



The Bahá'í Question

Persecution and Resilience in Iran

A resource guide on the persecution of Iran's Bahá'í Community
Bahá'í International Community 2024

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The Bahá'í Question: Persecution and Resilience in Iran

A document prepared by the Bahá'í International Community 2024

United Nations Office
866 United Nations Plaza
Suite 120 New York, NY
USA 10017

www.bic.org

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Executive Summary

For 45 years, since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Bahá'í community, the country's largest non-Muslim religious minority, has faced severe persecution.

The Bahá'ís have endured the taking of their lives, their basic rights, their liberties, their opportunities in life, their properties, their businesses, and their homes. They have been denied the right to education, denied livelihoods, denied the right to live in a society free from hateful propaganda or the danger of violence, and denied the right to be buried in dignity.

All because the Iranian government, judiciary, and security institutions have pursued a campaign of religious prejudice against the Bahá'ís that seeks to eradicate the Bahá'í community as a viable entity in the country of its birth.

Many of these policies were detailed in a 1991 Iranian government memorandum on "The Bahá'í Question," signed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a rare example of documentary evidence demonstrating a government's intent to persecute a minority community.

When the Bahá'í Faith emerged in 19th century Iran, it taught new principles such as the equality of women and men, the need for harmony between science and religion, and the duty of all to be educated and to work for the betterment of society. Bahá'í teachings were opposed by Iran's religious orthodoxy—and sparked an historic retaliation by the country's Shia clergy that became state policy under the Islamic Republic.

And yet, after decades of systematic persecution and anti-Bahá'í hate speech, today the Bahá'í community in Iran is coming to be seen by Iranians inside and outside the country in its true light: a community striving to contribute to the betterment of Iran through principles such as gender equality and justice, universal education, service to society, and freedom of conscience.

Public support for Iranian Bahá'ís has surged in recent years—with Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureates leading a charge among luminaries and ordinary citizens alike in recognizing the contributions of the Bahá'í community to positive social change and calling for their rights to be respected. Campaigns such as



the landmark #OurStoryIsOne have helped many Iranians to broaden their perspective on the Bahá'ís—from a merely persecuted community to one that is an intrinsic part of the Iranian social fabric, and one that ultimately has the best interests of all humanity at heart.

An elderly Iranian Bahá'í woman confronts authorities as they bulldoze farmlands belonging to Bahá'ís in the village of Ahmadabad, Mazandaran province, in May 2024 (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

the response of the Bahá'ís, and how the international community can support the Bahá'í community in Iran.

The Bahá'í Faith promotes the unity of humanity, gender equality, and the harmonious coexistence of religion and science. Today, Bahá'ís from diverse backgrounds reside in nearly every country, striving to contribute to the betterment of society.

Over 200 Bahá'ís were executed after 1979—after which a systematic campaign was launched to hinder the progress and development of the community. Bahá'ís have endured arrests on false charges, imprisonment, denial of higher education and economic opportunities, and persistent harassment and hate speech. In recent years the persecution of Bahá'ís has intensified, marked by more arrests, land and property confiscations and destruction, a rise in levels of online hate speech, official efforts to spread disinformation and propaganda, and an alarming concentration of arbitrary detentions and imprisonments against Iranian Bahá'í women.

But the Iranian government, even though it is bound by international law to protect all citizens, has consistently violated its obligations. The Bahá'í teachings, calling for spiritual renewal and gaining popularity among Iranians, are seen as a direct threat to the country's religious orthodoxy. The Islamic Republic has therefore engaged in violent and dehumanizing acts to uproot the Bahá'í community.

The Bahá'í Question: Persecution and Resilience in Iran explores the historical religious motives behind the persecution, the legal and practical methods employed by the Iranian government,

Iranian authorities claim that Bahá'ís have full citizenship rights—claims which are refuted by extensive evidence. The following pages detail repeated incidents of persecution and link these to

Iranian government documents that detail exactly how, when, and where the Bahá'ís should be suppressed by the state.

Despite enduring a century of persecution, Iranian Bahá'ís have refused to respond with violence and outrage. The Bahá'ís have instead focused on contributing to Iranian society through social and economic development initiatives aimed at assisting their fellow citizens, while also meeting their own educational and social needs through a peaceful form of “constructive

For decades, human rights reports presented to the highest United Nations bodies have highlighted the systematic and escalating persecution faced by Iran's Bahá'í citizens. Iran's Bahá'í community relies on ongoing support from UN bodies and Member States, as well as national governments issuing declarations and statements of concern, diplomatic pressure exerted on Iranian leadership, and media campaigns that bring attention to and expose the persecution of Bahá'ís. The international community

channels, to call on the Iranian government to cease its persecution, revoke discriminatory policies, and reform laws to ensure full citizenship rights for Bahá'ís.



resilience” that neither takes on the character of the oppressor nor falls into apathy.

must maintain unwavering pressure, using both multilateral and bilateral

Iran's government uses property confiscations and destruction as part of a wide-ranging set of policies designed to persecute the Iranian Baha'i community (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

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The Bahá'í International Community established the Archives of Bahá'í Persecution to record the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran—in response to rising interest internationally and within Iran to understand the depth and breadth of this persecution. The documents shed light on the decades-long, systematic, and ongoing persecution of the Bahá'ís, instigated by the clergy and by the government. Officials at international bodies, national governments, human rights organizations, media outlets, and academic researchers can find 45 years of archival material in Persian and English that substantiate and illustrate the persecution of Iran's Bahá'í community. Visit the Archives at iranbahaipersecution.bic.org or @PersecutionIran on Instagram and Twitter/X.

