

Question for written answer E-015434/2015
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Barbara Matera (PPE)

Subject: VP/HR - Iran: 'exemplary' sentence to stifle free expression

The poets Fatemeh Ekhtesari and Mehdi Musavi, who are prominent figures on the Iranian literary scene known for their writings on social issues, have been sentenced by an Iranian court to 99 lashes each for having publicly shaken hands with members of the opposite sex during a poetry festival in Sweden. Ms Ekhtesari had admitted to shaking hands with male participants at the festival.

Karin Deutsch Karlekar, director of Free Expression Programs at PEN American Center, an association working to break down barriers to free expression, said that the sentence was a clear violation of a fundamental human right and was at odds with the moderate image that the Iranian President likes to project outside Iran.

1. Have any similar violations of freedom of expression in Iran come to the High Representative's notice?
2. Has she taken, or does she intend to take, any action?
3. Does she know of this specific case, and if so, what will she do to minimise the consequences for those concerned?