



## DEBATE PACK

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# Human Rights in Iran

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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. Summary

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.

## **Judicial process and the death penalty**

The huge amount of executions in Iran continues to cause concern. According to [Amnesty International](#), the authorities executed 567 people in 2016, and an article by [Iran Human Rights](#) says that one execution was carried out every four hours from July this year. 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](#).

## **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: 165<sup>th</sup> 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 with increasingly harsh prison sentences. Free trade unions are also banned.

### **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 can be married at an earlier age 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](#).

### **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.

### **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 [2016 Human Rights and Democracy report](#):

The UK has consistently pressed Iran to improve its human rights record, both through bilateral engagement and with our international partners, including through the UN and the EU. In 2016, we strongly supported the renewal of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur. In December, we welcomed the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Resolution on Human Rights in Iran. The UK lobbied hard for global support and the Resolution passed with an increased number of positive votes.

In 2017, we will continue to engage with our international partners to hold Iran to account for its human rights record. In particular we look forward to working with the new UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran, Asma Jahangir, and call on Iran to allow her access to the country. We will also support the upcoming EU/Iran dialogue on human rights.

## 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.

**[This is what Trump should do about Iran at his first UN General Assembly meeting](#)**

Independent  
Peyvand Khorsandi  
18 September 2017

**[New Light On Iran's Human Rights Violations](#)**

Forbes  
Heshmat Alavi  
04 September 2017

**[Thousands of voters take to the streets of Tehran to celebrate landslide re-election of Iran's President Hassan Rouhani in a huge victory for reformists](#)**

Daily Mail  
Simon Holmes  
20 May 2017

**[Why Trump should focus on Iran's human rights abuses](#)**

Washington Examiner  
Amir Basiri  
02 May 2017

**[Iranian man sentenced to death for 'insulting Islam' through messaging app](#)**

Independent  
Rachel Roberts  
30 March 2017

**[EU urged to clarify if states are funding mass executions in Iran](#)**

Independent  
Alexandra Sims  
04 December 2016

**[Iranian musician hospitalised after one-month hunger strike](#)**

Guardian  
Saeed Kamali Dehghan  
01 December 2016

**[Silencing of journalist draws huge backlash from Iranian public](#)**

Guardian  
Saeed Kamali Dehghan  
04 November 2016

**[Iranian writer faces six years in prison for unpublished novel on stoning](#)**

Independent  
Bethan McKernan  
06 October 2016

**[Ban Ki-moon troubled by lack of progress on human rights in Iran](#)**

Guardian  
Saeed Kamali Dehghan  
04 October 2016

**[Iran offers human rights dialog with Europe](#)**

Press TV.com  
04 August 2016

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

Guardian  
Saeed Kamali Dehghan  
04 March 2016

## 3. Press Releases

### [Letter to UK Ambassador to Iran calls for jailed Britons' cases to be raised this week](#)

#### **Amnesty International UK**

**02 October 2017**

Letter to Nicholas Hopton comes ahead of major Europe-Iran business meeting in Zurich.

Mr Hopton urged to call for Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Kamal Foroughi's release.

Amnesty International and REDRESS have written to the UK's Ambassador to Iran, Nicholas Hopton, urging him to press for the release of two Britons jailed in Iran.

The [letter](#), ahead of a major Europe-Iran business conference in Zurich tomorrow (3 October), calls on Mr Hopton to use meetings with Iranian officials at the event to seek the release of the imprisoned charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and the businessman Kamal Foroughi (see case information below).

The Zurich gathering, the Europe-Iran Forum, bills itself as an "Unparalleled Project in 'Business Diplomacy'", and Amnesty and REDRESS' letter notes that while diplomatic and business ties between EU countries (including the UK) and Iran have recently improved, there has been no movement on the matter of unfairly jailed EU-Iranian dual-nationals.

The letter "strongly urges" Mr Hopton to use the Zurich event to call for the "immediate release" of Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Mr Foroughi, and, pending their release, "secure consular access to them". The letter says:

"It has now been over one year since diplomatic relations with Iran have been fully restored, and six-and-a-half years since Mr Foroughi was first detained, yet Iran continues to deny UK officials access to UK nationals detained in Iran."

