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# International Liberty Association Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL

As we are preparing this newsletter we are witnessing a world in turmoil and uncertainty as economic and social pressures meet health and safety considerations regarding the coronavirus and its continuing threat to life and well-being.

In many countries, including here in Britain, governments are taking tentative steps to ease lockdown guidelines as more types of shops and businesses are allowed to reopen, some children are going back to school and air travel is soon to be resumed with hotels returning to a degree of capacity at home and abroad.

There are many heartwarming scenes of family members reuniting after nearly 3 months of enforced separation and we at ILA are beginning to feel we can look forward to the day when we can again host you in person at a social event, where you will be able to savour the delights of our Persian cuisine, one thing we have been unable to provide in our weekly "Hour with ILA" zoom sessions.

It is with great sadness we reflect that, due to the recent death of the great Iranian singer, Marjan, while undergoing surgery, we will be unable to see her sing for us again in person. Many of us have had the opportunity to see Marjan perform in ILA events, raising spirits with her stirring songs of perseverance and of yearning for her beloved homeland of Iran. We know from feedback that with Marjan many of you felt language no barrier as she had a way of expressing herself that sang directly to the soul. She will be forever in our hearts and surely singing along with us in spirit as we continue our endeavours.

The current situation in Iran

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## PRISON CONDITIONS CONTINUE TO DETERIORATE ACROSS IRAN



Iranian genius student political prisoner, **Ali Younesi**, has contracted coronavirus in prison, his brother tweeted on Thursday 11 June.

Ali Younesi and another student, **Amir Hossein Moradi**, went missing on 10 April. After 26 days, the Iranian

regime's judiciary admitted to having apprehended them and to holding them in custody.

Ali Younesi and Amir Hossein Moradi were accused of being engaged in "diversionary actions" and "attempting to ... continued on p.2

## FAREWELL TO IRANIAN SINGER WHO DEVOTED HER LIFE TO HUMAN RIGHTS



**Marjan**, an accomplished Iranian singer and actress who became the symbol of human rights activism, died in an LA hospital on Saturday 6th of June at the age of 71.

She was a well loved actress and

singer and a well-known celebrity. She had roles in some 30 movies in the 1960s and 70s and sang some much loved songs.

In 1980, a year after the mullahs took over Iran, they imprisoned her for singing as a woman prior to the revolution.

She was arrested again in 1982 with her husband for their contacts with critics and opponents of the regime. She spent 2 years in the notoriously horrific Evin prison, 9 months of the time in solitary confinement.

She saw and met many women prisoners whom she remembered and talked about years later. Most of them, of very young age, being executed by the mullahs.

In Iran she was banned from singing and banned from travelling abroad for 17 years. Eventually Marjan and her husband ... continued on p.3



## Editorial

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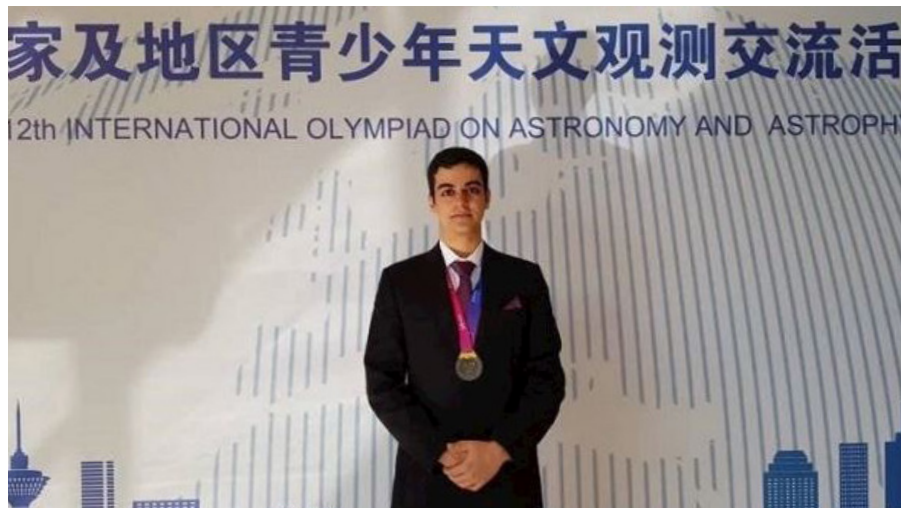
remains critical and the actual number of deaths from the virus, many times higher than the officially quoted figures, is still increasing, as is the number of people being arrested for trying to tell the truth to the world.

