



Iran lambasts Canada's "crocodile tears" for dead photographer

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TEHRAN - Iran again hit out at Canada for complaining about the murder in custody here of Canadian-Iranian photographer Zahra Kazemi, saying Ottawa was only crying "crocodile tears".

"We are confounded by him and his statements," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said of Canadian Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew.

In recent weeks Pettigrew has upped his tone against Iran. News reports from Brussels widely quoted in the Tehran official press quoted him as saying that dialogue with the Islamic republic was a "farce" and that greater international pressure should be brought to bear on the clerical regime.

"We don't know on what basis he passes such hasty opinions. Zahra Kazemi was an Iranian. The Islamic republic's government is deeply sorry, it was a devastating accident but there is no need for the Canadians' crocodile tears."

However Pettigrew aide Sebastien Theberge insisted that the minister had described as farcical "not the dialogue with Iran but the Kazemi trial itself".

Ottawa has accused Iran's hardline judiciary of covering up how the 56-year-old photographer died in hospital after sustaining a blow in custody.

Between her arrest and her admission to hospital, Kazemi was interrogated by judicial prosecutors, the police and the intelligence ministry, rival power power centres in Iran which have since blamed each other for the death.

Intelligence ministry agent, Mohammad Reza Aghdam Ahmadi, 42, was cleared of "quasi-intentional murder" in July, and the judiciary said later Kazemi's death seemed to have been accidental as "the only suspect" had been found not guilty.

Despite an apparent effort by the judiciary to close the affair, Asefi insisted "this case is not closed and done with yet".