Adopting a hardline policy of refusing to recognise dual-nationality, the Iranian authorities have repeatedly refused to allow UK officials access to either Zaghari-Ratcliffe or Foroughi.

Kate Allen, Amnesty International UK's Director, said:

"While diplomatic and business ties between the UK and Iran are steadily being restored, Nazanin and Kamal are still languishing in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. The UK could and should be doing more to secure the release of Nazanin and Kamal, and we strongly urge Nicholas Hopton to use his time at Zurich to raise their cases with Iranian officials."

Carla Ferstman, REDRESS Director, said:

“Business as usual without guarantees for basic human rights won’t help bring Nazanin and Kamal home. Their continued arbitrary detention taints any efforts to improve business relations with Iran.”

### **The two cases**

Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested at Tehran airport in April 2016 prior to boarding a plane back to Britain following a family visit to Iran. After being detained for over five months, initially in solitary confinement, Zaghari-Ratcliffe was subjected to an unfair trial and sentenced to five years in prison after being convicted of “membership of an illegal group”. The charges appear to relate to her employment at Thompson Reuters Foundation, a charity organisation, as well as her past work as an administrative assistant on a BBC Media Action project to train young journalists. Amnesty believes Zaghari-Ratcliffe is a prisoner of conscience and is calling on the Iranian authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally.

Meanwhile Kamal Foroughi, also a UK-Iranian national, is an oil and gas company consultant who has already spent over six years in jail in Iran. Mr Foroughi was sentenced to seven years after being convicted of “espionage” following an unfair trial. Under Iran’s own laws, Foroughi has been eligible for release for the past three-and-a-half years, though he continues to be held without an official explanation.

In both cases there are very serious health concerns, with the families of both prisoners repeatedly expressing fears that their relatives are being denied urgently-needed specialised medical treatment. Meanwhile, relatives have been allowed very little contact with their loved ones.

### **The UK Government’s role**

Prime Minister Theresa May (and her predecessor David Cameron) have reportedly raised the two cases with the Iranian president Hassan Rouhani, while UK ministers are also said to have highlighted them with their Iranian counterparts. While the UK Government has formally called for Foroughi’s release on humanitarian grounds, it has yet to publicly call for the release of Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

## **[Iran: execution of juvenile offender denounced as 'shameful act'](#)**

### **Amnesty International UK**

**02 October 2017**

Alireza Tajiki was 15 when arrested and only 16 when sentenced to death, contrary to international law.

Fourth juvenile offender execution in Iran this year, while at least 88 juvenile offenders remain on death row.

Country is second only to China in number of executions it carries out.

Following today's execution in Iran of Alireza Tajiki, a young man who was arrested, convicted and sentenced to death as a child, Magdalena Mughrabi, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director, said:

"This shameful act marks a critical turning point for Iran, and exposes the hollowness of the authorities' claims to have a genuine juvenile justice system.

"By going ahead with this execution in defiance of their obligations under international law, and despite huge public and international opposition, the Iranian authorities have again cruelly demonstrated their complete disdain for children's rights.

"Alireza Tajiki is the fourth person executed in Iran this year who was arrested as a child. His execution, which was carried out despite his allegations that he was tortured into 'confessing', consolidates a horrendous pattern that has seen Iran repeatedly send people arrested as children to the gallows, often after deeply unfair trials."

Tajiki, who was 21 years old, was sentenced to death at the age of 16 in April 2013 after a criminal court convicted him of murder and male rape. He had been arrested at the age of 15. His trial was grossly unfair and relied primarily on "confessions" which Tajiki said were extracted through torture, including severe beatings, floggings, and suspension by his arms and feet.

Following his arrest in May 2012, Tajiki had been placed in solitary confinement for 15 days, without access to his family. He was denied access to a lawyer throughout the entire investigation process. He has said that during this period he was subjected to torture to "confess" to the crime. He later retracted the "confessions" both before the prosecution authorities and during his trial, and has since consistently maintained his innocence. However, his "confession" was admitted as evidence during proceedings against him.

