost 90 per cent of all executions took place in only three countries, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia; further recognises that at least nine people who were executed in 2015 were under the age of 18 when sentenced to death; notes that during 2015 25 countries, around one in 10 of all countries are known to have carried out execution, and this is an increase from 22 in 2014; and calls on the Government to act decisively to end the death penalty globally, working with international organisations like Amnesty International and our partner nations to end this barbaric practice.

UK FOREIGN POLICY ON THE DEATH PENALTY

EDM 1087 (session 2015-16)

Stuart McDonald

8 February 2016

That this House reiterates its opposition to the use of the death penalty under any circumstances; notes with concern the Government's recent decision to abandon its death penalty strategy at a time when

executions in countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have hit record numbers; further notes with deep concern the recent report by the Reprieve campaign which states that Saudi Arabia executed 157 people in 2015 and killed 47 prisoners in just one day on 2 January 2016; notes with concern Reprieve's statement that Pakistan executed 325 people since lifting a moratorium on the death penalty in 2014, and that Iran executed nearly 1,000 people in 2015 where at least 600 of those hanged were convicted of drugs offences, understood to be the highest total for 16 years; and calls on the Government to continue to oppose the use of the death penalty in all circumstances, to reinstate its death penalty strategy, to make it a formal objective of UK foreign policy to seek the global abolition of capital punishment, and to make high level and specific diplomatic representations in relation to all death sentences that violate the particular principles of international law.

6. Further reading

[Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015](#), Foreign and Commonwealth Office, April 2016

US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015: [Iran](#)

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2016: [Iran chapter](#)

Amnesty International Annual Report 2015/16: [Iran](#)

Human Rights Watch World Report 2015: [Iran](#)

[Growing up on death row: the death penalty and juvenile offenders in Iran](#), *Amnesty International*, 2016

[Annual Report on the death penalty in Iran 2015](#), *Iran Human Rights*, March 2016

[Speech by Dr Matthew Offord at UK lawmakers meeting with Maryam Rajavi](#), Iranian opposition leader, Published on 13 Feb 2016

[Government response to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Report: UK policy towards Iran](#), Cm 8920, 12 September 2014

[UK policy towards Iran](#), Third Report of Session 2014–15, Foreign Affairs Committee, HC 457, 14 July 2014

[National Council of Resistance of Iran](#)

[People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran](#)

[International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran](#)

[Iran Human Rights](#)

[Iran Liberty](#)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group for Iran](#)

[All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group](#)

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