

A delegation from the International Committee against Stoning, spearheaded by its spokesperson Mina Ahadi, was invited by Millenium Institute to come to Brazil for a series of engagements. The focus of the trip was the case of Sakineh Ashtiani and the gross human rights violations in Iran. The delegation had several high profile meetings with Brazilian politicians and dozens of interviews with print, TV and radio journalists. Mina Ahadi took part in a conference and gave a seminar on human rights in the Middle East.



São Paulo

The tour started in São Paulo with a speaking engagement at the 2nd Forum on Democracy and Freedom on Tuesday 3 May.

The day-long conference saw five panels debating issues such as freedom, human rights, state capitalism, accountability of the media, democracy and citizenship. The panellists were diplomats, economists, journalists, political scientists, lawyers and representatives of human rights organisations.

Mina Ahadi gave a 20 minute speech on the human rights violations in Iran and the case of Sakineh Ashtiani. She then took part in the panel on 'democracy, freedom and human rights' together with Javier El-Hage, director of the Human Rights Foundation and moderated by Paulo Uebel, director of Millenium Institute.



Numerous newspapers and TV channels interviewed Mina Ahadi on her life and work, the case of Sakineh Ashtiani, Osama Bin Laden's execution as well as the Brazilian government's foreign policies with the Iranian regime.



Brasilia



Mina Ahadi was invited to the capital Brasilia for several meetings with government politicians.

Arriving at the human rights offices, the first meeting was with Special Secretary for Human Rights, Maria do Rosário who was accompanied by Fábio Balestro Floriano, director of the Department of International Relations at the Secretariat of Human Rights.



Ms do Rosário expressed her and president's Dilma Rousseff's solidarity with women facing violence and stated that they are ready for an open dialogue with Mina Ahadi and her work. Mina Ahadi talked about the suffering and fear of those mothers and fathers whose children will be executed any day, as well as of the anguish of children whose parents have already been executed. She talked about the situation of Sakineh Ashtiani and her lawyer Houtan Kian, both of whom are still imprisoned and still face execution.

Maria do Rosário stressed the Brazilian government's willingness to not only support the victims of human rights violations but to also save them. Ms do Rosário said that 'execution is always a horror' and that stoning is 'unacceptable'.



The delegation was then seen by Senator Paulo Paim, the chairman of the Brazilian Senate's Commission on Human Rights and Participative Legislation. In their conversation Mina Ahadi talked about the wave of executions over the last six months and human rights violations in Iran. Senator Paim stated that the fight against violence is an 'ongoing fight'.

Ms Ahadi asked the Commission to approve a resolution condemning any act that violates human rights, especially against women and with a specific condemnation of stoning in Iran. The senator promised to present the resolution in the plenary of the Commission with the voting results being made public.



The last meeting of the day was in the Palácio do Planalto (Presidential Palace) with Marco Aurélio Garcia, Special Advisor on Foreign Affairs to the president.



Mina Ahadi brought up the close relation the previous president Lula da Silva and Ahmadinejad had and the stern condemnation it had caused within the Iranian population and opposition movement.

Ms Ahadi spoke about the late night, secret phone calls she gets, sometimes directly from those imprisoned, asking her for help to save them from execution. She appealed to Garcia and the government to continue towards a clear stance on human rights.



A press conference in the lobby of the Palácio do Planalto followed that was attended by dozens of media outlets. The journalists asked questions about Ms Ahadi's meeting with the politicians and how she sees the foreign policy of the Brazilian government past and present.

Ms Ahadi said: 'The meetings today were very important. I want to declare here that we have a fascist, Islamic regime in Iran that should be isolated by the rest of the world'. Ms Ahadi talked about how the 'Facebook generation' was observing the government's actions closely and that they were encouraged when president Rousseff spoke out against stoning, commenting that 'Ahmadinejad's last friend' had abandoned him now.



Ms Ahadi stated that she was very happy about the meetings and expressed her hopes that the Brazilian government would sever its diplomatic relations with Iran and continue the promising path the government had taken up recently with a clear stance on human rights. She said: 'The very fact that we were meeting government officials today already sends a strong signal to Ahmadinejad and the Islamic regime'.

In all her meetings Mina Ahadi talked about the big movement for freedom and human rights in Iran that fights against the barbaric Islamic regime and she urged the Brazilian government to support the people in Iran and not the regime.

Rio de Janeiro

On Friday, 6 May a seminar entitled 'Human Rights in the Middle East' was held at IBMEC University in Rio de Janeiro at which Ms Ahadi was the main speaker. The seminar was moderated by Leonardo Paz and Paulo Uebel from Millenium Institute was also on the panel. The talk centred on Ms Ahadi's life and her work to save women and men from execution, especially stoning, and the life of people in Iran under the Islamic Republic. The talk was followed by a Q&A session. The seminar was attended by over a hundred students, professors and journalists and was followed by interviews and private talks.



For more information on ICAS and Mina Ahadi go to <http://stopstonningnow.com>

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