Meanwhile, both the original court and Iran's Supreme Court relied on forensic opinions stating that Tajiki was "mature" at the age of 15 and therefore eligible to receive the death penalty.

Yesterday morning he was transferred to solitary confinement ahead of his execution in Adel Abad prison in the city of Shiraz in southern Iran. His family were told to go to the prison to make their final visit, though the authorities did not inform his legal representatives, contrary to Iran's own laws which require lawyers to be informed of their clients' scheduled execution at least 48 hours in advance.

At least 88 juvenile offenders remain on death row.

Iran is one of very few countries in the world to execute juvenile offenders. Last year, Amnesty published a report showing how "reforms" introduced by the Iranian authorities in 2013 were largely designed to deflect criticism of the country's record on such executions.

Since then, Iran has condemned dozens of young people to death for crimes committed when they were below 18.

Amnesty has identified the names of at least 88 individuals (other than Alireza Tajiki) on death row in Iran who were under the age of 18 when the crime for which they were convicted was committed.

In total, Iran carried out at least 567 executions last year - the [second highest of any country in the world](#). At least two of these were juvenile offenders, and at least eight were women. At least 33 executions were carried out in public.

### [Iran: 'vicious' crackdown on human rights activists under Rouhani - new report](#)

#### **Amnesty International UK**

**02 August 2017**

Activists given long jail sentences after trials lasting only 45 minutes

'Offences' include communicating with EU, UN and human rights organisations

'The international community, and in particular the EU, must not stay silent over the outrageous treatment of human rights defenders in Iran' - Philip Luther

The Iranian authorities have waged a "vicious" crackdown on human rights defenders since Hassan Rouhani became president, demonising and imprisoning activists who dare to stand up for people's rights, Amnesty International said in a new report today.

Over the past four years, Iran's judicial authorities have lowered the threshold for invoking vague and overly-broad "national security"-related charges and, at the same time, have sharply increased the length of prison sentences given to convicted human rights activists.

In a succession of cases, people have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms, sometimes exceeding a decade, for acts that should not even be considered crimes. These include contact with the EU and the UN, as well as with media outlets, international trade union associations and human rights groups based outside Iran - including Amnesty International. The activists are often labelled "foreign agents" and "traitors" by Iranian state media.

Amnesty's 94-page report, Caught in a web of repression: Iran's human rights defenders under attack, provides a comprehensive overview of the crackdown which has targeted activists from key battlegrounds for human rights in Iran. It highlights 45 cases, including anti-death penalty campaigners, women's rights activists, trade unionists, minority rights activists and human rights lawyers.

One of the most emblematic cases is that of critically-ill human rights activist Arash Sadeghi, who is serving a total of 19 years in prison for

“offences” that included communicating with Amnesty as well as sending information to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, and members of the European Parliament. Despite his critical condition, the authorities have repeatedly blocked his transfer to a hospital outside prison in reprisal for a hunger strike he staged last year in protest at the imprisonment of his wife, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, for writing a fictional story about stoning.

Meanwhile, prominent activist Narges Mohammadi, who led the Centre for Human Rights Defenders in Iran, is serving a 16-year prison sentence also in connection with her human rights work. The criminal case against her was opened in reprisal for a meeting she had with EU’s former foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, on International Women’s Day in 2014.

In another case, Raheleh Rahemipour, was sentenced to one year in prison after the UN requested information from the Iranian authorities about the enforced disappearance of her brother and niece during the 1980s. Meanwhile, trade unionists - including Esmail Abdi and Davoud Razavi - have also experienced harassment and imprisonment for being in contact with international organisations, including the International Labour Organisation. In yet another case, Alireza Farshi, a member of Iran’s Azerbaijani Turk minority, was given a 15-year prison sentence for “offences” that included writing a letter to UNESCO to hold an event commemorating International Mother Language Day.

Amnesty is calling on the EU, which announced plans to relaunch a bilateral human rights dialogue with Iran in 2016, to speak out in the strongest terms against the persecution of human rights defenders in the country.

Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Research and Advocacy Director, said:

“The international community, and in particular the EU, must not stay silent over the outrageous treatment of human rights defenders in Iran.

