



International Women's Day 2015: Berlin Conference



On the eve of International Women's Day on Saturday 7 March in a grand gathering in Berlin titled "For Tolerance and Equality against Fundamentalism and Misogyny" participants underscored that the advancement of the ideal of equality in the world today has come face-to-face with a formidable barrier, Islamic extremism. This phenomenon is endangering the entire Middle East

and the world through genocide, terrorism and discrimination and more than anything is hostile to women, the conference emphasised.

A great number of prominent personalities and women's rights activists from the world's five continents took part in this conference including Kim Campbell (former Prime Minister of Canada), Rita Süßmuth (former Speaker of the German Parliament),

Linda Chavez and Frances Townsend (former White House advisors), Ingrid Betancourt (former Presidential Candidate from Columbia), as well as a delegation of women jurists, including Maria Candida Almeida (Portuguese General Prosecutor), women MEPs including the British MEP, Julie Ward, a delegation from the Syrian opposition, a delegation of prominent women from

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Editorial

Happy Easter to our Christian friends, and may this celebration of life and love resurrected shower its blessings on us all.

While preparing this bulletin, events in the Middle East have taken yet another turn as Arab States join against the Iranian regime and its surrogates in Yemen. In Iraq, Iran's terrorist network is now blatant about extending its grip, while the US government remains focused on a fragile nuclear deal, widely predicted to lead to an Iranian bomb menacing the whole world.

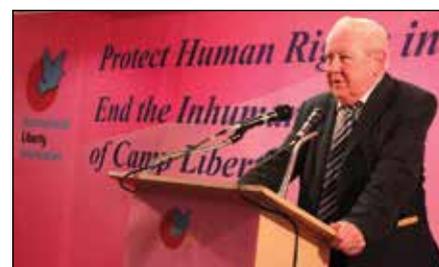
The focus of this issue, however, is women, women in Iran, women of the resistance in Camp Liberty, women everywhere. Its centrepiece, the International Women's Day conference in Berlin, made very clear that misogyny, characterised by the repression and exploitation of women, is at the core of all the extremist groups masquerading as

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Lord Clarke of Hampstead in our community centre:

I am so happy to be able to say thank you to you. Those of you that have given so much of your time, your efforts, your support, for the people who are incarcerated not just in Ashraf and in Liberty but the people in Iran itself. You have given your time, your love and devotion to a cause. There is no higher cause, ever, than to be looking after one's fellow human beings and you've kept that going here and I'm so delighted to be able to spend a bit of time with you.

My mind goes back to the young girl who was in Ashraf, we had a phone link from Westminster to Ashraf. And I spoke to this girl, spoke perfect English, and we expressed our solidarity and our friendship, and then on that dreadful day, that sixteen-year-old girl was murdered with the other residents in Ashraf. And I always tell politicians, if they want to find out the truth, read the



reports from the regime itself, because unlike many other parts where they cover up their brutality, the regime in Iran – they seem to be proud. And I think the reason for that is, they want to install fear in everybody's heart. It's a duty on democratic people to speak out when these things are going on. We have to, as we do, keep telling our government that they shouldn't talk about appeasement. Get a hold of that ten-point plan of Madame Rajavi and start working the proper answer to the problems of Iran

Thanks for all you do to keep the message going out and the flag flying for freedom. Join me in my hope and prayer that Iran will be free.



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Asia, a large delegation of legislators and mayors and other German dignitaries, a delegation of women parliamentarians from Arab countries, delegations representing dozens of Iranian women associations throughout Europe and the United States, and thousands of women from various countries and followers of various religions.

Keynote speaker of the conference was Mrs Maryam Rajavi, president elect of the Iranian opposition, NCRI. She stressed that the decisive factor empowering the fundamentalists was the rise to power of reactionary mullahs in Iran that for the first time offered a model for governance by fundamentalist groups. She added: "Fundamentalism is not a face-off between Islam and the West nor a confrontation between Islam and Christianity and Judaism, or a Shia and Sunni conflict. The crux of the conflict is between freedom versus subjugation and dictatorship,

between equality on the one hand and tyranny and misogyny on the other. Fundamentalism has placed misogyny at its core and through suppressing women it intimidates and suppresses the entire society."

She concluded: "To rein in the ominous phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism, one should inescapably confront the religious dictatorship ruling Iran." (Excerpts from her speech appears on page 4.)

