

**Statement of Rep. Christopher H. Smith, Co-Chairman
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

Hearing on

**The Iran Crisis: A Transatlantic Response
June 9, 2005**

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your faithful commitment to speak out whenever and wherever human rights are trampled underfoot. Today's hearing underscores the breadth of that work. While outside of the OSCE region, there is no question that Iran and developments in that country have serious implications for all of the participating States, not only the United States.

While much attention is paid to the security aspects of Iran, far too little is paid to the brutality of the regime in Tehran. You have touched on many elements of this repression, indeed it is a lengthy litany of abuse. As with other authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, the Government of Iran relies on fear as an instrument of power against its own people. This climate of fear is perpetuated by summary executions, disappearances, torture and other degrading treatment, reportedly including severe punishments such as amputations and flogging.

As the latest *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* cites, Iran maintains facilities "notorious for the cruel and prolonged acts of torture inflicted upon political opponents of the Government." The report also noted that, in recent years, government officials have inflicted severe prisoner abuse and torture in a series of "unofficial" secret prisons and detention centers outside the national prison system. Human Rights Watch has documented a number of these facilities.

While dissent in many places can be dangerous, in Iran it can have deadly consequences. It is a capital offense in Iran today to undertake "attempts against the security of the State, outrage against high-ranking officials, and insults against the memory of Imam Khomeini and against the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic."

The names of many of the regime's victims are not known to us. One case that has generated considerable attention is that of Canadian-Iranian photojournalist, Zahra Kazemi, who died while in custody a few days after her arrest in July 2003. Nearly two years after her death, the authorities have yet to hold those responsible accountable for her death.

Human Rights Watch reports torture and ill-treatment in detention, including indefinite solitary confinement, are routinely used to punish dissidents in Iran, including those imprisoned for peaceful expression of their political views. Severe physical torture is also used, especially against student activists and others who do not enjoy the high public profile of older dissident intellectuals and writers, the group concludes.

Mr. Chairman, my hope is that today's hearing will shine light on developments in Iran that don't make it into the headlines, but deserve our attention. Thank you.