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## **Iran: Human Rights in the spotlight on the 30th Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution**

10 February 2009 marks the 30 year anniversary of the change in government in Iran that led to the creation of the Islamic Republic. Amnesty International is marking the date by raising its concerns over a range of human rights violations that have persisted over the past 30 years.

Previous governments appointed by the former Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi were widely regarded as corrupt and responsible for egregious human rights violations. The Islamic Republic of Iran was created following a nationwide referendum on 1 April 1979. Another referendum, in December 1979, approved the constitution and confirmed Ayatollah Khomeini as Supreme Leader.

Despite promises made by Ayatollah Khomeini that all Iranians would be free, the past 30 years has been characterised by persistent human rights violations. The vast scope and scale of those violations of the early years of the Islamic Republic did decline somewhat with time. Limited relaxation of restrictions on freedom of expression during the period of reform under former President Khatami raised hopes of a sustained improvement in the human rights situation, although the situation remained poor. However, these hopes have been firmly crushed since the accession to power of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Impunity, arbitrary arrest, torture and other ill-treatment, as well as the use of the death penalty remain prevalent. Some sectors of society – including ethnic minorities – continue to face widespread discrimination, while the situation for other groups – notably some religious minorities – has significantly worsened. Those seen as dissenting from stated or unstated official policies face severe restrictions on their rights to freedom of belief, expression, association and assembly. Women continue to face discrimination - both in law and practice. Impunity for human rights abuses is widespread.

Amnesty International has been documenting human rights violations in Iran since the middle of the 1960s. On the occasion of this anniversary, Amnesty International urges the Iranian authorities to:

- Release all prisoners of conscience: those imprisoned in Iran because of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs, ethnic origin, language, national or social origin, sexual orientation or other status who have not used or advocated violence or hatred;
- Direct government, judicial and security officials to review the cases of all prisoners held for political reasons. This includes the release all political prisoners who were unfairly tried in previous years who should be retried under procedures which meet international standards for fair trial. Release those who have not yet been tried unless they are to be tried promptly and fairly on recognizably criminal charges;
- End impunity for past human rights violations, by fully investigating past abuses such as the 1988 mass

killings of political prisoners, commonly known as the “prison massacres”;

- Make it clear to state officials that torture and other ill-treatment will not be tolerated and bring to justice anyone found responsible for such abuses;
- Reform key areas of the administration of justice to ensure that no one is arbitrarily arrested or subjected to unfair trial and that evidence obtained under torture and other ill-treatment is not admissible in courts.

**Note to editors:**

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