During the conference women personalities declared their solidarity

with the International Front against Fundamentalism that had been called for by Mrs Rajavi.

Vida Nik Talean, President of Women Association for Democracy in Iran, spoke on behalf of Iranian women's associations that had participated in the Berlin conference.

Speakers in this conference highlighted the role of 1000 brave Ashrafi women who have a pioneering role in confronting the misogynist mullahs in Iran and called for greater protection for the residents of Camp Liberty.



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Islamic, fuelled by the most brutal and medieval of them all, the Mullahs who have held the people of Iran in their fundamentalist grip since 1979.

It is only natural that the main resistance movement to such oppression is led by women. Their experience of standing up to the Mullahs for over 30 years makes them a model for all Middle Eastern women. The 1,000 Ashrafi women, most still

in Camp Liberty, bring hope and inspiration not only to the women of Iran and the Middle East, but also those currently enjoying much greater freedom in the western world.

Many prominent women came from around the globe to speak in Berlin. Their message was clear and inspiring. They spoke of their determination and commitment to carry the fight forward until the women, and men, of Iran, the Middle East and the entire world are free from oppression, fear and the

injustice of discrimination.

Only then can lasting peace be assured, within and between our communities, societies and nations. We too, renew our commitment to achieving this noble goal, pledging to work even harder to spread the words of wisdom and support those in the front line of this global battle for peace and justice. In this endeavour, we remain ever grateful to all who give a helping hand, a single prayer or a good wish. Thank you!



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Ingrid Betancourt: *"You are important, not only for Iran but for all of us"*



I would like first to pay tribute to the women in Camp Liberty. I think that we cannot begin any sentence here today

at the eve of the Women's Day without having them in mind. But I am also here and I came here because I wanted to protest rather than celebrate. I come with a contrite heart and it's difficult for me to think what I could celebrate in the Women's Day tomorrow, but I want to protest. I want to protest first because I have seen in all the news of all the world the images of Islamic fanatics destroying the art, the ancient cities of Nimrud and Mesopotamia. I have heard UNESCO protesting and declaring that this is a war crime, but I have seen nowhere the images that I have seen in YouTube of women sold in cages in the market of Mosul.

But why don't we talk about the apartheid against women?

Why in the West and the free world is there nothing about that apartheid? Why is it just swept like it was just a comma in the sentence? I am protesting, then, for the silence of the free world and of the leaders of the free world.

The only person that I have seen talking about the imperative of having sanctions against Iran because it works, because it's the only thing that they understand, has been Madame Rajavi. She has been the one pointing out that because there is leverage we shouldn't be shrinking in using that leverage.

Well, I think that sometimes the obvious things seem to be like not obvious for the people who should take the decisions. That's why, if there is something that I want to celebrate today, it's what you here are doing, because this rally, this meeting, under the leadership of Madame Rajavi is not for us. We know who we are, we know how many we are and we know how devoted we are to the cause. But this is what the Ayatollahs are watching, and

we here are becoming the watchdogs of Iran.

And I would like to finish by saying that it's because we need you, we need you, you who are here we need you, not only for Iran, not only for saving the lives of our sisters and brothers in Camp Liberty, but we need you for the world.

I was reminded that in the Iranian constitution the idea of a universal caliphate, as Alejo Vidal-Quadras reminds me, is already there. It's not even an idea of ISIS. It has been the product of the insanity of the ayatollahs.

You are important, not only for your country, Iran, not only for the people of Ashraf, but for all of us, because the ayatollahs want to have a universal caliphate. It's the imperialism of extremism and that's what we're fighting against. But I have good news. I'm a believer, a very strong believer, and in the Scriptures it is said that when God wants to defeat His enemies He makes them mad. That's what's happening in Iran. They're mad.

Frances Townsend to the women in Camp Liberty: *"We are your voice"*



Our sisters in Iran, in Afghanistan, and in Yemen face the most dire time in our lifetimes for women's freedom

and fate, and so I would say in particular to the women in Camp Liberty: we are your voice. We will not stop fighting for you, we will not stop remembering you, we will not stop being your voice in the free world.