“Instead of appeasing Iranian officials, the EU should forcefully call for the immediate and unconditional release of all those jailed for their peaceful human rights activism and for an end to the misuse of the justice system to silence activists.

“It is a bitter irony that as the Iranian authorities boast about their increased engagement with the UN and the EU, particularly in the aftermath of the nuclear deal, human rights defenders who have made contact with these same institutions are being treated as criminals.

“Rather than propagating the dangerous myth that human rights defenders pose a threat to national security, the Iranian authorities should focus on addressing the legitimate concerns they raise. These are people who have risked everything to build a more

humane and just society - it is appalling that they are so viciously punished for their bravery.”

### **Grossly unfair 45-minute trials**

Human rights activists whose cases are featured in the report were invariably convicted after grossly unfair trials before Revolutionary Courts, where proceedings are often extremely brief. For example, anti-death penalty campaigners Atena Daemi and Omid Alishenas were sentenced to 14 and ten years' imprisonment, respectively, after a trial in March 2015 which only lasted about 45 minutes. Their sentences were later reduced to seven years on appeal.

Trials of human rights activists generally take place in a climate of fear in which their lawyers face a range of abusive measures. These include attempts by the authorities to arbitrarily restrict them from visiting defendants or communicating with them in private, or delaying their access to court files.

Human rights lawyers who speak out against torture and unfair trials have also faced harassment, disbarment and imprisonment. Prominent human rights lawyer Abdolfattah Soltani has been serving a 13-year sentence since 2011 for his courageous human rights work including with the Centre for Human Rights Defenders.

### **'Brave' campaign**

Amnesty recently launched a global campaign 'Brave' calling for an end to attacks against those defending human rights worldwide.

## **[U.S. State Department Issues Report on Human Rights Sanctions on Iran](#)**

### **U. S. Department of State**

**17 May 2017**

The State Department released today its semi-annual [report to Congress](#) detailing sanctions imposed on persons involved in human rights abuses in Iran. The report cites recent sanctions against the Tehran Prisons Organization and Sohrab Soleimani, the former head of the Tehran Prisons Organization, as required by the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010, as amended by the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Ambassador Stuart Jones gave the following statement on the report:

“As we continue to closely scrutinize Iran’s commitment to the JCPOA and develop a comprehensive Iran policy, we will continue to hold Iran accountable for its human rights abuses with new actions. We urge our partners around the world to join us in calling out individuals and entities who violate international sanctions targeting Iran’s human rights abuses.

“Whether it’s imprisoning people arbitrarily, inflicting physical abuse and torture, or executing juvenile offenders, the Iranian regime has for decades committed egregious human rights violations against its own people and foreign nationals, and this pattern of behavior must come to an end. The U.S. and its partners will continue to apply pressure on Iran to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone in Iran. This includes the U.S. citizens wrongfully detained or missing in Iran, and we call on Iran to immediately return them to their families.

“In addition to the actions taken today, we are communicating to the U.S. Congress that the United States continues to waive sanctions as required to continue implementing U.S. sanctions-lifting commitments in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. This ongoing review does not diminish the United States’ resolve to continue countering Iran’s destabilizing activity in the region, whether it be supporting the Assad regime, backing terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, or supporting violent militias that undermine governments in Iraq and Yemen. And above all, the United States will never allow the regime in Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon.”

The report’s release coincides with the Department of the Treasury’s announcement of new sanctions related to Iran’s ballistic missile program.

“Last month the Treasury Department imposed the first human rights-related sanctions designations against Iranian individuals and entities since December 2014, and we will continue to pursue initiatives around the world that uphold our core values of promoting and protecting human rights,” said Jones.

“The Treasury Department is imposing new sanctions on Iranian defense officials, an Iranian entity, and a China-based network that supplied missile-applicable items to a key Iranian defense entity. The action reflects concern with Iran’s continued development of ballistic missiles, which is inconsistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. Iran continues to pursue missile-related technologies capable of delivering a nuclear weapon. The State Department will continue to partner with our colleagues at the Department of the Treasury to ensure our national security in the face of Iranian threats.”

See [here](#) for the Treasury Department press release.

