

candidates were not permitted to run, seriously limiting the public's choice. Conservative forces in Parliament also forced the resignation of a reform minded Minister and the reform mayor of Teheran was tried and convicted on corruption charges. Both men were among the most prominent supporters of President Khatami. Municipal elections will be held at the end of February but conservatives are again blocking reform candidates from running.

Women: Since the Islamic Revolution, discrimination against women has increased. Discrimination manifests itself most immediately in a strict dress-code for women, separation of the sexes in many areas of daily life and a bias within the legal system in certain family law matters. The UN Special Representative on Iran reported that a lively discourse about the role of women is underway, but there appears to be no commitment to change. The Parliament rejected a bill that would have provided for equal inheritance rights between men and women and passed a bill for the compulsory segregation of health-care services for men and women. This bill has been up held, but the Parliament is expected to pass it again. Iran also took the decision not to accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Religion: Iran continues to extend a degree of tolerance to mainstream branches of the three monotheistic religions and to the Zoroastrians. However, neither apostasy nor proselytism are tolerated. Members of specific religious groups are subject to various degrees of repression. Some, such as the Baha'is, have experienced a high degree of mistreatment and judicial persecution. One Baha'i man was executed and two others received death sentences for committing crimes against the state, which amounted to practising their faith within their community. The government also arrested staff members and confiscated equipment and records of the Baha'i Open University in an attempt to shut it down. This university was created because Baha'i students are not allowed to study in Iranian universities.

Resolutions condemning the human rights situation in Iran were passed at both the UN Commission for Human Rights and the UN General Assembly Third Committee. Canada co-sponsored this year's resolution on human rights in Iran at the UN General Assembly Third Committee, which passed by a vote of 64 for, 41 against and 56 abstentions.

CANADIAN POSITION

Iran's poor human rights performance, together with other issues, have impeded progress towards a normal political and diplomatic relationship between Iran and Canada. Iranian human rights practices and abuses run counter both to Canadian norms and international human rights covenants.

Canada continues to make strenuous efforts to change Iranian behaviour especially with respect to the Iranian Baha'i community. The Canadian Ambassador leads a group of like-minded ambassadors in monitoring human rights concerns and raising specific cases with Iranian authorities. Canada has made it clear to Iran that there will have to be major changes before normal ties are possible.

We continue to raise specific human rights cases with the Iranian Government, both in Ottawa and in Tehran. Canada also maintains regular consultations with governments and international human rights groups on the issue of human rights in Iran.