Just this week in Washington I had the privilege of being with the Women's Freedom Forum and a group of Iranian women trying to bring Washington's attention to the issue of women's freedom, and I saw a videotape of several of the young women who had been horribly maimed with acid in their faces in Iran, and one of the women very poignantly said: "You can destroy my face but not my belief." And it brought to mind, of course, the phrase by Malala who has been so horribly attacked as a

young girl for seeking an education and practising it, what she said: "You can kill a person but not an idea." Your presence here today bears witness to that truth. They have kidnapped, they have killed your relatives, they continue to hold captive those in Iran and in Camp Liberty, they can kill our brothers and sisters, they can kill us, but they will not kill our yearning and our fight for freedom. It is a privilege to stand with you and we will stand with you until we all are free.

Maria Almeida: *"I support your struggle for freedom, justice and equality"*



I am Maria Candida Almeida, an attorney-general from Portugal. I was the first female Prosecutor-General for

Portugal.

I am a member of the Portuguese

Women Jurists' Association and I have been working for women's rights for many years.

The situation I read about the residents in Camp Liberty is very bad. They have been attacked on many occasions but now they have been deprived of minimum humanity.

The residents of Camp Liberty should

be able to have free access to medical cures. They should not be deprived of fuel and the bare necessities, and under international law they should be respected and protected as they have been promised.

I support you in your struggle for freedom, justice, equality and women's rights, as the fight continues.



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"Women's power is the greatest challenger of Islamic fundamentalism"

Excerpts of speech by Maryam Rajavi, President Elect of Iranian opposition:



In the past two centuries, our world has time and again reached new heights in large measure due to women's equality movements; women's landmark movement for suffrage, their efforts to obtain individual rights and freedoms, including the right to education, to property, to divorce, to inheritance, to equal pay, increasing participation quota of women in economic and political institutions, and their selfless struggle in the framework of liberation movements against dictatorship.

Regrettably, however, the advancement of the ideal of equality has today come face-to-face with a formidable barrier, Islamic fundamentalism. While endangering the whole region and world through genocide, terrorism and discrimination, this phenomenon is most hostile to women. For this reason, today, women's plight in the Middle East is entirely entwined with

insecurity, oppression, homelessness, murder and servitude.

Far beyond the Middle East, fundamentalism is now threatening Europe and other regions across the globe.

Nevertheless, I want to say that there is a way to defeat and overcome this destructive force and there is a solution: *Women's power is the greatest challenger of Islamic fundamentalism.*

Indeed, the solution is being offered by a resistance movement which believes in the power and leadership of women, who are leading this fight.

At the outset, allow me to explain how fundamentalism came into being.

The emergence of fundamentalism stems from a multitude of factors, including social and historical circumstances, as well as policies pursued by the international community.

Major developments in the twentieth century in their own right impacted the formation and rapid advance of fundamentalism. *But none has been as determinative as the rise to power of the reactionary mullahs in Iran.* This is particularly the case because the ruling regime in Iran offered, for the first time, a model for fundamentalist groups to follow, the very groups who have now become the source of terrorism and war in the Middle East region and elsewhere.

But is the emergence of fundamentalism, as some assert, a face-off between the Islamic world and the West; or more specifically, is this a confrontation between Islam on the one hand, and Christianity and Judaism on the other?

Indeed no! In reality, the crux of the conflict is not between Islam and Christianity. Nor is it between Islam and the West, and nor between the Shia and the Sunni. The conflict is over freedom versus subjugation and dictatorship, between equality on the one hand and oppression and misogyny on the other.

Misogyny lies at the core fundamentalist mindset, which by suppressing women oppresses and

intimidates society as a whole.

I must, however, emphasise that fundamentalism is a defensive reaction to the freedom and equality movement.

Confronting fundamentalism requires a comprehensive solution, including a cultural response.

By invoking the name of Islam, fundamentalism uses this religion as a weapon to go on the offensive.

Thus, the answer is in Democratic Islam, the antithesis to fundamentalism.

I must therefore emphasise that these two phenomena are diametrically opposite one another.

One is a dictatorial ideology and the other is the religion of freedom, which recognizes sovereignty as the most important right of the people.

One defends religious discrimination; the other is an Islam which defends equal rights for the followers of other religions.

One is monopolistic and dogmatic; the other is a tolerant Islam, which promotes respect for the belief in other ideas and religions.

One is a religion imposed through force; the other is an Islam which rejects any compulsion in religion.

One practices misogyny; the other promotes gender equality.

Today, in Asia and Africa, different fundamentalist groups are engaged in destruction and terrorism under the banner of Islam. Their atrocities, having spread to Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen, have endangered human society.

How can this danger be thwarted?

