



TO: The Council of the European Union

January 30, 2020

Your Excellencies,

The undersigned of this joint letter write as representatives of human rights and civil society organisations to express grave concerns regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran’s increasing and systematic use of televised forced confessions against human rights defenders and political prisoners, the content of which is often used in court as incriminating evidence. The undersigned urge the Council of the European Union to adopt restrictive measures against the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and its relevant officials for their role and responsibility regarding the production and broadcast of forced confessions.

The IRIB has served as a conduit for the judiciary and security forces by utilising its national platform to broadcast forced confessions since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to Justice for Iran’s research, at least 355 individuals have been forced to confess — often to fabricated and false allegations — on state TV since the 2009 election protests.

In recent years, public testimonies from some of the victims of this practice have highlighted the systematic pattern of broadcasting forced confessions and close collaboration between IRIB officials and security forces. Among others, journalist [Masih Alinejad](#) and the family members of the Iranian-Canadian environmentalist the late [Kavous Seyyed Emami](#) have publicly spoken against both the role of IRIB and its affiliate individuals in producing and broadcasting televised forced confessions. In this vein, two labour rights activist [Sepideh Gholian](#) whose forced televised confessions were [broadcast](#) by IRIB on 19 January 2019, has also recently filed a complaint with the judicial authorities of the Islamic Republic against IRIB officials. She has done this despite serious threats of reprisal and while expressing her deep distrust of the judicial system.

We, the undersigned of this joint letter, remain gravely concerned about the ongoing and systematic use of televised confessions obtained under torture and ill-treatment in Iran. Our concern is compounded and rendered more urgent by the fact that in the framework of the widespread waves of crackdowns and mass violations of human rights in Iran observed during recent unrests and uprisings in November 2019, many detainees identified by the authorities as alleged leaders face the risk of forced televised confessions, and the content being used against them for harsh sentences, even risking the possibility of facing the death penalty. Since mid-November 2019 and the repression

of the recent nationwide protests, the IRIB has already broadcasted at least 22 forced televised confessions that they obtained from detainees.

Moreover, following the shooting down of Flight 752 by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Islamic Republic detained a number of individuals for their alleged role in recording and publishing footage of the incident and their participation in January 2020 vigils and mournful demonstrations. There is indeed a real risk that the detainees will be forced to undergo televised confessions leading to their conviction of national security charges punishable by harsh sentences.

Additionally, the production and broadcasting of such televised forced confessions, which violate the rights to privacy and due process, is further used to instil fear amongst the general Iranian population in order to repress the rights to freedom of expression and assembly while simultaneously causing psychological suffering and pain for the victims and their families.

For these reasons we, the undersigned of this letter, urge the Council of the European Union to maintain and expand the list of existing restrictive measures against IRIB officials responsible for the production and broadcasting of forced televised confessions. The undersigned also urge the EU to take restrictive measures against IRIB itself, as a governmental entity that has emerged as a platform for staging and engaging in clear human rights violations regularly committed against political prisoners, human rights defenders and their families.

There is a clear precedence of the EU in taking restrictive measures against entities of the Islamic Republic involved in human rights violations, like the Iranian Cyber Police for its role in torture of political prisoners [[\(No. 206/2013 of 11 March 2013\)](#)]. The IRIB has played and continues to play a key role in obtaining, publicising and leveraging forced confessions from political prisoners which gravely violates their right to due process and to fair trial. Therefore it is imperative that the entity as a whole should be held accountable and have restrictive measures imposed on them.

Moreover, the primary platform of IRIB for implementing the agendas of security forces including from the Ministry of Intelligence and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is the 20:30 news programme. As such, it is important to impose sanctions on the executives of the IRIB and producers and reporters, the key IRIB officials in charge of the 20:30 news programme including the following seven individuals:

- (1) Abdul-Ali Ali-Asgari (Head of IRIB) - for his role as a decision-maker at large at IRIB
- (2) Majid Akhundi (Political and Security Deputy of IRIB)- for his role as a decision-maker regarding all IRIB's new programmes with political and security agenda
- (3) Mohammad Reza Jafari-Jelveh (Head of Channel Two of IRIB) - for his directorial role of an IRIB channel that hosts and broadcasts 20:30 news programme
- (4) Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour (Reporter and a member of 20:30 news programme's production team at IRIB)
- (5) Ali Rezvani (Reporter and a member of 20:30 news programme's production team at IRIB)
- (6) Yousef Salami (Reporter and a member of 20:30 news programme's production team at IRIB)
- (7) Hamid Emami (Reporter and a member of 20:30 news programme's production team at IRIB)

The Council of the European Union and European Court of Justice has established a clear precedence of imposing restrictive measures against individuals in Iran who have committed grave human rights abuses against the Iranian people. This includes the involvement of three IRIB officials, namely Ezzatollah Zarghami, Mohammad Sarafraz, and Hamidreza Emadi, in producing and broadcasting forced confessions of political prisoners and show trials [[Council Decisions 2012/168/CFSP of 23](#)

[March 2012](#) and [No 206/2013 of 11 March 2013](#) and ([T-273/13- Sarafranz v Council](#) and [T-274/13- Emadi v Council](#))].

The undersigned, along with human rights defenders and victims of forced confession who have urged the international community to hold the perpetrators accountable, call on the European Union to take a firmer stance by adopting a regulation that will impose restrictive measures against IRIB as an entity, as well as its decision-makers and responsible officials, in order to demonstrate that the practice of televising forced confessions are reprehensible and will not be tolerated.

We urge the EU to recall and place in the forefront of their current and future engagements and policies the human rights violations and atrocities done by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Signatories:

1. Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran
2. All Human Rights for All in Iran
3. Article 19
4. Association for the Human Rights of the Azerbaijan People (AHRAZ)
5. Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort (ECPM)
6. Iran Human Rights Documentation Center
7. Impact Iran
8. Iran Human Rights
9. Justice for Iran
10. Kurdistan Human Rights- Geneva (KMMK-G)
11. Outright Action
12. Siamak Pourzand Foundation
13. 6Rang (Iranian Lesbian & Transgender Network)