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**STATEMENT BY MS. ASMA JAHANGIR  
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ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE ISLAMIC  
REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

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Mr President,

Excellency, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the General Assembly for the first time since I took up my role as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in November 2016. The **report** which I am presenting today covers the first six months of 2017. It is based on information received from sources both inside and outside of Iran, communications sent to the Government and responses received, the review of legislation, and consultations with various stakeholders including civil society organisations. I have highlighted a number of individual cases in the report after a process of verification and would encourage the Government and States to give their full attention to each one.

Mr. President,

I can report that **cooperation** between the Iranian Government and my mandate is ongoing. The Government has responded to 20 communications of the 28 that I have sent. It provided numerous comments on the report that I present to you today, and I was able to engage with representatives from the Permanent Mission of Iran and a visiting delegation from Iran during useful and substantive meetings in March and September in Geneva. It is my sincere hope that this progress and dialogue will continue and be consolidated, in particular through the Government responding positively to my request to visit the country.

I have made reference to a number of **positive developments** in my report. The presidential and local elections in May benefited from a high rate of participation, reflecting the desire of the people of Iran to express their views. During the campaign, President Rouhani spoke about the freedom of the press, women's empowerment, and the rights of all minorities and the most marginalised segments of Iranian society. He further voiced concerns about the curtailment of social media, the repression of students, and the situation of reformist leaders under house arrest. I further welcome the intention to utilise the Charter on Citizen's Rights as human rights guidelines for the executive branch. It is my hope that this intention will be effectively realised through ensuring implementation and enforcement of the Charter.

These encouraging signs render many of the reports that I continue to receive all the more painful, and the need for institutional reform all the more pressing.

Mr. President,

I am concerned by the rate of **executions** in Iran. Reports indicate that since the beginning of the year 435 persons have been executed.

There are some **encouraging signs**. The law on anti-narcotics may reduce sentencing of death penalties. In the last year, at least two executions of juvenile offenders have been postponed due to the timely intervention of the authorities.

However, at least four **juvenile offenders** were executed, and 86 more are known to be on death row, although the actual figure may be higher. I take the opportunity to reiterate my request for a list of all juvenile offenders on death row and reiterate my appeal to the Iranian authorities to urgently abolish the sentencing of children to death, and to engage in a comprehensive process of commutation of all death sentences issued against children, in line with juvenile justice standards.

Furthermore, I recently received information concerning **Mohammad Ali Taheri**, the founder of a spiritual movement, writer and practitioner of alternative medicine theories used in Iran and abroad, who was sentenced to death on the charge of *Fesad fel Arz* (corruption on earth). His appeal is pending before the Supreme Court. The trial took place amidst serious due process concerns, and a number of his followers were arrested and reportedly coerced into giving confessions. I call for the immediate withdrawal of charges against Mr. Taheri and for his unconditional release, and the withdrawal of charges against all individuals held for peaceful exercise of freedom of expression, religion, or belief.

Mr. President,

There are numerous reports of the use of physical and mental **torture**, including to coerce confessions. I regretfully note that amputation, blinding, flogging, and the continued use of prolonged solitary confinement continue to be regularly practiced. I am also deeply concerned by consistent reports of the denial of access to proper and necessary medical treatment of detainees, including the deprivation of medical care as a form of punishment.

Mr. President,

I would like to pay tribute to those individuals and organisations who submit information to my mandate – many in fear for the consequences. More broadly, I have received ongoing and consistent reports of **harassment, intimidation, and prosecutions of human rights defenders**. For example, the well respected human rights defender, Narges Mohammadi, continues to be imprisoned simply because of her commitment to human rights. I am also deeply concerned by the reports of attacks on women human rights defenders in the form of judicial harassment, detention, and smear campaigns. Interlocutors living outside their country have expressed extreme fear also of reprisals against their family members living in Iran, and I have received reports of actions taken, mainly by the judiciary, against the family and lawyers of activists in order to exert pressure upon them. I will continue to document and report on such intimidation in line with my mandate and while seeking to ensure confidentiality where necessary. In my report I also highlight the situation of trade unionists held in prison for peaceful activism, as well as the urgent and critical health situation of prisoners of conscience on, or having undergone, life-threatening hunger strikes to contest the legality of their detention.

Mr. President,

Equally disturbing and no less chilling are the reports that I receive of violations against the rights to **freedom of expression, opinion, information and the press**. As of June 2017, at least 12 journalists, as well as 14 bloggers and social media activists were either in detention or had been sentenced for their peaceful activities. Other media workers report being subjected to interrogation, surveillance, and other forms of harassment and intimidation.