We must find the answer in challenging the religious dictatorship ruling Iran, because this regime is the heart of the problem and its support for Bashar Assad's dictatorship in Syria and Maliki in Iraq led to the emergence of fundamentalist militias and ISIS.

As such, silence vis-à-vis the Iranian regime's meddling in Syria, Iraq and other regional countries, let alone collaborating with it under the pretext of confronting ISIS, represents a strategic



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"We must create a world based on justice, freedom and equality"



mistake. *It would be delusional to ask the arsonist to put out the arson. To the contrary, the correct policy is to evict the mullahs' regime from Iraq and Syria.*

The Iranian regime is the founding state for most of the atrocities and evil which fundamentalist groups have perpetrated and are perpetrating by using the mullahs' rule as a role model.

Indeed, who made stoning to death an official practice in the last two decades of the Twentieth Century?

Who enacted in law eye gouging and limb amputation as punishment?

Who massacred the largest number of political prisoners since the Second World War?

Who issued a fatwa to murder a foreign author?

Who revived and used a reactionary caliphate as a role model?

Indeed, it is the velayat-e faqih regime, the godfather of terrorism, the enemy of Middle East nations and the primary threat to global peace and security.

As we mark the International Women's Day, I must say that Khomeini and his cronies have perpetrated many heinous crimes and assaults against women most of which have remained untold even now.

The reality is that the shocking and heart wrenching crimes committed by ISIS in recent months are only a small part of the catastrophe the Iranian

people have had to endure for the past 36 years.

Just three days ago, simultaneous with nuclear talks, the mullahs hanged publicly and secretly dozens of prisoners including six Sunni Kurdish political prisoners who had been on hunger strike. Their execution was a bid to conceal the regime's impasse and prevent popular uprisings.

The policy of appeasement has emboldened the mullahs. Such a feeble policy amounts to encouraging fundamentalism. So Western powers must end it.

There is a solution because the Iranian people have at no time remained silent vis-à-vis the ruling religious dictatorship.

This movement owes its perseverance and advancement to its belief in the ideal of equality.

Indeed, a movement which finds fulfilment in its own ideal and is not deterred by the balance of power endures, advances, remains invigorated and refreshed and creates new values, which provides it with the power to persevere today and to rebuild tomorrow.

These values include giving primacy to love, affection, friendship and putting one's fellow colleagues first. Such values are the mirror image of rivalry, envy and eliminating others. It is in a word, love in place of hatred.

I must say that these values do not belong to Iran's pioneering women and men. They are key to progress and liberation wherever there is oppression and inequality. This is a path and a mantra which urges hope and continuing struggle. It promotes perseverance.

I call on all of you to form and expand a powerful front against Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism and barbarism under the name of Islam.

Because of this historic responsibility, changing the status quo is our duty and commitment and we must all work together to realise it.

Indeed, we must create a world based on justice, freedom and equality.

Let us join voices and tell the world community, the U.S government, the European Union and the United Nations that the largest movement comprised of pioneering women in Camp Liberty is the source of hope and inspiration for Iranian women and is a treasure for equality movements everywhere. You must not ignore their protection.

Indeed, a moment in history is looming that despite darkness and despair, the world will be rid of the nightmare of fundamentalism and the nations of the Middle East will be saved from this evil spell. And with no doubt this will be realized with our unity.

We can and we must!



• O U R E V E N T S •

International Women's Day in London

Professor Sara Chandler, member of the Law Society Council and the President of the Human Rights Commission of the Federation of European Bar Associations, addressed our event in Westbourne Grove church and said:

It really is such a warm feeling of solidarity and to be with so many activists and volunteers and supporters of freedom. Your work in the International Liberty Association is so important. Like all organisations that carry support in the international community, it makes such a difference because without that support – think of the remaining refugees in Camp Liberty who are in such a perilous situation. The support of the international community is keeping them alive.

Thanks to the organisations in the international legal community, and especially ones like the International Liberty Association, this is where protection lies at the moment.



Asraf, in Iran, it seems that the Iranian government is prepared to kill them if they do not bow to the subservience demanded of them. As Mrs. Maryam Rajavi has said, "Freedom does not come free and no one will ever deliver it to us in a silver platter", and she added that with women's liberation, men were also liberating themselves.



The famous English writers, the Bronte sisters, had to write secretly and under men's names and that tradition continued well into the last century in this country. But it changed, though we still do not have equal rights. Iran, too, will change. It will be the courageous and determined efforts of the Iranian women seeking equality before the law and fundamental freedoms and rights which will bring this about and lead the way for all the exploited women in the world to demand their democratic rights. We are with you all the way!

