

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Paulo Casaca speaks at the House of Commons on Iranian ethnic minorities and dissidents**

On 27 February 2017, the All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG) and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief organised a panel discussion on “The Persecution of Religious and Ethnic Minorities in Iran” at the House of Commons in London. The event aimed at discussing the continuing widespread persecution of and discrimination against members of religious and ethnic minorities in Iran, who are also arrested and imprisoned for attempting to exercise, or to call for, religious and cultural rights, and to explore how the international community can help support and protect them.

**Paulo Casaca**, ARCHumankind’s Executive Director, participated to the panel event, as well as **Dr. Ahmed Shaheed**, current UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief and former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran; **Mosa Zahed**, Executive Director of the Middle East Forum for Development (MEFD); **Amir Saedi**, Representative of the Ahwaz Human Rights Organisation UK; **Nikoo Cordman**, Director of Operations of Middle East Concern.



Paulo Casaca’s intervention focused on Iranian ethnic minorities and dissidents and the victims of Iran’s drugs policy. During his speech, he claimed “the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has channelled, in a non-transparent way, large amounts of funds from the international community to the Iranian authorities in the name of the “war on drugs”.

Paulo Casaca advised democratic legislatures to ask for full transparency by UNODC on all the support (financial and other) it provided to the Iranian authorities in the past 15 years, and also to refuse to allow any Government funding to the agency as long as it provides financial support to Iran.