In the course of this year, I have met with numerous journalists, including some working in the **Persian Service of the British Broadcasting Company** during a short visit to the United Kingdom. They described how they have been harassed and intimidated by agents of the State. In some cases, I understand that those targeted did not return back to work. I have also received reports of family members being called in for questioning and warned of dire consequences if their relatives continued to work for the BBC Persian Service, and the imposition of asset freezes preventing the journalists, for example, from being able to sell property. I received written submissions from many of the journalists that I interviewed which detailed the intimidation that they had been subjected to. They all sought private meetings for fear of the consequence of being identified as having provided information to my mandate.

Mr. President,

In my report, I noted that the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had identified an emerging pattern concerning the **arbitrary deprivation of liberty of dual nationals**, which has continued this year. To illustrate, I highlighted a number of individual cases in my report, and most recently called for the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in line with the August 2016 opinion of the Working Group. Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe is a dual national who is serving a sentence of five years and is now facing new charges which could lead to an additional sixteen years of imprisonment. I also am also deeply disturbed by the recent conviction of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali to death following a trial marred by violations of due process. He was accused of “espionage”.

Mr. President,

In my report, I welcomed the pledges made by President Rouhani to address the **rights of women** in Iran, and noted the commitment made by the State to the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowerment. However the vehement reaction to the social media campaigns protesting against mandatory dress codes; the arrest of individuals for allegedly reading and spreading feminist literature; the ongoing ban prohibiting women from watching sporting events in stadiums in contravention to the Charter; and exclusion of women from certain occupations and positions suggest much remains to be done to realise these commitments. I call upon the Government to address these concerns in practice, and in legislation through ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to repeal all laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls.

Mr. President,

I have also documented the **situation of ethnic and religious minorities** in the country, including the unabated discrimination against and targeting of the Baha'i community, which threatens their right to a livelihood. I reiterate my call upon the Government to guarantee their equal protection as provided for by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Iran is a party. I have also been disturbed by the reports of arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, and prosecution for activities carried out by ethnic minorities to promote social, economic, cultural, and linguistic rights and call upon the Government to ensure that the rights of all communities are protected.

Mr. President,

Whilst I have focused today on the current human rights situation in Iran, which is deeply concerning in many respects, I also believe that there are some encouraging signs which I hope will be realised in the near future. I stand ready to offer what **assistance** I can in this regard, through increased engagement and dialogue with the authorities, and I hope through visiting the country.

To this end, I sought to make some specific recommendations in my report to the Government to reform the **judicial system** with a view to ensuring its independence, including through capacity building and training; through ensuring the transparent and merit-based appointment of judges; through ensuring the protection of judges, prosecutors and lawyers and their families; and through strengthening the self-regulation functions and independence of bar associations and councils.

To move forward, I would suggest we must also look back. In this regard, the significant number of petitions, communications, and documentation related to the reported execution of thousands of political prisoners, men, women, and teenagers in 1998, speaks of a deep and unremitting pain that must be surely addressed. The killings themselves have been acknowledged by some at the highest levels of the State. Almost on a daily basis, I receive heartfelt letters from the relatives of those killed calling for answers. The families of the victims have a right to remedy, reparation, and the right to know about the truth of these events and the fate of the victims without risking reprisal. I therefore reiterate my call upon the Government to ensure that a thorough and independent investigation into these events is carried out.

Mr. President,

Looking forward with respect to my mandate, I would also like to inform of a productive mission that I undertook in August to **Norway** and **Sweden**. I met with individuals who recently left Iran, civil society representatives, and was able to have an exchange of views with respective foreign ministries. My visit served to further confirm the assessment presented to you today, and I was able to receive further detailed information related to violations of due process and the right to fair trial. I am deeply concerned at the numerous and consistent reports indicating a lack of independence of the judiciary, as well as the restrictions imposed upon the bar associations which limit their ability to operate independently. There are also a significant number of reports of lawyers being intimidated, harassed, and arrested whilst performing their professional duties. I further received information related to the repression of human rights defenders and activists, which has led to

the curbing of collective organised initiatives to defend human rights within the country, amidst surveillance and intimidation. I also heard from representatives of ethnic minorities on discrimination faced and violations perpetrated against the Baha'i community. I look forward to formally reporting on the findings of this mission in due course.

Mr. President,

I would **conclude** by paying tribute again to those who continue to speak out and provide information to my mandate, amidst a blanket of fear and intimidation directed towards them and their families. I also reiterate my appreciation for the ongoing dialogue with the Government and my deep hope that the human rights situation in Iran will improve through the efforts of the Government and a continuous dialogue. This will require an enabling political environment both at the national and global level.