Rest assured that the Law Society, as a leader of the legal profession in the UK, will continue to remain an outspoken critic of the violation of human rights in Iraq and in Iran.

We are especially committed to the women of Iran in their struggle for their rights. We will stand with you as long as we are needed.

In a message to ILA for the occasion of IWD, **Jean Stead**, formerly assistant Editor of the Guardian newspaper wrote: *The discrimination Iranian women face is much greater and the consequences for their brave actions more brutal. They have become leaders in the struggle for women's freedom throughout the world. At Camp Liberty, at*

Twickenham



North London





• NEWS FROM IRAN •

A fighter for the path of freedom



Beside the grave of Satar Beheshti's* father, Satar's sister, Sahar, gave a very courageous speech which was recorded on video and uploaded to YouTube. These are her words translated:

Where in the world have you seen this cruelty? Satar's father had a heart attack when he heard that his son was killed under torture. I had bought this grave for the family. But the authorities in order to

break the spirit of my mother, told us that only Satar's father can be buried here and not my mother.

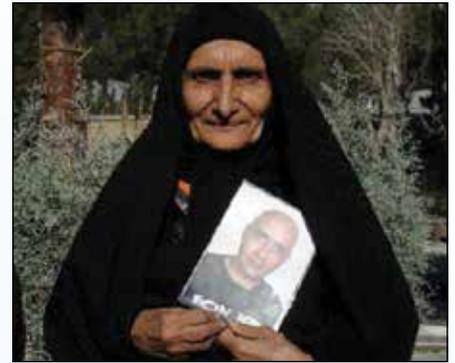
Good for those who died, they are free from oppression now. Hail to those whose names will be remembered by generations like the name of Jesus.

I am happy that my brother, a true patriot, stood tall and died for the cause of freedom. I am happy that my brother, with his smiles, bothered the tortures who were tormenting freedom lovers.

I say with pride. I am Sahar Beheshti, Satar Beheshti's sister, a fighter for the path of freedom of my nation. Long live Iran, long live Satar.

Then her mother took the stage and said:

I adore my lioness daughter. She is the pride of our family and his brother and father. While I am alive I will be Satar's



voice and when I die Sahar carries the fight forward to make sure Satar's voice is heard everywhere. I am grateful of her, I am proud of her.



* Satar Beheshti is the young blogger who was killed under torture in the hands of interrogators in November 2012. His mother and family have been calling for justice ever since.

Repression against protesting teachers



Several teachers who participated in the Sunday, 8 March protest in the cities of Tehran and Karaj have been summoned by the courts and by the Ministry of

Intelligence and Security (MOIS) and faced interrogations. Four members of the Teachers' Union in the city of Karaj near Tehran, were summoned to the city's "Revolutionary Court" and the agents asked them to commit to stop their union activities.

Esmail Abdi, the Secretary General of the Teachers' Union, was summoned by the MOIS and was pressured to resign. According to reports MOIS agents threatened that if he did not resign from his post, he would be sentenced to at least 10 years in prison.

According to informed sources inside Iran many teachers who participated in the protests were called in by the "Herassat" office of the Ministry of Education (the security body responsible for dealing with employees of that department) for questioning.

On Sunday, 8 March, in different cities across Iran, teachers participated in rallies to protest their very low wages as well as discriminations and harsh living conditions.

The flow of child brides under the Iranian regime's rule

Last spring the names of 18,000 girls under the age of 15 were registered for marriage. Article 1401 of the Iranian regime's Civil Code, approved in 2002 states, "Girls getting married before the age of 13 and boys before 15 must be under the permission of a male caretaker."

On 26 February, the State-run Salamat News website reported an interview with a 36-years-old women whose 'face is already filled with wrinkles'.

"Women in this village become mother-in-laws at the age of 36. We are always busy just taking care of the children," a girl said. "Our hair goes white at the age of 14 or 15. Here they don't ask girls about their opinion on the marriage. When the father answers yes, it's all done. My sister was 12 when her marriage was arranged. She said she never thought of loving her husband or not, and she was just happy that they gave her a ring."

"Most of the marriages in this village are with relatives and this has become customary. Families with sons get small girls into their own custody so she grows up to behave the way the husband's family wants. In the marriage certificate, there is no word of the woman's right to divorce, housing, employment and education. The village women believe if they divorce one day, they will be forced to give up their dowry because here men have the last word," she added.