### **[Baroness Anelay welcomes conclusions of UN Human Rights Council](#)**

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
21 March 2017**

The UN Human Rights Council concluded its 34th Session today with important resolutions on Syria, South Sudan, Burma, DPRK, Sri Lanka, Libya and Iran.

Baroness Anelay said:

[Relevant extracts]

This was the first Human Rights Council (HRC) session since the UK's successful re-election in November to serve a second term on the Council. The UK, represented at Ministerial level by my colleague Mr Sharma, Minister for Asia, played a leading role on a number of important issues, including Syria, Sri Lanka and South Sudan, as well as supporting on Burma, DPRK and Iran.

I welcome the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Iran. The human rights situation within the country is deeply worrying, in particular the continued execution of juvenile offenders. The newly introduced Charter on Citizen's Rights has the potential to make a positive impact and I urge Iran to grant immediate access to the Special Rapporteur so she can work with them to implement it.

**Corporate report Iran - Human Rights Priority Country**  
**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**  
**8 February 2017**

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: Political Prisoners](#)

**25 September 2017 | HL1513**

**Asked by: Lord Maginnis of Drumglass**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by Amnesty International on 22 August concerning conditions imposed on political prisoners in Gohardasht and other Iranian prisons, particularly the finding that around 20 such political prisoners are on hunger-strike; and what representations they have made, or diplomatic pressure they have imposed, on the Iranian authorities to take such life-preserving action as may be necessary.

**Answering Member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

Reports about mistreatment of political prisoners in Iran are deeply concerning. I urge Iran to allow the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran access to the country in order to carry out an independent assessment of prison conditions and the wider human rights situation in the country.

### [Iran: Baha'i Faith](#)

**04 September 2017 | 8459**

**Asked by: Diana Johnson**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of trends in number of people of the Baha'i faith persecuted in Iran (a) between 2005 and 2013 and (b) since the coming to power of President Hassan Rouhani in August 2013.

**Answering Member: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK Government does not hold historical data on the number of Baha'is detained or persecuted in Iran. The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran estimates that, as of March 2017, there were 90 Baha'is detained in Iran, all for charges related to their religious belief and practices.

### [Iran: Baha'i Faith](#)

**04 September 2017 | 8458**

**Asked by: Diana Johnson**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate the Government has made of the number of (a) British and (b) other nationals of Baha'i faith who have been (i) detained, (ii) sentenced to imprisonment, (iii) murdered, (iv) executed and (v) persecuted in other ways in Iran in each year since 2005.

**Answering Member: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK Government does not hold historical data on the number of Baha'is detained or persecuted in Iran. The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran estimates that, as of March 2017, there were 90 Baha'is detained in Iran, all for charges related to their religious belief and practices.

[Iran: Baha'i Faith](#)

**04 September 2017 | 8457**

**Asked by: Diana Johnson**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations the Government has made at (a) an EU and (b) a UN level on the persecution of people of the Baha'i faith in Iran.

**Answering Member: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We regularly discuss concerns about the human rights situation in Iran, including the persecution of followers of the Baha'i faith, with our EU and other international partners in both Tehran and in Brussels. In the UN we continue to lead efforts to encourage Iran to improve its human rights record. For example, in March 2017 at the UN Human Rights Council, we highlighted persecution of Baha'is during the dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran.

[Iran: Baha'i Faith](#)

**15 March 2017 | 68161**

**Asked by: Bob Blackman**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received of the suppression of the economic activity among the Baha'i community in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

**Answering Member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The treatment of the Baha'i community in Iran is of particular concern. The latest report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran sets out the suppression and harassment that Baha'is are subject to in Iran. This includes restrictions on the types of businesses and jobs Baha'is can have, unequal treatment of Baha'i employees, and seizures of Baha'i businesses and property.

The UK has consistently pressed Iran to improve its human rights record, both through bilateral engagement and with our international partners. We fully support the Special Rapporteur's recommendation that the Iranian authorities should recognise freedom of religion and belief, and

that this entails the freedom to choose a religion or belief free from discriminatory or restrictive measures.

