



CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY, PLURALISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Weekly Human Rights Report

(15-07-2024 to 21-07-2024)

New Delhi. 21-07-2024. This week's report highlights the current human rights situation in five countries: Azerbaijan, Iran, Cameroon, and Eswatini. In Azerbaijan, recent calls from the global community have intensified for the release of an academic who has been detained under circumstances that many view as politically motivated. The academic's detention has sparked debates about academic freedom and the broader issue of human rights in the country. In Iran, a grave human rights violation has emerged with the sentencing of a Kurdish female labour activist to death. This decision highlights the severe repression faced by activists advocating for workers' rights and ethnic minority groups, exacerbating concerns over Iran's judicial practices and treatment of dissenters. Cameroon has introduced a controversial decree that stifles free speech, raising alarms about the shrinking space for dissent and freedom of expression. This new regulation has been criticized for its potential to suppress critical voices and undermine democratic processes in the country. In Eswatini, two opposition politicians have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms, underscoring the escalating crackdown on political dissent in a nation already grappling with significant political and human rights issues. These sentences reflect broader patterns of repression against opposition figures and civil society in Eswatini.

I. Azerbaijan: Several Human Rights Organisations Release Statement Asking for Release of Detained Academic

This week human rights organisations like Crude Accountability, Freedom Now, Human Rights House Foundation, Human Rights Watch, International Partnership for Human Rights, and Natural Resource Governance Institute released a statement regarding the harsh and unethical detainment of academic and human rights activist Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu and asked for his immediate release. Dr Ibadoghlu was an anti-corruption and environmental activist who was critical of the dictatorial government of Ilham Aliyev. Last year the academic was arrested by police officers in plainclothes who arrived in civilian vehicles. He was kept in prison over

charges like possession of counterfeit currency and extremist religious materials. After a few months, he has been under house arrest and might serve several years in prison on fabricated charges if convicted. Azerbaijan has a terrible record of arresting and harassing critics of Aliyev over faux charges.

For more information:

<https://www.jurist.org/news/2024/07/human-rights-groups-urge-azerbaijan-to-free-wrongfully-imprisoned-government-critics/>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/23/azerbaijan-free-academic-facing-bogus-charges>

II. Iran: Revolutionary Court Sentenced a Female Labour Activist of Kurdish origin to Death

CDPHR has regularly documented reports of long prison sentences for activists and critics of the Iranian government. A court in Iran handed Sharifeh Mohammadi a labour rights activist a death sentence. Mohammadi was arrested in December 2023 from her home in Rasht by intelligence officials who charged her with having close connections with the Kurdish armed organisation Komala. She has been a member of several workers' rights organizations including the Association of Labor Organization and Coordination Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations. Her death sentence is another instance of women activists facing long prison sentences.

For more information:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/07/women-activists-face-severe-sentences-iran-new-president-vows-easing-restrictions>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-death-sentence-mohammadi-activist-labor-kurdish/33022173.html>

<https://www.iranintl.com/en/202407045684>

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/death-sentence-against-woman-human-rights-defender-sharifeh-mohammadi>

III. Israel: Detailed Report Emerge Documenting Atrocities Committed by the Hamas Terrorists on October 7th

This week Human Rights Watch launched a detailed 236-page report on the Islamist terrorist organisation Hamas' atrocities on 7th October. On October 7, 2023, Hamas and affiliated groups launched a coordinated attack on Israel, which Human Rights Watch describes as involving significant atrocities. The report details the following key points about the violence and its implications:

Massacres and Attacks: On October 7, militants executed a large-scale assault on civilian areas in Israel. This included mass shootings, with reports of gunmen entering homes and killing civilians indiscriminately. The attack resulted in numerous deaths, rapes and severe injuries among non-combatants.

Kidnappings: Alongside the violence, there were numerous abductions of civilians, including women and children. The report describes these kidnappings as systematic and intended to terrorize the population.

Targeting of Civilians: The report emphasizes that the attacks were directed primarily at civilians rather than military targets, which is a critical factor in assessing the crimes under international law.

Destruction and Damage: In addition to the loss of life, there was significant destruction of property. Homes, schools, and other civilian infrastructure were damaged or destroyed during the attacks, exacerbating the suffering of affected communities.

International Legal Implications: The actions on October 7, if verified as part of a widespread and systematic attack against civilians, could constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. These legal designations depend on further investigation to establish the scale and intent behind the violence.

The report calls for a comprehensive investigation to hold those responsible accountable and to ensure justice for the victims of these grave violations.

Read Full Report Here:

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/07/17/i-cant-erase-all-blood-my-mind/palestinian-armed-groups-october-7-assault-israel>

IV. Cameroon: Free Speech Law Changed Ahead of Polls in the Country

On July 16th, a decree was issued by the provincial head of the Mfoundi division within which the capital city is situated. It states that “anyone who dangerously insults the [state] institutions or the person who embodies them” will be banned from staying within Mfoundi thereby expelling that individual from the capital of the country. As the country faces an election in 2025, critics argue that such orders are an attempt to stifle criticism and maintain hold of current President.

For more information:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-opposition-civil-society-condemn-government-threats-toward-biya-opponents-/7709808.html>

<https://x.com/Koaci/status/1813924108700418108>

<https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/rights-lobby-revocation-of-cameroon-s-anti-free-speech-decree-4700902>

<https://www.fairobserver.com/world-news/unconstitutional-laws-limit-free-speech-and-punish-journalists-in-cameroon/#>

<https://www.barrons.com/news/cameroon-restricting-free-speech-ahead-of-vote-hrw-says-db982c90>

V. Eswatini: Two Opposition Politicians Given Lengthy Prison Sentences

This week reports emerged that a court in the Kingdom of Eswatini sent Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza and Mthandeni Dube to 25 and 18 years in prison respectively. Both individuals were former parliamentarians and were heavily involved in the 2021 pro-democracy protests. Both were arrested in 2021 for these protests. Then in 2023, they were charged under the country’s anti-terrorism and sedition laws.

For more information:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/eswatini-s-pro-democracy-movement-undeterred-as-mps-sentenced-to-prison-/7703430.html>

<https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/eswatini-pro-democracy-mps-sentenced-to-long-jail-terms-for-murder-terrorism-20240715>

<https://www.africanews.com/2023/06/02/eswatini-two-pro-democracy-mps-convicted-of-terrorism//>

<http://new.observer.org.sz/details.php?id=22408>

<https://adamimogofm.com/two-eswatini-parliamentarians-convicted-of-terrorism-over-involvement-in-anti-monarchy-protest/>

<https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/uganda-eswatini-mps-uganda/6217206.html>

<https://freedomhouse.org/article/eswatini-authorities-should-release-parliamentarians-and-drop-charges-against-them>