FROM CAMP LIBERTY

Interview with Hengameh Haj Hassan the author of *Face to Face with the Beast*



Q: How can you relate the current situation in Iraq to the crimes of the regime in Tehran and in particular against women, given your experience as a former political prisoner?

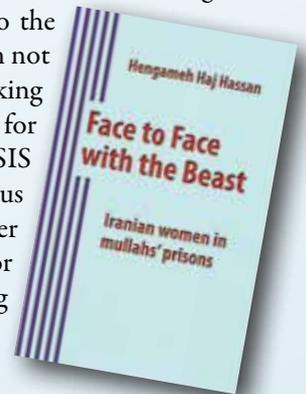
A: The reality is that the mullahs' regime is the main source of Islamic extremism. Khomeini himself was inventor of this phenomenon in 20th Century. He committed most atrocious crimes against the people of Iran himself, from ordering the killing of journalists and writers to killing women and youth in street corners all over the country to executing our compatriots from Christian and other religions and minorities.

Khomeini's rule is characterised by misogyny, and repression against women is one of the main pillars of his ideology. He first started with the slogan, 'cover your head or take beating in the head'. His thugs attacked women in the

streets at first, later women were being executed in hundreds. This barbarity is still continuing in my country. What the regime was previously doing in secret in dungeons, it is now doing in public. By these crimes the regime seeks its survival. These demagogues, I can tell from my prison experience, while taking blindfolded women to courts would give women prisoners a wooden stick to hold one end of it and they kept the other end so that they are not seen touching women's hands, but at the same time most severe indescribable sexual assaults and tortures were being practiced by the same thugs inside prisons against women of all ages, from old grandmothers and pregnant women to underage juveniles. I witnessed myself many women who lost their sanity under these tortures and many committed suicide. I have named many in my book. Even in Hitler's concentration camps you would not find a place where so many women and girls were subjected to this inhumanity. You could find nowhere in the world so many execution of women and children, execution of a girl, like Reyhaneh

Jabbari, for defending herself against sexual assault; or pouring acid on the face of women that the regime's so called parliament has propagated. Islamic fundamentalism and extremism – the worst case of violence against women – was first and foremost practiced and theorised in Iran by Khomeini and his reactionary mullahs. These practices take precedence in the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and violent extremism you are witnessing in Iraq and the whole of the Middle East.

The appeasement policy of the western governments has emboldened the regime that is the godfather of ISIS and all the rest. The only way to deal with Islamic extremism in the region is to stand up to the regime in Tehran not appeasing it. Asking Iran to join in for destroying ISIS is as ridiculous as asking Hitler to join in for 'destroying stormtroopers'.



UN GENEVA HQ: CALL TO END PUBLIC EXECUTIONS IN IRAN

On Thursday 12 March, Dr Alejo Vidal-Quadras, President of the International Committee in Search of Justice (ISJ) and former Vice-President of European Parliament (1999-2014) was the keynote speaker in a conference held at the UN Headquarters in Geneva.

In his speech, Dr Vidal-Quadras said: "Iran, under the so called moderate Rouhani, has executed many more prisoners than Ahmadinejad during the same period", with nearly 1400



executions during Rouhani's term.

He added: "Many Iranians including Kurds, Baluchis and Iranian-Arabs from the Khuzestan province are waiting to be executed. The religious minorities are repressed. Around 140 Baha'is are held in Iran's prisons and their cemeteries have been destroyed. Those Iranians who have converted from Islam to Christianity have been brutally repressed by the authorities. This repression also targets the Sunni Muslims.

"In 2014, under President Rouhani the government announced or implemented discriminatory policies, including restricting the employment of women in coffee shops, certain restaurants, and other public spaces. There was a wave of acid attacks against women in September and October in

Isfahan and some other cities.

"Rouhani has been recorded on TV in a response to a question about death sentences which he clearly replied that this is the rule of law and must be carried out and we must not interfere.

"We in the ISJ believe that the mandate of Mr Ahmad Shaheed the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran, must be extended. The Iranian regime has not allowed him to visit the country.

"Any expansion of relationship with Iran must be conditioned to a clear progress in human rights. Iran should end the executions, free political prisoners, stop the repression of women and respect the rights and freedoms of the Iranian people.

"We need to be on the side of the Iranian people so they would feel that we are not going to abandon them."