



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the violation of religious freedom in Iran**

The European Union expresses its deep concern about the increasing violation of religious freedom in Iran.

In particular, the European Union condemns the continuing persecution by the Iranian authorities of legitimate expressions of Christian belief. According to available reports, the Iranian nationals Hamik Khachikian, Jamal Qalishourani and Nadereh Jamali, arrested in January 2009, continue to be detained without charges, as are Marzieh Amirizadeh and Maryam Rustampoor, arrested in March 2009. In March 2009, Seyed Allaedin Hussein, Homayoon Shokouhi and Seyed Amir Hussein Bob-Annari received a commuted sentence of eight months in prison. Available evidence suggests that the aim of this persecution is to suppress the free choice and expression of religious belief.

P R E S S

The European Union reiterates its concern about the situation of seven members of the Bahai religious community in Iran –Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naimi, Said Rezaei, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Vahid Tizfahm – who have now been held in detention for more than one year and are facing serious legal charges. Again, evidence suggests that the persecution deliberately aims to suppress Bahai religious identity and legitimate community activities. Concerns relating to this case are further reinforced by numerous reports of official harassment of members of the Bahai community, including detentions; police summons and pressure to desist from community religious activities.

The European Union further expresses its concern at the plight of the Iranian Shiite ayatollah Seyed Hossein Kazemini Boroujerdi, who has been imprisoned for his religious activities along with several of his followers. According to available reports, Boroujerdi is being denied hospitalization despite his serious health condition.

The European Union urgently calls on the Iranian authorities to uphold their international legal undertakings to safeguard religious freedom and to stop their persecution of legitimate religious activities. The European Union also reminds the Iranian authorities of their duty to safeguard the health of all persons in prison or under detention.

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.