



U.N. panel condemns Iran for post-election crackdown

Fri, Nov 20 2009

By Louis Charbonneau

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - The U.N. General Assembly's human rights committee condemned Iran on Friday for a violent crackdown on protesters after presidential elections this year that the Iranian opposition says were rigged.

Tehran's U.N. Ambassador Mohammad Khazaei sharply criticized the Canadian-drafted resolution, saying assembly decisions of this kind have "created an atmosphere of confrontation and polarization."

The 192-nation assembly's Third Committee, which focuses on human rights, approved the nonbinding resolution 74-48, with 59 abstentions. The committee adopted similar resolutions condemning North Korea and Myanmar by much wider margins on Thursday.

The Iran resolution "expresses its deep concern at serious ongoing and recurring human rights violations."

It voiced "particular concern at the response of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran following the Presidential election of 12 June 2009 and the concurrent rise in human rights violations."

Among those violations were "harassment, intimidation and persecution, including by arbitrary arrest, detention or disappearance, of opposition members, journalists and other media representatives, bloggers, lawyers, clerics, human rights defenders, academics, (and) students."

The result, it said, has been "numerous deaths and injuries." It also condemned reports of "forced confessions and abuse of prisoners including ... rape and torture."

Iran has begun executing people in connection with the unrest that broke out after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election. Opposition leaders say the vote was rigged to ensure Ahmadinejad won.

Saudi Arabia, which has accused Iran of supporting Shi'ite rebels in neighboring Yemen, broke ranks with the vast majority of Muslim nations and voted in favor of the resolution.

Riyadh, the world's top oil producer and a U.S. ally that sees itself as the guardian of Sunni Islam, has often been at odds with Shi'ite Iran.

U.S., BRITAIN, CANADA WELCOME RESOLUTION

U.S. State Department deputy spokesman Robert Wood welcomed the censure, saying it "demonstrates that the international community is deeply concerned over the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran and the government's failure to uphold its obligations under its own constitution and international human rights law."

U.N. resolutions condemning Iran, North Korea and Myanmar have become an annual ritual in recent years. Friday's vote showed that the ranks of Iran's critics increased by four over last year when a similar resolution was adopted 70-51.

Both of Tehran's veto-wielding defenders on the U.N. Security Council, Russia and China, voted against the measure. There is no veto in the General Assembly.

A special assembly session next month is expected to formally adopt all recently approved committee resolutions.

Khazaei sharply criticized Canada for "systematic violations of human rights including discriminatory policies ... against Aborigines, migrants and minorities."

Khazaei also had harsh words for Israel, one of the resolution's co-sponsors, accusing it of "the worst forms of human rights violations, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, mass murder, crimes against humanity and terrorism."

Canadian Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon did not respond directly to Iran's accusations but joined Washington and his British counterpart David Miliband in welcoming the resolution. Cannon said it is "another clear signal of the international community's concern for the human rights of people in Iran."

Miliband said it will encourage "all those campaigning for an improvement in Iran's dismal human rights record."

(Additional reporting by David Ljunggren in Ottawa; editing by Mohammad Zargham)



© Thomson Reuters 2009. All rights reserved. Users may download and print extracts of content from this website for their own personal and non-commercial use only. Reproduction or redistribution of Thomson Reuters content, including by framing or similar means, is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Thomson Reuters. Thomson Reuters and its logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of the Thomson Reuters group of companies around the world.

Thomson Reuters journalists are subject to an Editorial Handbook which requires fair presentation and disclosure of relevant interests.