With the twin spectres of the virus being badly mishandled and the increased poverty of the people, highlighted in this issue by the many children forced into garbage collection and other forms of exploitation, while the regime officials sit on billions of dollars of plundered fortunes which they have no intention of spending on the suffering people, protests continue and the threat of another major uprising is very real.

To try and prevent unrest, the regime knows only repressive measures and so is continuing to implement its brutal strategy, including the arrest and imprisonment of elite students and others despite the virus having now taken hold of a high percentage of the prison population, with several deaths. The harassment of women for 'heinous crimes' such as 'hijab violation' has also been stepped up and executions, including of minors and some of those arrested in previous demonstrations, are ongoing as deterrents.

We continue to do everything we can to bring attention to the suffering and injustice in Iran and are very pleased to confirm that the UN has agreed to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, Javād Rehmān, to maintain his spotlight on the situation of human rights abuse including the level of executions.

We feel especially blessed that you continue to stand with us, even in these times of concern and limitations in your own lives. We are sure that by standing together we will soon prevail in ushering in a new way in Iran, based on humanity and the rule of just law, to the benefit also of the region and the whole world.



## Prison conditions continue to deteriorate

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carry out sabotage operations.”

Younesi won the gold medal for Astronomy and Astrophysics at the 12th International Olympiad, held in China in 2018. He had previously won the silver and gold medals at the National Astronomy Olympiad in 2016 and 2017. Amir Hossein Moradi won the Olympiad's silver medal in 2017.

The families of the young prisoners are very worried about their loved ones and are appealing to international organisations and the UN Human Rights Council to get involved and rescue their children from the harsh fate the regime authorities have dreamed up for these elite students.

At the same time, prison conditions continue to deteriorate across Iran as more and more people are being detained due to the regime's fear of a looming uprising.

The brother of one of the political prisoners called for action to secure his sister's release in an open letter to human rights organisations.

In the letter he wrote: “I was a political prisoner in Iran for 12 years, through the 1980s, and now I live outside of Iran. I am aware of the brutal treatment of prisoners and their torture by Iranian regime

agents.

“I remembered that Lajevardi, the [then] head of the prisons, had jokingly told us, “I am the custodian of the treasury. The country does not have extra bread to feed you. We feed you just enough to not die so we can execute all of you ourselves” In those days, my sister **Marzieh Farsi**, who was 22 years old, was coming to visit me to ease my pain.

“This time it is my sister who is arrested and I do not have the possibility of meeting her.

“I am supporting her from abroad, but with another difference, Coronavirus has cast its ominous shadow over the prisons.”

Marzieh, 53, has both heart disease and cancer. Last year, in 2019, she underwent surgery for cancer. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic in Evin prison and Marzieh's illness, her life is in danger.

The Iranian regime not only gives its opponents a hard time on the streets; it is also killing them inside Iran's prisons.

Iran has already released over 70,000 inmates who were in prison for committing criminal offences. However, it kept the political detainees in the prisons.

This means that these political detainees will face slow death in the different Iranian prisons.

Over 70% of prisoners in Urmia Prison have contracted Covid-19. Some of the prisoners have died from the disease. The prison authorities have taken no measures whatsoever to protect the prisoners against the virus.

A large number of prisoners in Urmia staged a hunger strike in protest against the death of a fellow prisoner from Covid-19.

The same is happening in other prisons across the country.



Marzieh Farsi





## IRAN'S FORESTS ARE BURNING AND THE AUTHORITIES DO NOTHING



On World Environment Day, 5 June, fire continues to rage across Iranian forests due to the inaction of the authorities.

Reports and footage from Iran indicate that hundreds of acres of forests in several Iranian provinces have been burning for several weeks. Yet the regime has not taken any



action to control it.

The fire started on May 28 in the Khaeiz area located in Iran's Kohgiluyeh & Boyer Ahmed province, in the south of Iran. However, at the time of preparing this article, reports and footage online indicate a large fire is raging in Chitgar forest, near Tehran,

some 400 miles north of Khaeiz.

The Khaeiz protected area is a mountainous region with different plant and animal species, and the spread of fire can cause irreparable damage to the various flora and fauna in this region.

As the fire continues to rage, the local authorities speak of a lack of fire fighting equipment. Corruption and mismanagement is largely to blame for the inability and unwillingness of the regime to contain the fires.

