



## **7<sup>th</sup> World Congress against the Death Penalty, EU Parliament, Brussels**

Ladies & gentlemen,

Thank you for your invitation. It is an honour for me to be here as a member of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty, to address some of the main human rights challenges that ethnic minorities are facing in Iran.

There is no better place than the European Parliament for pointing out the ongoing violations that are constantly committed in Iran-where the death penalty is used as a means of political repression and control over the population.

The death penalty maintained in some countries is a truly painful dimension, of today's debate.

I would like to focus on the Kurdish minority in Iran. The Kurdish case is an excellent case study of the treatment of all minorities. I think it exemplifies very well the human rights challenges. We can use the Kurdish example to shed light on other minorities in Iran such as: Baluchi, Ahwazi arab, Bahai, Turkemen and Azerbaijani- Turks.

The number of Kurdish executions is dramatically high and disproportional to its demographic population, in Iran.

The Kurdish people in Iran amount to 13% of Iran's 80 million. However, their share of executions is 25%.

The Kurdish political prisoners constitute almost 50% of all Iran's political imprisonment.

The Kurds have no say in any political participation. There is not a single minister of Kurdish origin in Iran's central government. There is not a single governor of Kurdish origin in Kurdish-populated provinces.

In 2018, the Islamic Republic executed almost 252 prisoners and 61 of them were Kurds. One third of Kurdish executions are related to the fabricated charges of "national security threats" and "moharebeh" (which is an imaginary crime against God).

Last September, despite the UN special rapporteur's warning, Iran executed Lukman, Zanyar and Ramin for their political opinions. It is also important to highlight that nearly a quarter (17 out of 61) of the executions of Kurdish prisoners took place outside Kurdish regions and the number of executions related to belief and political opinion were 10 in 2017 while this number is 29 in 2018. And the government refuses to return back the bodies of the victims, to their family.

*We approve the noteworthy decrease related to drug executions which led in 2018 to the fall of the numbers of executions from 500 to 252. However, despite this positive development, the executions of Kurds are still increasing dramatically and disproportionately.*

There is also a dramatic increase of extra-judicial executions of Kurdish citizens in Iran. In 2018, 75 Kurdish civilians were killed and another 177 citizens were injured.

Furthermore, 30 Kurdish activists, based in Iraqi Kurdistan were targeted by Iranian bombing, assassination and missiles.

By repressing the minorities, Iran is pushing towards ethnic violence and civil war. This can only lead to a boiling point where the worst crimes against humanity can be committed. Remember Srebrenica: in the name of nationalism and religion all the links that traditionally structured society were destroyed and the genocide followed.

The EU's has a crucial role to play. Its' diplomatic weight is heavy in Iran. Not only can it act as a moral compass for the world to consider seriously such human rights violations but it can also convey this message to the Iranian authorities.

Furthermore, Iran is under political and economic pressure. More than ever, it needs EU support and with that comes an attentive ear. This is an historical chance for the European Union to emphasize the imperative of Iranians to respect for human rights and the rights of minorities and women.

Please ladies & gentlemen, hear this call: Europe, don't sacrifice your own soul and belief in human rights! Never forget that the plight of the Kurds is an important catalyser of democratic development in Iran and in the region. The Kurdish population remain a factor of stability not only for the chaotic Middle East but also for the world peace.

Thank you very much

Taimoor Aliassi

Brussel, EU Parliament, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019

UN Representative

Association for Human rights in Kurdistan-Geneva (KMMK-G)