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European Greens demand EU stops allowing deportations of gay and lesbian Iranian Citizens

The Spokespersons of the European Green Party today said that the EU institutions and member states must take urgent measures to stop the deportation to Iran from the United Kingdom of Mehdi Kazemi and Pegah Emambakhsh, two Iranian citizens who face certain imprisonment, probable torture and possibly even stoning to death if they are returned to Iran because they are gay and lesbian respectively.

EGP Co-Spokesperson Ulrike Lunacek, who is herself a lesbian and is the Austrian Green Party's Parliamentary Spokesperson on LGBT issues said: "Both Mehdi Kazemi, a 19 year old gay Iranian citizen and Pegah Emambakhsh, a 40 year old Iranian lesbian, have applied for asylum in the UK because their partners were sentenced to death by the Iranian authorities and they are themselves likely to face a similar fate if they are faced to return to Iran. Shamefully, the UK government refused asylum to Mehdi Kazemi and he fled to the Netherlands. A Dutch court decided on the 11th March that his asylum case cannot be heard in the Netherlands so he will be sent back to the UK in the next 72 hours. Pegah Emambakhsh has also had her application for asylum rejected by the UK authorities and is currently applying for a judicial review at the High Court. Not only do we in the EGP demand that the UK shows compassion in these cases and allow both Mehdi Kazemi and Pegah Emambakhsh permanent right to remain in the UK but we also call on all EU member states and EU institutions to take urgent action to avoid similar situations arising in the future."

EGP Co-Spokesperson Philippe Lamberts continued "It is vitally important that EU member states recognise persecution for sexual orientation as a ground to grant asylum, in adherence with the Qualifications Directive. Returning Mehdi Kazemi and Pegah Emambakhsh to Iran, where human rights groups estimate that between 3000 and 4000 people have been executed under sharia law for the crime of homosexuality since Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979, would amount to a gross violation of European and international human rights obligations. We welcome the fact that a resolution for a motion on this issue is being presented in the European Parliament this week, with the

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support of the Green/EFA group as well as other political groupings, and we very much hope that both the Commission and member states take heed of the motion and work together so that a common European solution to this problem can be found so that in the future no EU member states expel people to Iran or other countries where they face persecution, torture or death as a result of their sexual orientation."
