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**Speech by Kate Allen, Amnesty UK  
All Party Parliamentary Group on Iran  
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## **Human rights in Iran**

Amnesty International continues to document serious human violations including detention of human rights defenders and other prisoners of conscience, unfair trials, torture and mistreatment in detention, deaths in custody and the application of the death penalty. Iran has one of the highest number of recorded executions of any country in the world. Amnesty International is particularly concerned about the execution of children and individuals who were minors when their crimes were alleged to have taken place.

Amnesty International has reported extensively on a number of human rights abuses—including large-scale arrests, incommunicado detention and torture—that have taken place in the context of recent unrest among the country's Arab and Kurdish and Azeri ethnic minorities. Demonstrations held to protest violations have been met with indiscriminate use of violence; several of the victims have been children. Religious minority communities—including Bahais and Muslims practicing Sufism, have also been faced increased persecution in recent months.

In recent months, the Iranian authorities have been carrying out a widespread crackdown on civil society, targeting academics, women's rights activists, students, journalists and labor organizers. Hundreds of trade union activists—in particular activists from the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company were arrested as part of measures to prevent planned strikes. Lawyers, web bloggers and others who have spoken out against human rights violations have themselves been targeted for abuse.

Women continue to face widespread discrimination in law and practice. Activists working with the Campaign for Equality, which aims to collect a million signatures in Iran calling for an end to legalized discrimination against women, faced harassment and arrest. At least two – Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi – remain in detention. The authorities have persistently filtered the Campaign's website, making access difficult.

Amnesty has worked very closely with the global trade union federations on the case of Mansour Ossanlu and more widely in defence of workers rights in Iran. Worldwide Action Days have involved coordinated demonstrations and embassy delegations in many countries. When we heard news that Ossanlu was likely to lose

his eyesight unless he was given an operation that was being denied to him by the authorities, an unprecedented email action resulted in fifteen thousand protest messages being sent to the authorities over a five day period, at which point he was transferred to hospital for an operation. It is likely that these actions have had some impact on his treatment, but he is not free and union repression continues to be widespread.

In the UK Section of Amnesty we are working particularly closely with the TUC on the trade union situation in Iran and are also cooperating on Amnesty's campaign in solidarity with women's human rights defenders in that country. Although the situation remains grim, there are glimmers of hope. Despite extensive repression, workers are continuing to organise and to resist attacks on their basic rights. Women's rights advocates have become increasingly vocal and are having some impact on government policy. In the context of widespread rights abuses these struggles are all the more remarkable. We hope that we can count on the APPG's support for these valiant human rights defenders.

For more, go to [www.amnesty.org/tradeunions](http://www.amnesty.org/tradeunions)