



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 26 September 2008  
13376/08 (Presse 269)  
P 121  
(OR. fr)

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on the situation of people belonging to religious minorities in  
Iran**

The European Union is very concerned at the deterioration in the exercise of freedom of religion or belief, and especially the freedom of worship, in Iran, where the pressure on people belonging to religious minorities has worsened in recent months.

The European Union is deeply disturbed by the arrests since April of Iranian converts to Christianity and members of the Baha'i community. It calls for their immediate and unconditional release and the cessation of all forms of violence and discrimination against them.

**P R E S S**

---

Rue de la Loi 175 B - 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026  
[press.office@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:press.office@consilium.europa.eu) <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>  
13376/08 (Presse 269)

1  
**EN**

There have been many reports that people belonging to the Christian, Baha'i, Sufi and Sunni minorities in Iran are regularly suffering forms of persecution such as confiscation of property, desecration of their places of worship, imprisonment and numerous acts of violence, including some life-threatening.

The European Union is concerned at the Iranian parliament's decision to consider a draft law making apostasy one of the crimes punishable by death. If adopted, that law would be a serious infringement of the freedom of religion or belief, which includes the right to change religion and the right to have no religion. It would violate Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was freely ratified by Iran, and would threaten the lives of a number of Iranians who have been arrested and held without trial for several months on account of their religious beliefs.

The European Union urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to reconsider its decision to examine the law in question, release all those who have been imprisoned because of their religious affiliation and allow all its citizens to exercise their freedom of religion or belief in full.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.