The destruction of forests is not limited to Zagros. The northern parts of Iran with their old forests have also been widely affected by the regime's wrong-headed policies. Masoud Molana, a member of the National Environmental Coordination Council, in an interview with the state-run

ISNA news agency on October 24, 2018, said: "According to the statistics of natural resources and forestry, the forests of the north have been reduced from 3,600,000 to 1,800,000 acres over the past 40 years. Once we have destroyed half of the forests, the rain will no longer be a blessing and every precipitation would turn into a flood."

The Iranian regime, due to its institutionalized corruption and prioritizing domestic oppression and export of terrorism abroad, has been plundering Iran's national wealth to fund its illicit activities, and neglected helping people in the face of natural disasters. This approach, which is in line with the mullahs' handling of the coronavirus outbreak, once again confirms that this regime does not care about Iran and the Iranian people.



Given lack of government support locals try to put off the fire with whatever they have. Some have given their lives.

### Farewell to Iranian singer

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left the country and took exile in the USA.

In exile she used her beautiful voice for the Iranian people's dream of freedom.

In Washington in 2005 she sang for the first time since 1979. In a gathering of Iranian exiles, she sang what would become her most famous

song, *The Inevitable Germination of Sprouts* for the first time:

*"Even if you cut my branches,  
What would you do with my strong root?  
"You may ban birds from flying,  
but what could you do with their chicks  
getting ready in their nests"...*

In exile she used her much loved voice in support of the Iranian's desire for freedom and human rights, including singing at ILA events in London.

Although her voice and music is officially banned in Iran, it is widely listened to by Iranians, especially the youth whose voice she felt she was: *"Don't you think that I've been forgotten,  
I have been etched in history and memories,  
I've become so united with my people,  
That I became and I am their voice"*

She appeared many times on *Sima-y-Azadi (Face of Freedom)* TV.

Her death had a massive impact on



Iranian and music loving communities both in and outside of Iran, and once again raised the issue of human rights as the mullahs threatened many of her fans inside Iran with prison.

May God bless her soul and may she rest in peace.



## NEW MISOGYNIST STEPS AGAINST WOMEN



The misogynist regime ruling Iran is taking a new step in its systematic crackdown against Iranian women across the country by launching an initiative to issue fines, send threatening text messages and even impound vehicles in which women passengers are seen, according to the regime, to be not abiding by hijab (veiling) regulations.

“When citizens receive a text message saying, ‘Vehicle

owner! Hijab regulations were not abided in your vehicle,’ they should immediately refer to a police station; it doesn’t matter in what city they are or in what city they have received the hijab violation text,” said Tehran Security Police chief Ali Zolghadri on Wednesday, 10 June, according to Fars news agency. This outlet is linked to the regime’s Revolutionary Guards (IRGC).

In other news, the mullahs’ regime intends to launch 80 new stations for the police in the Iranian capital of Tehran. “80 new stations must be added to Tehran’s police centres and arrangements have been made for each district to allocate two areas for this initiative,” said Tehran Governor Anoushirvan-Mohseni-Bandpei, according to a piece published on Wednesday, June 10, by the state-run Entekhab website. “We in the governorate are seeking to provide special assistance to the police force. One such initiative is for Tehran’s police force to have state-of-the-art electronic cameras and equipment. Therefore, wherever the police say there is a need for electronic cameras, we will do so to our utmost capability,” he added.

## IRAN’S CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK MUCH WORSE THAN ACKNOWLEDGED



Iran’s coronavirus death toll has surpassed 60,000 according to figures collected from hospitals and mortuaries across Iran. Of course, the Iranian regime has acknowledged only a fraction of that number.

The regime’s undercount is further justified by a lack of testing. Shortages of testing kits have even plagued wealthier, Western countries. But in Iran, such shortages are welcomed and even manufactured. In recent weeks, the Iranian regime’s officials have been boasting about the country’s plans to export domestically-produced medical equipment related to the Covid-19 pandemic. This of course deprives the Iranian population of resources that they desperately need at a time when the daily increase in cases is rising beyond a two-month-high, even according to the regime’s own figures.

The renewed growth of Iran’s outbreak is the inevitable result of a premature reopening of the nation’s economy. Ordinary domestic activities were put on pause only briefly, from late March to early April. By then, it had been widely recognised that Iran was by far the worst affected country in the Middle East.

The Covid-19 crisis in Iran has aggravated since it was



confirmed that the outbreak had begun much earlier in Iran than the regime initially acknowledged.

