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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

ISSUE

The human rights situation in Iran continues to be a matter of serious concern to the Canadian Government. In 1992, the expulsion of members of the International Committee of the Red Cross coincided with increased violations of individual human rights. Members of the Bahai community, in particular, have been subject of gross violations of their rights. At the same time, we deplored the increase of the bounty offered for the murder, or the "fatwa", of British writer Salman Rushdie.

BACKGROUND

Serious and renewed violations of human rights in Iran continued to be reported last year. Areas of concern are "notably those concerning executions, ill-treatment and torture, lack of defence counsel in trials before the revolutionary courts, failure to notify detainees of the charges against them immediately after their arrest, difficulties in ensuring public trials, restriction of the press, on the publication of books, problems relating to religious minorities group, right of petition and obstacles to forming associations".

In particular, there is reason for heightened concern about the treatment of members of religious minorities. The punishment to which women are subject for what Iranian authorities consider improper dress is another source of concern. Various sources confirmed that summary executions, even without formal charges, still take place for trafficking in drugs and for ordinary offenses, in particular for smuggling. The situation of the Bahais has once again deteriorated with the arrest and the execution of several members of that community.

Iranian authorities reacted sharply to the criticism of their human rights record at the U.N. (e.g. the approval of a Resolution in the Third Committee following the release of the Special Representative's report). Iranian officials maintain that "the issue has been politicized by Western countries ideologically opposed to the Islamic Republic of Iran".

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada is disturbed about continuing reports of violations of the right to life, the authorities' repressive attitude towards women, and the renewed persecution of the Bahai community. We deplore Iran's failure to review its decision to expel members of the International Committee of the Red Cross. We will continue to urge Iran to cooperate with the U.N. Special Representative and permit members of the ICRC to return to Iran.

Canada uses every opportunity in bilateral contacts and in international forums to express its concerns over Iran's human rights record and to urge that it be improved.

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