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## Statement by the spokesperson of the High Representative Catherine Ashton on the Human Rights situation in Iran

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

*"The High Representative is disturbed by the reported execution of three Ahwazi Arab men, detained since 2011 on grounds which reliable reports suggest are political. The EU has expressed, on numerous occasions, its concern about the position of minorities in the country and has called on Iran to refrain from discriminatory policies. On capital punishment, the EU has called on Iran, as it does on all states which insist on maintaining the death penalty, to halt pending executions and to introduce a moratorium.*

*In addition, the High Representative is very concerned about the reported verdict of the Iran Court of Appeals in the case of Mr Abdolfattah Soltani. The Court recently issued a 13 year prison sentence in 'internal exile', on charges of propaganda against the system, participation in founding an illegal organisation and collusion against national security. Mr Soltani is a prominent Iranian lawyer who bravely stood up to defend the rights of numerous human rights activists in his country. This exceedingly harsh verdict constitutes yet another unacceptable attack against the legal profession in Iran. The High Representative calls on Iran immediately to drop all charges against him and to release him.*

*The above developments show a clear deterioration of the human rights situation in Iran, in the general context of an increase in use of the death penalty, repression of ethnic and religious minorities and the ever precarious situation of human rights defenders in the country. "*

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**P R E S S**

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