### [Iran: Baha'i Faith](#)

**07 March 2017 | 66859**

**Asked by: Clive Betts**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will instruct the UK Mission to Geneva to raise a question on the situation of the Baha'is in Iran with the Special Rapporteur on Iran, Ms Asma Jahangir, during her interactive dialogue with member states at the 34th session of the Human Rights Council; and if he will make a statement.

**Answering Member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The United Kingdom remains extremely concerned about the persecution and discrimination of religious minorities in Iran. Our statement during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran will reiterate our serious concerns about the treatment of the Baha'is and freedom of religion in Iran.

### [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps](#)

**07 March 2017 | 66859**

**Asked by: Bob Blackman**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' and the (a) persecution of dissidents and dual nationals in Iran, (b) exporting of terrorism abroad and (c) need to proscribe that organisation.

**Answering Member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is a proscribed organisation by the EU, listed due to actions relating to Iran's support for terrorism and human rights violations. There are several reports on the IRGC's role and their involvement in the persecution of individuals in Iran, including the latest report from the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in Iran.

We remain concerned about IRGC activity in the region, including worrying reports of Iran's links and support (including financial support and the provision of military equipment and training) to militant/proscribed groups, such as Hizballah, Hamas, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Palestinian rejectionist groups. This support directly undermines prospects for regional security and lasting-peace in the region.

### [Iran: Civil Liberties](#)

**08 December 2016 | 56850**

**Asked by: Jim Shannon**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the level of freedom of (a) religion and belief and (b) association in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

**Answering Member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The human rights situation in Iran remains of serious concern. Members of religious minorities continue to face severe restrictions. The same is true for freedom of association. The latest report of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran highlights the insufficient protections on the independence of political, professional and labour groups and in particular notes serious concern regarding the targeting, arrest and prosecution of labour union activists.

The UK calls on Iran to cease harassment of all religious minorities and to fulfil its international and domestic obligations to allow rights and freedoms to which all its citizens are entitled.

### [Iran: Prisons](#)

**05 September 2016 | 45042**

**Asked by: Jim Cunningham**

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the human rights conditions in prisons in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

**Answering Member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Iran does not allow British officials access to Iranian prisons and as such we are unable to make an assessment of their human rights conditions. The UK recently supported the renewed mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran and regularly calls on Iran to allow them access to the country to carry out their work. Iran has also been identified as a Human Rights Priority Country and the UK regularly calls on Iran to uphold its international human rights obligations.

### [Iran: Capital Punishment](#)

**02 June 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**

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.

## 5. Other Parliamentary material

### 5.1 Debates

[British Prisoners in Iran](#)

18 Jul 2017 | Vol 627 cc281-300WH

[Iran's Influence in the Middle East](#)

22 March 2017 | Volume 623 cc337-360WH

[Iran: Human Rights](#)

23 Jan 2017 | Vol 778 cc502-516

[Iran: Human Rights](#)

08 Dec 2016 | Vol 777 cc941-956

[Iran: Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe](#)

06 September 2016 | Volume 774 cc936-937

[Human Rights in Iran](#)

28 Jun 2016 | Debates | Vol 612 cc1-23WH

### 5.2 Statements

[Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report 2016](#)

20 Jul 2017 | HCWS90

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
(Boris Johnson)**

I have today laid before Parliament a copy of the 2016 Foreign and Commonwealth Office report on human rights and democracy (Cm 9487).

The report highlights policy developments on human rights issues overseas in 2016.

The report assesses the human rights situation in 30 countries which FCO has designated as its human rights priority countries. These are: 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.

This report focuses on how the Government are striving to protect and promote human rights around the world. In the two centuries since Britain became the first country to outlaw the slave trade, this country has helped to lead the struggle for justice and decency. The Government's approach towards human rights stands in this long tradition, based on the firm belief that our values are not only right in themselves but the key to prosperity and development.

