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UN blasts Iran's human rights violations

(AFP) – 3 days ago

UNITED NATIONS — A UN panel on Friday blasted Iran for "serious, ongoing and recurring" human rights violations, including violence against protesters after the disputed June presidential elections.

Members of the United Nations human rights committee adopted the damning -- but non-binding -- resolution by with 74 votes in favor, 48 against and with 59 nations abstaining.

In a similar vote last year, before the disputed elections, Iran garnered slightly more support.

One country who shifted support away from Iran was Saudi Arabia, which voted "yes" this year after voting "no" in 2008.

The decision is being seen as a sign of Riyadh's irritation at alleged Iranian support for a Shiite rebellion in Yemen, which has spilled onto Saudi territory.

The resolution expresses "deep concern at the serious, ongoing and recurring human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran."

It condemned the government's response after mass protests that followed President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed June 12 re-election "and the concurrent rise in human rights violations."

Deadly street rallies broke out after the vote, with protesters claiming Ahmadinejad's re-election was rigged.

About 4,000 people were arrested, and 140 of them, including senior reformers and journalists, were shown on state television in mass trials charged with seeking a "soft" overthrow of the regime.

The UN panel lambasted the Iranian government for targeting opposition members, human rights activists and journalists with "harassment, intimidation and persecution, including by arbitrary arrest, detention or disappearance."

Iran's UN ambassador, Mohammad Khazaee, protested against the measure introduced by Canada, saying that Ottawa was revealing "its ill intentions" and "advancing its narrow political agenda."

The 192-member General Assembly was to adopt the text at a later, unspecified date. It will be the 22nd time since 1985 that a UN plenary assembly addresses human rights in Iran.

In Washington, US Democratic Senator Carl Levin introduced a resolution late Thursday condemning the Islamic republic's human rights record, calling for the "immediate release of those wrongfully imprisoned" and the restoration of "meaningful human rights" to all Iranian citizens, his office said.

Levin denounced "Iran's deplorable violations of basic human rights."

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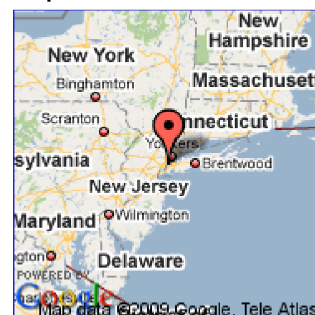
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