Recently, the World Health Organisation’s director for the Middle East, Dr. Rick Brennan, after returning from a mission in Iran, determined that the government mortality figures, which continue to be cited by global media, represented something like one-fifth of the actual total.

From time to time, some of the regime’s officials, fearing the post-coronavirus situation and the restive society, have broken rank with the official narrative and questioned the validity of official figures.



The regime’s authorities have acknowledged arresting hundreds of individuals for “rumour mongering” on the topic of coronavirus.





## GARBAGE COLLECTOR CHILDREN IN IRAN

According to the state-run ISNA news agency on 14 June, the Tehran Municipality estimated that about 4,000 garbage collector children exist in Tehran alone. These are homeless and poor children who have no other means to make ends meet and are being exploited by regime officials to make huge financial gains.

Deputy mayor Mohammadreza Javadi said: "The garbage-collector children are a result of abuse and neglect, and we must not allow this abuse of children to take place." He said this while he admits that the work of these children is done under the supervision of the municipality itself and the children are even charged for a permit to search in the garbage.

Javadi said: "Every district has a contractor. Our studies have shown that a contractor usually gives every five to six streets to a group and it usually gets 28 million rials from these garbage collectors and gives them a card. We have plans to reform this system between the working children and the contractor."

Child labour in Iran is the direct result of the regime's destructive policies and neglect. While everywhere in the world, children are going to school to build the country's future, in Iran children scurry across the streets in hopes of finding something to fill their stomachs. And the irony is that the authorities are well aware of this calamity and do nothing.

At the beginning of the academic year, Hamdeli, a state-run newspaper, wrote: "The economic poverty engulfing families is creating a major obstacle in advancing education.



One of the most important results is children forced into labour outside of their houses, preventing them from going to school."

Hamdeli concluded: "The truth is that children who drop out of schools have the potential of acting as a time bomb that can explode any day and any moment. Such an explosion that can not only destroy themselves, but also inflict damage to others and the society." Around the same time, Tasnim, another state-run news agency run by the regime's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) Quds Force, acknowledged that at least 3.5 million Iranian children have been deprived of education.

## INTERVIEW WITH DR HANIFEH KHAYYERI



*Please introduce yourself*

I live in Stockholm in Sweden and currently work as a special advisor at a Swedish governmental agency. But have been volunteering for human rights advocacy since I was very young.

*How come you decided to volunteer in this work?*

I grew up in a family where both my parents were human rights defenders and participated in activities for promoting human rights in Iran. When I was four years old, my mother was killed by the Iranian regime. This of course has been my moral compass which motivated me to keep in touch with the Iranian community. But when I reached a more adult age, I wanted to make a more active choice and decided to get to know people and learn more about Iran's history. So I read books and asked a lot of questions. At

some point, you've asked all the questions you can ask and simply have to decide if you want to engage and contribute. That's how I've become a volunteer.

*Can you comment on the success of International Liberty Association campaigns in particular whether they have had any impact on the implementation of death penalty and rights and liberties of prisoners in Iran?*

NGO campaigns are crucial for advancing human rights in countries where their governments have no, or limited, respect for human rights, such as Iran. Iran is a country that isn't transparent and doesn't report its real numbers for executions, people on death row, prison conditions and rights and many more. Iran also doesn't allow independent international experts to visit the country to report on the situation of human rights. In such circumstances, NGO campaigns and reports are critical for highlighting the human rights abuses and really be the voice of the unheard and the silenced. By providing not only facts but also showing a critical mass of people who care about Iranian lives, governments and the international community will be obliged to put pressure on Iran to uphold its obligations to human rights.

We can see the effect of NGO activities very clearly in campaigns for individual human rights defenders. Once the names of human rights defenders is known and the unreasonable punishment or treatment of them by the Iranian authorities exposed, it is the outcry of the International community against this injustice that prevents their execution.



## ILA ZOOM MEETINGS

On 6 June we had Bishop John Pritchard and the Hon. David Jones MP as speakers for our 'One Hour with ILA' online event. The programme usually includes poetry and music as well. Below you will find excerpts of the speeches by **Bishop Pritchard** and the **Hon David Jones**:



**Bishop John Pritchard, former Bishop of Oxford:**

I'm really pleased to be able to join you. This was an unexpected pleasure and privilege to come along, because you've obviously been meeting for some time, thirteen meetings, that's impressive. So well done for doing that, but more important than that, you know, well done for the tremendous work that ILA is obviously doing for Iran and the Middle East as a whole. Yes, I was in Oxford for a number of years and loved it, and I will have met probably a number of the good folk who are here right now, and there's Peter Watsham I saw.

