

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: UN rights investigator on Iran named (Reuters)

GENEVA (Reuters) - A former foreign minister of the Maldives, Ahmed Shaheed, was named United Nations human rights investigator on Iran on Friday, the first in nearly a decade.

The U.N. Human Rights Council established the independent post of special rapporteur on human rights in Iran on March 24, a move spearheaded by Washington that will subject Tehran's record to scrutiny.

The 47-member forum has voiced concern at Iran's crackdown on opposition figures and increased use of the death penalty and called on the Islamic Republic to cooperate with its new envoy.

Shaheed's appointment was announced by the council's spokesman Cedric Sapey at the end of a three-week session.

The United States and European Union voiced concerns this week at human rights violations in Iran. The EU cited reports of torture, arbitrary detention and unfair trials.

U.S. human rights ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe, in a speech, condemned the killing of Iranian activist Haleh Sahabi at the funeral of her prominent dissident father on June 1.

"Eyewitness accounts make it clear that she died as a result of reprehensible actions by Iranian security forces," Donahoe said of the activist who was on release from prison herself when she died, having been arrested during the unrest after Iran's 2009 presidential election.

The semi-official Mehr news agency reported sporadic clashes at the funeral but said the 54-year-old died of a pre-existing heart condition and not because of rough handling.

U.N. officials say Iran has not allowed U.N. human rights experts to visit since 2005, when hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president.

Even if the new rapporteur is not allowed into Iran, he would still be expected to contact the government frequently about allegations and produce an annual report incorporating testimony from activists and alleged victims of abuse.

Shaheed resigned from his post as Maldives foreign minister in August 2007, accusing conservative

elements in the government of stalling on democratising reforms.

The now defunct U.N. Human Rights Commission had special rapporteurs on Iran from 1984 to 2002.

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