

Brussels, 12 May 2017



Honourable High Representative, Federica,

We, the undersigned Members of European Parliament supported the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as well as the ongoing development of a broad agenda for EU-Iran relations. We recognise the leadership by the EU in facilitating the JCPOA negotiations, as well as in seeking ways to make sure the lifting of sanctions benefits the population in Iran. Their rights and wellbeing have always been at the core of our concern, and remain so today.

On May 19th, the Presidential elections are scheduled to take place in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The outcome of these elections will have a profound impact on the future of the Islamic Republic, and as a consequence on EU-Iran relations as well. It is essential that these elections are free and fair, and that they are monitored by independent observers.

Already, there is additional repression taking place in the run up to the elections. There have been numerous summons and arrests of journalists, activists and students. Intimidation also occurs. Activists have expressed fears of an intensification of the current crackdown, with the blocking of means of communications and filtering of online platforms. Recently, journalists and administrators of twelve groups on Telegram were arrested by the Revolutionary Guards Intelligence Organization and the Intelligence Ministry. After that, Telegram's Voice Call Service has been shut down. Despite systematic restrictions to speech, and to accessing the open internet, social media channels have remained important means for people to connect with each other. The unjustly detained journalists, political prisoners and Telegram group administrators should be released from detention.

The Iranian authorities should protect journalists and civil society actors and must allow full access to the internet and social media platforms, in line with the use by the leadership of the Islamic Republic itself, which is fervently communicating online. The authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran should institute all necessary measures to respect their international and domestic obligations to guarantee free and fair elections.

We call on you to convey to your counterparts and to the other relevant authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran that further development of the relationship between the EU and Iran can only be successful when accompanied by respect for the rights and wellbeing of people in Iran.

Sincerely,

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