



The British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom



Press Release

British MPs urge UN ban on Iran after torture to death of political prisoner

British MPs and Peers on Thursday strongly condemned the death under torture of a political prisoner belonging to the main democratic Iranian opposition group, the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran.

At a conference in Parliament the lawmakers urged the British government to work for imposing comprehensive sanctions on Iran over its flagrant human rights abuses.

The MPs focused on the case of Mr. Abdolreza Rajabi, a PMOI member who had spent seven years in Iran's notorious prisons until he was finally tortured to death on October 30.

Lord Corbett of Castle Vale, Chairman of the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom described human rights violations in Iran as "appalling", and said, "The Iranian regime has been censured by the United Nations at least 54 times for its consistent, persistent and worsening human rights abuse".

"The regime claims to speak and act on behalf of Islam", Lord Corbett told the meeting. "In fact, it defiles that religion".

Former UK Solicitor General, Rt. Hon. Lord Archer of Sandwell QC, said, "Abdolreza Rajabi was tortured to death at the hands of those whose duty was to protect the law. His death was ordered by the mullahs".

"The mullahs don't debate with those who disagree with them; they silence them. They don't justify their position, because they cannot justify them", Lord Archer said. "The torture committed by the mullahs is a crime against humanity".

Baroness Gibson of Market Rasen said that by inflicting torture, the mullahs were carrying out "heinous crimes against the individual as well as the individual's family and supporters"

Welsh MP Mark Williams said, "I am not a lawyer, but I do have a gut reaction to the issue of human rights. Over 120,000 people have been executed in Iran for supporting the PMOI".

"As we speak, there are some 500 prisoners on death row in a jail in Mashhad (north-east Iran)", Mr. Williams said.

Mr. Rajabi's two sons and daughter addressed the meeting by live satellite phone from Camp Ashraf, the main base of the PMOI in Iraq's Diyala Province.

His daughter, Faezeh Rajabi, said, "For seven years, my father resisted the Iranian regime in its prisons. During those years, I was always waiting for him to come back. I always thought to myself that when I see him again, I would hug him very tightly and tell him everything about myself, until last week, when I was informed about his death.

"When we used to go visit my father in prison, I was very little. But I remember that every time, he was smiling and was very lively. Although I later found out that he had been horrendously tortured at that time, he never showed it and would not let us realise that he had so much pain.

"When I got older, my father would tell us in every visit, 'Go to Ashraf - that is where you belong.' He would say that Ashraf is the hope of the Iranian people. At that time, I didn't understand what kind of a place Ashraf is. All I wanted was to be near him and hug him and kiss him in the visits we had once in a while, and tell him how much I missed him.

"When I came to Ashraf for a visit and then decided to stay here, I finally understood what he had said all along about Ashraf, and why he said it is the hope of our people", Ms Rajabi said.

Lord Clarke of Hampstead said, "I reaffirm my resolution to raise my voice and support the PMOI at every opportunity".

The parliamentarians also denounced provisional plans by the U.S. to hand over security of the PMOI's base, Camp Ashraf, to Iraqi forces. Iran is pushing the Iraqi authorities to take over protection of Ashraf from U.S. forces. The mullahs know that if U.S. forces stand aside, they could step up attacks on the PMOI, the MPs said.

Rt. Hon. Lord Slynn of Hadley, a former Judge at the European Court of Justice and UK law lord, said, "The people in Ashraf are wonderful people who clearly need protection".

"Nobody doubts that if the people in Ashraf were contrary to international law sent back to Iran, or to an authority that might seek to do so, there would be a grave risk of them being tortured to death".

"It is essential that the people of Ashraf should continue under international law to be protected by U.S. forces. ... The Iraqi government, under pressure from Tehran, would not be able to protect the residents of Ashraf.

Baroness Turner of Camden said, "PMOI members in Ashraf must continue to be protected by international law".

"Anyone who is complicit in returning the residents of Ashraf to the authorities in Iran would be complicit in their torture", Lord Archer said.

"The government wants to appease the Iranian regime, but appeasement will never get us anywhere with this regime", Baroness Gibson said.

**The British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom
6 November 2008**

Note to editors:

The following Parliamentarians took part in the meeting:

Rt. Hon. Lord Slynn of Hadley – former Judge at European Court of Justice and UK law lord

Rt. Hon. Lord Archer of Sandwell QC – former UK Solicitor General

Lord Corbett of Castle Vale – Chairman, British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom

Mr. Roger Williams MP (Liberal Democrat)

Mr. Mark Williams MP (Liberal Democrat)

Baroness Turner of Camden (Labour)

Lord Clarke of Hampstead (Labour)

Lord Wedderburn of Charlton QC – (Labour)

Baroness Gibson of Market Rasen (Labour)

Under pressure from Iran, the Iraqi government released a directive on 17 June 2008 demanding that U.S. forces hand over protection of Camp Ashraf and PMOI members, who are recognised as "protected persons" under the 4th Geneva Convention, be expelled from Iraq.

This call violates the "principle of non-refoulement" and International Humanitarian Law. International law prohibits the handover of "protected persons" to an authority which would seek to violate their rights.

Transferring protection of Ashraf residents under the present circumstances violates the principle of non-refoulement, the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Refugee Convention, the Convention Against Torture and more generally International Humanitarian Law and international law and paves the way for a humanitarian catastrophe.