

United Nations Human Rights Council, 49th Session (28 February - 01 April 2022)

Item 3 – ID with SR on Iran.

Speaker: Humanists UK representative: Robert Cann¹

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur into the increasing persecution of religious and non-religious minorities in Iran. He notes these groups are 'disproportionally affected by the imposition of the death penalty, and... disadvantaged with regard to recognition of rights in law and as a matter of policy.'²

Iran remains one of the world's most hostile states to the non-religious. In Humanists International's 2021 *Freedom of Thought Report*, only Saudi Arabia ranks below Iran for violating the right of freedom of religion or belief. The non-religious are forced to live in total secrecy – under fear of arbitrary detention, torture, and execution if they were to be discovered.³

Iran is one of only 13 countries that maintains the death penalty for blasphemy or apostasy. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that 'in countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes.'⁴ In other words, *not* for blasphemy or apostasy – the criminalisation of which is a violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief itself. In the last year Christians, Baha'is,⁵ and Sunni Baluchi citizens have been arrested as a result of the free practice of their faith.⁶ In 2020, executions in the four ethnic minority provinces increased by more than 20%.⁷

We are concerned that Swedish-Iranian researcher Dr Djalali remains on death row on false charges of espionage and 'spreading corruption on earth.' His case is exemplary of the persecution of international academics in Iran, who over the course of their stay are arrested and imprisoned on spurious charges.⁸

We ask the Special Rapporteur what conversations he has had with the Iranian Government on abolishing the death penalty, and what progress has been made towards amending Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution in order to recognise and strengthen protections for Baha'is, humanists, and other minority belief groups?

Thank you.

¹ Humanists UK is the operating name of the British Humanist Association.

² UN Human Rights Council, forty-ninth session. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*. January 2022. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/49/75>

³ US Department of State, *2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran*.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/iran/>

⁴ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

⁵ UN Human Rights Council, forty-ninth session. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*. January 2022. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/49/75>

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Iran Human Rights (IHR), and ECPM (Together Against that Death Penalty), Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran, 2020. January 2021, p85. <https://www.ecpm.org/wp-content/uploads/Rapport-iran-2021-gb-290321-HD.pdf>

⁸ Humanists International, Cases of Concern: Ahmadreza Djalali <https://humanists.international/case-of-concern/ahmadreza-djalali/>