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*The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 76th International Congress in Tokyo, Japan, 25th September-1<sup>st</sup> October 2010,*

More than one year after the mass protests against the result of the presidential election in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the political and social climate remains extremely tense. The government which sees its legitimacy seriously questioned continues to use violence and intimidation to suppress critical voices. Since 13 June 2009 scores of threatened journalists, authors and bloggers have been harassed, arrested or forced into exile. There have also been unprecedented restrictions on foreign reporting and increased censorship of the internet, local media and blocking of access to communications. Increasing levels of censorship and self-censorship means that the scope for cultural activity has become ever more limited.

**Alarmed about** the widespread use of arrest, torture and even execution to silence dissent, and the negative effect this is having on cultural life.

**Deeply concerned** that there are currently at least 37 writers, journalists and bloggers detained or facing charges for their dissident writings and activism, including journalist and award-winning novelist **Javad Mahzadeh**, detained since 22 October 2009 and sentenced to four years in prison on 4 February 2010. No charges against him have been disclosed; journalist and political analyst **Ahmad Zeydabadi**, arrested on 13 June 2009, sentenced to 6 years in prison five years' internal exile, and a lifetime ban on any political or journalistic activity; journalist and economist **Bahman Ahmadi Amooyi**, arrested on 20 June 2009 and spent 65 days in a solitary confinement cell in ward 209 of Evin prison before being sentenced to seven years and four months in prison, reduced to five years on appeal.

**Expressing profound outrage** at the sentencing on 28 September 2010 of the Iranian-Canadian blogger Hossien Derrakshan to 19 and a half years in prison for insulting Islamic thought and religious figures, and spreading propaganda against Iranian authorities.

**Shocked and indignant** by the severity of the sentence handed down in absentia to leading Canadian-Iranian journalist, writer and film-maker Maziar Bahari on 9 May 2010. Bahari was sentenced in absentia on national security charges to thirteen years and six months and an extended flogging for his coverage of the disputed presidential elections in June 2009.

**Alarmed and worried** that detainees are commonly held in poor conditions, without access to family, medical care and legal representation, and there are widespread reports of the use of torture against political prisoners.

**Condemns** the on-going practice of unfair trials held in camera, the absence of independent defense lawyers and observers, lengthy periods of pre-trial detention, and heavy prison sentences inflicted upon writers, journalists, human rights defenders and dissidents.

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**Deplores** that defense lawyers continue to be subjected to unbearable pressures (harassment, defamation and threat), often forcing them to give up the cases of persecuted writers or other persons prosecuted for their convictions.

**Troubled by** the acceleration of the Iranian government's Censorship of books and magazines. Permission to publish is increasingly curtailed and even the reprinting of already published books has been stopped. At the 23rd International Book Fair in May 2010 in Tehran, one could see clearly the new harsh measures against the publishing world. Several well-known publishers were not allowed to participate at the fair. Works by several prominent writers such as **Hushang Golshiri**, **Mahmud Dowlatabadi** and **Forugh Farrokhzad** did not get permission to be presented there, nor the book written by the late **Ayatollah Montazeri**. Books on Buddhism and yoga were among those forbidden.

**Also troubled by** the Iranian government's heavy censorship of the Internet and other forms of cultural expression such as art, film, and music.

**Deeply concerned** about the large number of writers, journalists and cultural activists from Iran's ethnic regions sentenced for their critical reporting and peaceful activism on minority rights. They include Iranian-Kurdish journalists **Adnan Hassanpour**, **Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand**, Ahwazi writer **Yousef Azizi Banitorf** and Azeri journalist **Said Matinpour**.

**Calls** for the immediate and unconditional release of all writers, journalists, human rights defenders, students and womens' rights activists who are currently arrested in Iran in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party, and for the repealing of laws used to criminalise free expression.