Thursday 19 December 2019

P9_TA(2019)0112

Violent crackdown on recent protests in Iran

European Parliament resolution of 19 December 2019 on the violent crackdown on the recent protests in Iran (2019/2993(RSP))

(2021/C 255/13)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on Iran, including its most recent of 19 September 2019 on Iran, notably the situation of women's rights defenders and imprisoned EU dual nationals [1],

— having regard to the Council conclusions of 4 February 2019 on Iran,

— having regard to the declaration of 8 December 2019 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), Josep Borrell Fontelles, on behalf of the EU on the recent protests in Iran,

— having regard to the statement by the Spokesperson of the European External Action Service (EEAS) of 21 November 2019 on the developments in Iran,

— having regard to the Council decision of 12 April 2018 to extend its restrictive measures for a further 12 months in response to serious human rights violations in Iran,

— having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders,

— having regard to the respective EU Guidelines on the death penalty and on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the EU Human Rights Guidelines on freedom of expression online and offline,

— having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2016 on the EU strategy towards Iran after the nuclear agreement [2],

— having regard to UN General Assembly resolution 73/181 of 17 December 2018 on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran,

— having regard to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran of 30 January 2019,

— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,

— having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966, to which Iran is a party,

— having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas tens of thousands of people from all over Iran and representing all segments of society have exercised their fundamental right to freedom of assembly and expressed their economic grievances over the increase in fuel prices of at least 50 % in the largest scale unrest in 40 years;

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[1] Texts adopted P9_TA(2019)0019.
[2] OJ C 215, 19.6.2018, p. 86.

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B. whereas despite repeated international calls for restraint, the Iranian security forces used disproportionate means and force against protesters; whereas according to civil society reports, Iranian security forces opened fire on unarmed protesters who did not pose any imminent risk, and allegedly shot to kill;

C. whereas according to Amnesty International, at least 304 people have been killed, including children, with many more wounded, and whereas thousands of protesters, as well as journalists, human rights defenders and students, have been arrested; whereas the Iranian authorities have not announced the official death toll and have refused to release the bodies of the victims to their families;

D. whereas on 16 November 2019 the Iranian authorities implemented a five-day-long near-total shutdown of Internet communications, cutting almost all means of online communication for people inside Iran and preventing any flow of information in relation to the brutal crackdown; whereas shutting down internet communications is a violation of the fundamental right to access information, constituting a disproportionate limitation to freedom of expression, and has become an ongoing modus operandi for the authorities;

E. whereas its resolution of 25 October 2016 on the EU strategy towards Iran after the nuclear agreement ([3]) stresses the importance of upholding the EU human rights guidelines, including on human rights defenders, in the context of EU-Iran relations;

F. whereas human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers and online activists in Iran continue to face harassment, arbitrary arrest, detention and prosecution for their work; whereas the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and other forces have initiated a severe clampdown on civil society; whereas 77 members of the reformist opposition, mostly belonging to the Participation Front Party, issued an open statement condemning the excessive use of force in quelling the protests; whereas some of them were brought before the judiciary in Iran for 'spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic', and two were arrested, namely Mohammad Kianoosh Rad and Mehdi Mahmoudian;

G. whereas Iranian courts regularly fail to ensure fair trials, with the denial of access to legal counsel and denial of visits by representatives from consulates, the UN or humanitarian organisations, and permit the use of confessions obtained under torture as evidence; whereas there are no independent mechanisms for ensuring accountability within the judiciary, and serious concerns remain over the politicisation of judges, particularly those presiding over Revolutionary Courts;

H. whereas many EU-Iranian dual nationals are detained for their human rights activism or their academic work; whereas since June 2019 two French researchers have been incarcerated in Iran, namely Ms Fariba Adelkhah and, as recently confirmed, Mr Roland Marchal;

1. Extends its condolences to the families of the victims; wishes a speedy recovery to those injured;

2. Deplores the widespread and disproportionate use of force by Iran against non-violent protesters who were merely exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; stresses that such actions are unacceptable, urges the Iranian authorities to announce the total number of deaths and detainees, conduct a prompt, impartial, independent and transparent investigation into allegations of excessive use of force, including direct targeting of protestors by security forces, and hold all perpetrators of violence accountable;

3. Demands that all protestors, human rights defenders and journalists currently held under arrest in Iran for exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of expression and assembly are freed unconditionally; moreover, demands that the authorities inform all families of the location of their detained relatives, and calls for granting unhindered access for lawyers and international observers to all those detained during the protests and for providing identity of the detainees to the international community; reiterates the Parliament's previous calls for the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and many others who have been unlawfully detained;

([3]) OJ C 215, 19.6.2018, p. 86.

4. Strongly condemns Iran's decision to shut down internet access to global networks, which prevented communication and the free flow of information for Iranian citizens; underscores that such actions are a clear violation of the freedom of speech; urges the Iranian authorities to lift all online based communications and services blockages;

5. Stresses that fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and assembly must always be respected and calls on the Iranian authorities to live up to their international obligations, including under the ICCPR;

6. Calls on the United Nations, particularly its Human Rights Council, to trigger without delay a comprehensive investigation on the events that have taken place in recent weeks, led by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, with the aim of shedding light into the allegations of grave human rights violations in the country since protests begun, and calling on Iran to give full and unrestricted access to those conducting this inquiry;

7. Recalls its resolution of 19 September 2019; deeply regrets the lack of progress made on the cases of EU-Iranian dual nationals detained in Iran; urges the Iranian authorities to immediately release Roland Marchal and Fariba Adelkhah, as well as all the human rights defenders who have been imprisoned and sentenced for simply exercising their rights of freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly;

8. Calls for the EU, including the VP/HR, to continue raising human rights concerns with the Iranian authorities in bilateral and multilateral forums, in particular in the context of the EU-Iran high-level political dialogue;

9. Reiterates its full support for Sakharov Prize laureates Nasrin Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi; deplores the fact that Nasrin Sotoudeh is still imprisoned, serving a sentence of 33 years and 148 lashes, and insists on her immediate and unconditional release; calls on the Iranian authorities to lift the travel ban which has been placed on Jafar Panahi since 2010;

10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Members of the Iranian Majlis.