



UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

XXXXXXXXXXXX **HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS GRAVELY CONCERNED AT** XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
KILLINGS AND ARRESTS IN IRAN

19 June 2009

GENEVA – Five independent United Nations experts* have voiced their grave concern about the use of excessive police force, arbitrary arrests and killings during the past week in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This also seriously hampers freedom of expression and assembly and the situation of human rights defenders in the country.

Following the recent presidential elections, tens of thousands of opposition supporters have taken to the streets of Tehran and other cities throughout the Islamic Republic of Iran. While protests have been largely peaceful, violent clashes with security forces have resulted in the death, injury and arrest of numerous individuals. In addition there have been reported attacks against students and others who may have contested the election results.

"We are gravely concerned that the recent arrests and the use of excessive police force against opposition supporters may be a direct attempt to stifle freedom of assembly and expression in the country", said Frank La Rue, Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression. He had similar concerns about reports that access to online news services and social networking internet sites have been blocked since the election results were announced. "Human rights defenders are often the first target in situations as this one, but each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect them against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action," stressed Margaret Sekaggya, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

"It is the Government's obligation to take all necessary measures to guarantee the right of everyone not to be deprived arbitrarily of their liberty and to have fair proceedings before an independent and impartial tribunal", highlighted Manuela Carmena Castrillo, the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on arbitrary detention.

With regard to the reported killings, Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on

extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, emphasized that "law enforcement officials should apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms". The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Manfred Nowak, recalled that "excessive violence may constitute ill treatment which contravenes international human rights law".

The five human rights experts strongly urge the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to refrain from using excessive force and arbitrary detentions and to fully guarantee freedom of expression and assembly throughout the country.

* The five human rights experts are Manuela Carmena Castrillo, Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on arbitrary detention; Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Frank La Rue, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Manfred Nowak, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Margaret Sekagya, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

For more information and interview requests, contact Birgit Kainz-Labbé at + 41 22 917 9704

For use of the information media; not an official record