

## IRAN: UPR OUTCOMES

19 March 2015

Mr. President,

ARTICLE 19 notes Islamic Republic of Iran's (Iran) engagement in the UPR process and encourages the urgent implementation of recommendations to improve freedom of expression.

We thank all States who made recommendations concerning freedom of expression<sup>1</sup> and highlight Australia's recommendation to "guarantee the right to legitimate freedom of expression, association, and assembly, and release political prisoners [...] detained solely for exercising these rights"

Criminal laws are applied to suppress legitimate criticism, through broad provisions on "slander", "mockery, defamation, libel and violation of the public and private rights of individuals". Individuals have been executed under charges of "Moharebeh" (enmity against God), including Mohsen Amir-Aslani, in September 2014 and others facing the death sentence include juvenile offender Saman Naseem, for alleged crimes committed when he was only 17 years old.

We welcome the Netherland's recommendation to "guarantee freedom of speech and eliminate restrictions to the free flow of information, including through the Internet, and stop arrests, prosecution and sanction of individuals for expressing views and opinions"

Iran claims Article 25 of the Iranian Constitution – "Secrecy of Communication" – guarantees the right to privacy, yet, this right is routinely violated as the Constitution permits surveillance where communications are deemed contrary to domestic laws. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' cyberspace specialist in the organised cybercrime unit "Gerdab", Mostafa Alizadeh, has admitted that they maintain "intelligence control over all social networks," monitoring all "suspicious" activity. The chilling effect of such monitoring is seen in the case of Soheil Arabi, who was sentenced to death in August 2014 for insulting the Prophet Muhammad on Facebook.

At least 30 journalists remain in prison including American-Iranian journalist, Jason Rezaian, who has been held, without knowing the charges against him, for over 6 months. In light of this, we highlight the USA's call for his release. We also welcome Tunisia's recommendation for a "favourable environment for the activities of journalists, human rights defenders and civil society" and Senegal's recommendation for the promotion of a free press. The continuing harassment and arrests of human rights defenders such as Nargess Mohammadi, Mahdieh Golrou, and Mohammad Seifzadeh, and the increased closure of news outlets including the newspapers Bahar, Ruzan and Mardom-e-Emrooz, demonstrate that the space for freedom of expression in Iran is dramatically shrinking.

We call on States to increase international scrutiny and efforts to hold Iran accountable, including by renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, who must be permitted to visit the country. We therefore welcome all those Member States who emphasised the importance of full cooperation with the UN's Special Procedures.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Iran must release all detained human rights defenders and journalists, and demonstrate through real legal and policy reform that its commitment to protecting freedom of expression is more than simply rhetoric to placate the international community.

Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> ARTICLE 19 welcomes recommendations made concerning freedom of expression by Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, USA,

<sup>2</sup> ARTICLE 19 welcomes recommendations made concerning the UN Special Procedures by Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, USA