

AI Index: PRE 01/049/2010
12 February 2010

Iran's report to UN paints distorted picture on human rights

The Iranian government's view of the state of human rights in the country is severely distorted, Amnesty International said today in an analysis paper prepared ahead of a review of Iran by the UN Human Rights Council.

The Amnesty International paper was prepared in response to Iran's own submission to the UN in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review. The UN Human Rights Council's Working Group will evaluate Iran's human rights record on 15 February.

During the review, UN member states have the opportunity to raise questions about Iran's human rights record and make recommendations to the Iranian government, which may then say which, if any, it will accept.

"The Iranian authorities seem either to have lost touch with reality or are unwilling to acknowledge it," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International. "The government report reads as if there is no human rights crisis, just politically motivated criticism."

"UN member states must look at what is actually happening in Iran: mass arrests and detentions, beatings of peaceful demonstrators, torture and deaths in custody, 'show trials' and politically motivated executions. Complacency or misplaced solidarity with Iran should not stand in the way of demands for Iran to fulfil its human rights obligations."

Amnesty International's analysis includes examples that illustrate Iran's failure to uphold human rights, such as that those to a fair trial, to freedom of expression and, in the case of women and ethnic and religious minorities, to freedom from discrimination, and highlights obfuscations in the Iranian government report.

Iran's report states that it prohibits the use of torture to force "confessions" but the reality is very different. Torture and other ill-treatment for the purpose of extracting "confessions" are widespread. Recent Iranian broadcasts of extracts of "show trials" taking place in Tehran, show haggard-looking defendants apologizing and delivering what appear to be coerced "confessions".

Iran's judicial system is not the independent force depicted in the government's report, with sensitive cases heavily influenced by political considerations. It also discriminates against women from top to bottom. Women are absent in any of the senior, decision-making posts, while a woman's testimony in court is worth only half that of a man's and she receives only half the compensation of a man for bodily injury or death.

Amnesty International's report criticizes Iran's failure to engage with human rights organizations and UN human rights experts, consistently stalling on allowing visits - contrary to Iran's own assertions that it has co-

operated with human rights groups. Amnesty International has been denied access to Iran to conduct first-hand research into human rights violations since April 1979.

Several human rights bills, currently pending before the Majles, have been under consideration for years without progress. These include the Juvenile Crimes Investigation Bill, which could reduce the number of death sentences imposed on juvenile offenders, and the bill setting out “political crimes” which was drafted over five years ago, by a previous parliament.

Amnesty International acknowledged some of the improvements in legislation referred to in Iran’s report to the UN. These include the revival of the Offices of the Prosecutor, the equalization of diyeh for Muslims with non-Muslims and efforts to combat human trafficking.

“It is time for Iran to implement the necessary measures to improve human rights in the country by allowing human rights defenders to work without fear, journalists to freely report, people to protest without being exposed to violence and ensuring mechanisms are developed to improve justice and ensure accountability,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

A full copy of Amnesty International’s shadow report Amnesty International’s Comments on the National Report presented by the Islamic Republic of Iran for the Universal Periodic Review is available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/021/2010/en>

A copy of Amnesty International’s Submission of the Universal Periodic Review of Iran is available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/009/2009>