The thing that joins us all together, of course, is this concern for human rights which of course is indivisible. You can't have one part of the

international body suffering and not have all of us suffering, in a sense. Christians have this understanding of the Church as the body of Christ, and we say if one part suffers, we all suffer, but it's the same with humanity as a whole, isn't it, that if one part of humanity suffers, then we're all suffering.

But well done to members of ILA for just keeping that pressure on, for helping so much in getting Ashrafis out of the desperate situation they were in, and also now tackling that executions issue.

This is all really important work. Because the news coming out of Iran, we have to say, simply is not good at all.

There's the increased pressure on prisoners that's going on, there's the increased repression against minorities, and I'm particularly concerned of course with religious minorities, Christians, Baha'is, Sunni Muslims, and even Shia Muslims if they're not, well, if they're not accepting the repressive interpretations of the regime.

But why is all this going on? Why are the officials of the regime so afraid of their population? It must be because the people of Iran are actually fed up with repression and economic mismanagement and most of all the inequality that's imposed on their society. Because the majority of people in Iran live below the poverty line, and just those connected with

the Supreme Leader, it seems, in a sense, are those who have everything, in contrast.

This past week we have been hearing about the environmental disaster that's enveloping parts of the country: vast areas of forests, across several provinces, are burning, and local volunteers are risking their lives to save the forests, but the government seems to be doing so little. Local people asked the army to provide helicopters and equipment to help them put out the fires, but the military officials apparently are saying that since the Ministry of the Environment owes them money they're not providing the services. I mean, what a mess!

We've just heard of four Iranian Christian converts who've been summoned to begin their five-year jail sentences for leading house churches, for which they were convicted of acting against national security, and that's one of those catch-all phrases, isn't it? Acting against national security.

How can praying and encouraging others to connect with God, how can that be against national security? Come on! The mullahs do seem to be afraid of their own shadows. And we know several other Christians, of course, who've been, had many years in prison across Iran for these kind of charges.

But the good news, of course, is that people like you, and so many others, all over the world, are becoming the voice of prisoners.

So I want to commend the work of the ILA, and the selfless volunteers across the organisation and so many other organisations, some of whom I did meet when I was at Oxford but good to see you again, working tirelessly against this tide of oppression that there is, standing up for human rights, absolutely crucial.

I'm sure what you're doing in the ILA is important, and it does get results. We've seen the Ashrafis coming out from Iraq to Albania and that was a miracle of its own, a remarkable piece of generosity and wonderfully handled, so I'm sure that with your efforts and those of thousands of others, we will turn the tide on these human rights and religious violations that we see going on. Martin Luther ... continued on p.8







## NEWS IN BRIEF

### UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RENEWS THE MANDATE OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON IRAN



The United Nations Human Rights Council voted on 22 June 2020 to reinstate the Special Rapporteur on Iran and **Javaid Rehman's** mandate was renewed for another year. Rogue states tried to side with the Iranian regime on this issue but the final vote was 22 for and 8 against the mandate.

### PROTESTS ACROSS IRAN IN THE MIDST OF PANDEMIC

People of various walks of life, including nurses, workers, residents of cities without water and even investors whose money has been plundered by Iran's rulers, have been demonstrating in streets across the country amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the protesters are demanding unpaid wages and decent working conditions.



Nurses holding a protest rally in Tehran



Protest by municipality workers in Shahin Shahr



Workers protest unpaid wages

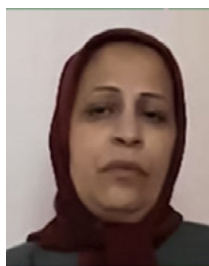


Protest by nurses in Isfahan



Investors rallying outside the Iranian regime's Central Bank in Tehran

### POLITICAL PRISONER RECEIVES DEATH THREATS FROM CRIMINAL OFFENDERS



Political prisoner **Zahra Safaei** has received threats to her life from ordinary prisoners in Qarchak Prison of Varamin. According to the news made public

on Saturday, 13 June 2020, several dangerous prisoners recruited by the Ministry of Intelligence and prison authorities have threatened to assault and murder the political prisoner.

Zahra Safaei was arrested along with her daughter, Parastoo Moeini, on 24 February 2020 and transferred to Qarchak Prison in mid-April.