## 5.3 Early Day Motions

### [Jailing of Reza Shahabi](#)

**EDM 244 (session 2017-19)**

**05 September 2017**

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle**

That this House notes with great concern the repeated jailing of Reza Shahabi, a member of the Executive Committee of the Trade Union of the Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company; further notes that on 8 August 2017 Mr Shahabi began a hunger strike in protest against the arbitrary resumption of his imprisonment; notes that the Rejai Shahr prison infirmary reports that Mr Shahabi needs specialist medical attention and that no steps have been taken to provide such care; notes that many prisoners are currently on hunger strike against poor conditions in Rejai Shahr; notes that in September 2015 painters' union activist Shahrokh Zamani, a fellow prisoner of Mr Shahabi, died under suspicious circumstances; urges the Iranian Government to release Mr Shahabi; and calls on the Government to press the Iranian Government to respect trade union rights and International Labour Organization conventions.

### [Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe](#)

**EDM 195 (session 2017-19)**

**17 July 2017**

**Tom Brake**

That this House expresses grave concern regarding the case of Ms Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British dual national, who is currently arbitrarily detained in Iran; is worried for the health and safety of Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who at times has been kept in solitary confinement and has been kept from seeing her now three-year-old daughter; supports the UN statement calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe and other British-Iranian dual nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran; urges the Government to publicly call for the immediate release of Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe; calls on the Government to ensure that Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case is raised in all private discussions with the Iranian authorities, to ensure consular access and secure her release; further urges the Government to take a more proactive approach to identifying and intervening in cases where British nationals face human rights violations; and calls on the Government to state that in all cases involving British nationals imprisoned abroad, any threat of or actual torture and mistreatment will not be tolerated and will be publicly condemned by the Government.

**Iran's influence in the Middle East**

**EDM 1013 (session 2016-17)**

**02 March 2017**

**David Amess**

That this House is extremely concerned by the growing domestic human rights violations in Iran and the high number of executions; highlights the role of Islamic Revolutionary Guards' (IRGC) increase in its domestic crackdown, including the arrest of activists, dissidents and dual nationals on trumped-up charges; is very disturbed by Iran's malign influence in the region through the IRGC, its Quds Force and its proxies that have participated in the slaughter of Syrian people, which the Government and many of its allies have described as war crimes; notes that IRGC plays a destabilising role in Iraq by providing training, funds and arms to paramilitary groups in that country; warns that Iran's continued ballistic missile tests are a threat to the region; believes that the regime and IRGC must know that their violations of human rights at home and warmongering abroad will not be tolerated; reiterates National Council of Resistance of Iran president-elect Mrs Maryam Rajavi's call on the international community for the complete removal of the IRGC and its proxies from Syria, Iraq and the region as a vital step to stabilise the Middle East; and urges the Government to condemn the IRGC for its serious violations of human rights and support for terrorism.

**Kamal Foroughi and Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**

**EDM 564 (session 2016-17)**

**18 October 2016**

**Tom Brake**

That this House expresses grave concern regarding the cases of Mr Kamal Foroughi and Ms Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, British dual nationals, who are currently imprisoned without charge in Iran; is worried for the health and safety of Mr Foroughi and Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe who have both been kept in solitary confinement at times and, in the case of Mr Foroughi, has been denied urgent medical help; urges the Government to publicly call for the immediate release of Mr Foroughi and the release of Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe unless she is formally charged and granted a fair trial; supports the recent UN statement calling for the immediate and unconditional release of British-Iranian dual nationals; and calls on the Government to ensure that both Mr Foroughi and Ms Zaghari-Ratcliffe's cases are raised in all private discussions with the Iranian authorities.

## 6. Further reading

### Library Briefing Papers

[Syria and Iraq: update July 2017](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8011  
21 July 2017

[Iran and the re-election of Rouhani](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-7983  
8 June 2017

### All-Party Parliamentary Groups

[Iran](#)

[Human Rights](#)

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office reports

[Iran - Human Rights Priority Country 2015 to 2016](#)

21 April 2016

A series of Human Rights Priority Country reports and status reports.

[Human Rights and Democracy Report 2016](#)

July 2017

See p39 for the section on Iran.

### International organisations

Amnesty International

[Iran 2016/17](#)

Human Rights Watch

[Iran](#) (general page on Iran, featuring reports and news articles)

[Iran: events of 2016](#)

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

[Iran](#) (general page on Iran, featuring news, links and UN reports)

### US Department of State

[Iran](#) (Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016)

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