Mrs Safaei endured time behind bars as a political prisoner from 1981 to 1989. She was arrested again in 2006 and subsequently banished to the Prison of Qazvin in 2009. Her father, a prominent figure in the Tehran business community, was executed in 1982.

The Iranian regime systematically sends female political prisoners to the notorious Qarchak Prison to increase the pressure on them.

### FIVE MEN SENTENCED TO FLOGGING IN TEHRAN



Iran's Supreme Court upheld the flogging and prison sentence of five men charged with robbing homes in Tehran, a state-run news agency said on Monday 15 June. The men were each sentenced to 110 lashes.

According to human rights groups at least five dissidents and protesters were flogged this month.

The regime regularly hands out flogging sentences to protesters and dissidents too.

Flogging is a cruel and degrading punishment and is tantamount to torture.

### LAWYER ARRESTED AFTER CRITICIZING CORRUPTION IN JUDICIARY



Iran's Intelligence agents arrested prominent lawyer **Ali Mojtahedzadeh** on Monday, 8 June, in Tehran, apparently for criticizing corruption at the Judiciary. He was immediately taken to the court based at Tehran's infamous Evin prison.

In his last tweet before detention, Mojtahedzadeh had referred to a controversial court hearing on widespread corruption in the Judiciary and wrote: "Those [court] cases that have been handled by corrupt judges should be reviewed and their outcomes reconsidered."



## ILA Zoom Meetings

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King, do you remember, said: "The arc of a moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." And ultimately justice cannot be defeated, it cannot be held back, justice will out. So I remain very much on your side during this uphill struggle and you are and will remain in my prayers.



### Hon David Jones MP:

I am very pleased to be here with you today even if only virtually from my home in North Wales. And first of all, can I thank the ILA for hosting this event. We're all very well aware of the work that the ILA has done to assist the residents of the former Camps Ashraf and Liberty, and I want to thank them too for all they're doing at the moment to campaign to stop the executions in Iran, about which I wish to speak a little later, and while I'm here I'd also like to send my good wishes to the residents of Ashraf 3 in Albania. I was very fortunate to visit Ashraf twice last year, and I'd hoped to go again this year before coronavirus intervened. Nevertheless, I'm sure I'm going to get the opportunity to visit them again, and in the meantime I wish them all the best for their health and well-being and that of their families.

This is of course a very difficult time for all of us, and I know that many of you who've joined this meeting are actually self-isolating. For my own part, after going into lockdown at home on the 23rd of March, I actually returned to Westminster this week, you probably saw the conga lines, and slowly but surely it does appear that the pandemic is starting to abate here in the UK, and that life may soon be returning to something approaching normal. The virus has devastated so many countries of the world, and it's an enormous tragedy that so many of our fellow-citizens have become ill, and in many cases of course sadly lost their lives. It's a tragedy here in the United Kingdom, but of course also in Iran, where it seems that well over 50,000 Iranians have now died, and sadly only on Friday it was reported that the country is now in the grip of a second wave of infection. I have to say that the response of the regime in Tehran to this crisis has been very regrettable. It suggests that it's unable to fight the virus effectively because of the impact of sanctions; however, the truth is that sanctions don't affect supplies of medicines, and questions have also been asked about the application of funds that were earmarked for medicines and for protective equipment. In due course, the regime will have to answer for its actions in relation to COVID 19.

In the meantime, more transparency is essential, and the truth is that the Iranian regime is now in crisis.

The MOIS and the IRGC intelligence organisation have begun arresting large numbers of young activists within the country. I

was particularly concerned to hear of the execution of two juveniles, Sayyan Sadehpour and Majid Esmailzadeh, [and I raised this issue in a parliamentary question to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who answered by expressing their own deep concern, pointing out that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had stated that the executions were prohibited under international human rights law, and amounted to a violation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Iran itself is a signatory; and I was equally concerned by the arrest of two gifted young students, Amir Hossein Moradi and Ali Younesi, as well as a number of other young people, and again I raised the issue with the FCO. This time, the role of charities such as the ILA has become increasingly important. The history of recent years shows that if the forces of democracy can stand together, then right can and it will prevail.

And I for one commend the Iranian people for their untiring perseverance, and, friends, I have no doubt that ultimately, one day, democracy will return to Iran.



Hugo Wray played magnificent guitar in one of our Zoom events in June

**Join us at our  
Saturday specials  
Every Saturday 5pm to 6pm  
An Hour with ILA**

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