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The Bahá'í community emerged in Iran in the mid-1800s with the belief that all

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humanity is one, that women and men are equal, and that religion and science must be the twin guiding lights for the progress of an ever-advancing civilization. Bahá'ís of every national, ethnic, and religious background now live in almost every country of the world, where they strive to serve their societies for the betterment of all.

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Iran's government is bound by international law to protect every citizen. Why does it continue to blatantly violate the terms of its obligations? The spiritual renewal called for by the Bahá'í teachings, and the Faith's growing appeal to the Iranian populace, have, since its inception, represented a direct threat to Iranian religious orthodoxy. The Islamic Republic has felt challenged by Bahá'í principles such as the equality of women and men, the harmony of science and religion, and the fact that the Bahá'í community is administered by elected institutions, instead of a clerical class, and encourages universal participation of all Bahá'ís in community and social life. Iran's government has therefore systematically sought to root out this community of adherents through violent, dehumanizing, and repressive methods.

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Iran's Bahá'í community needs the continued support of United Nations bodies and Member States, including declarations and statements of concern from national governments, pressure from governments on the Iranian leadership, and media campaigns to publicize and expose the persecution of the Bahá'ís.

- United Nations human rights mechanisms
- National statements and actions
- Media campaigns

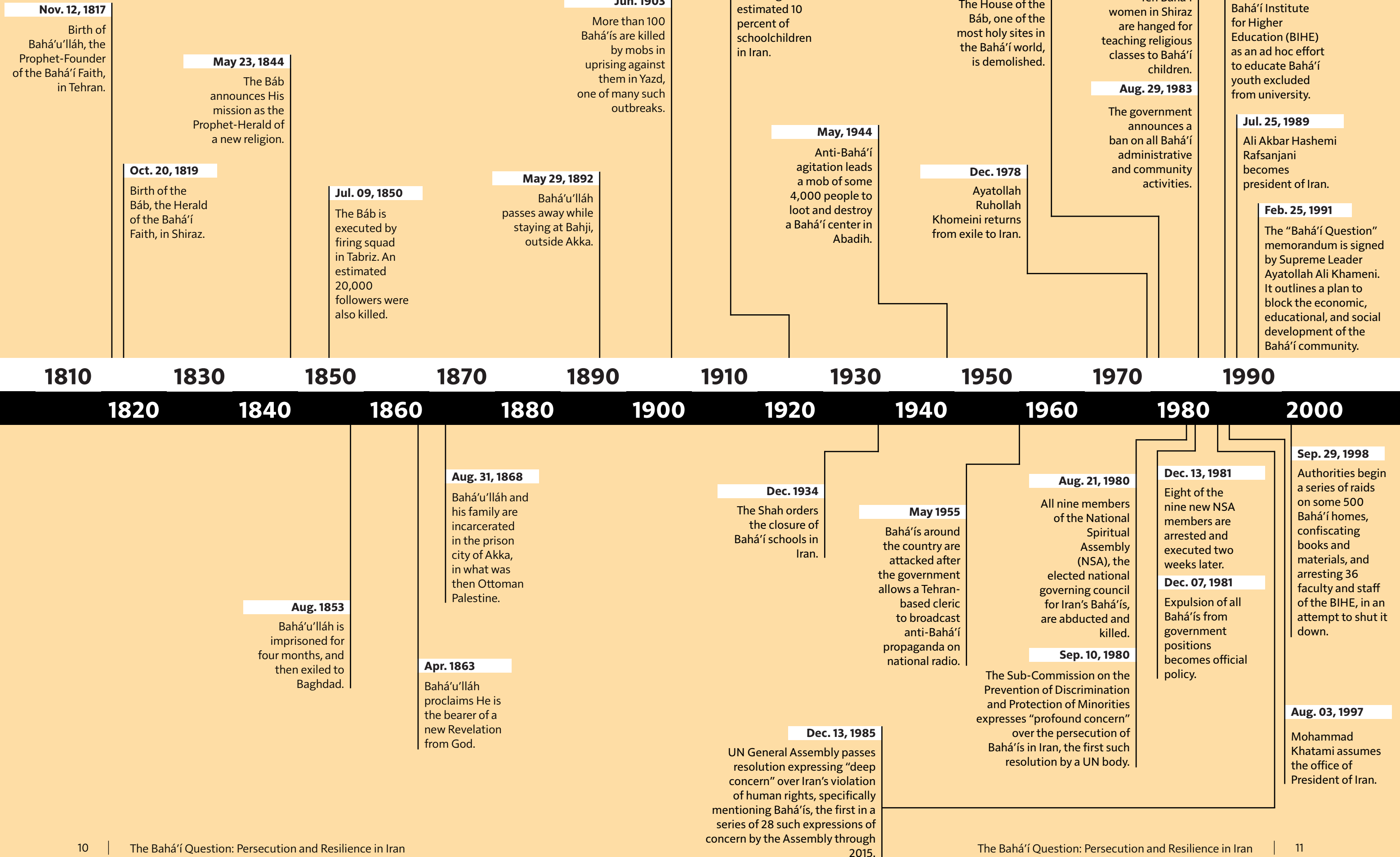
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For decades, reports issued by human rights mechanisms, and heard by the UN's highest bodies, have warned of the systematic and worsening persecution of Iran's Bahá'í citizens. The international community must continue to apply unwavering pressure, while using bilateral relationships, to press the Iranian government to relent in its persecution, rescind its policies against the Bahá'ís, and reform its laws so that Bahá'ís enjoy all citizenship rights.

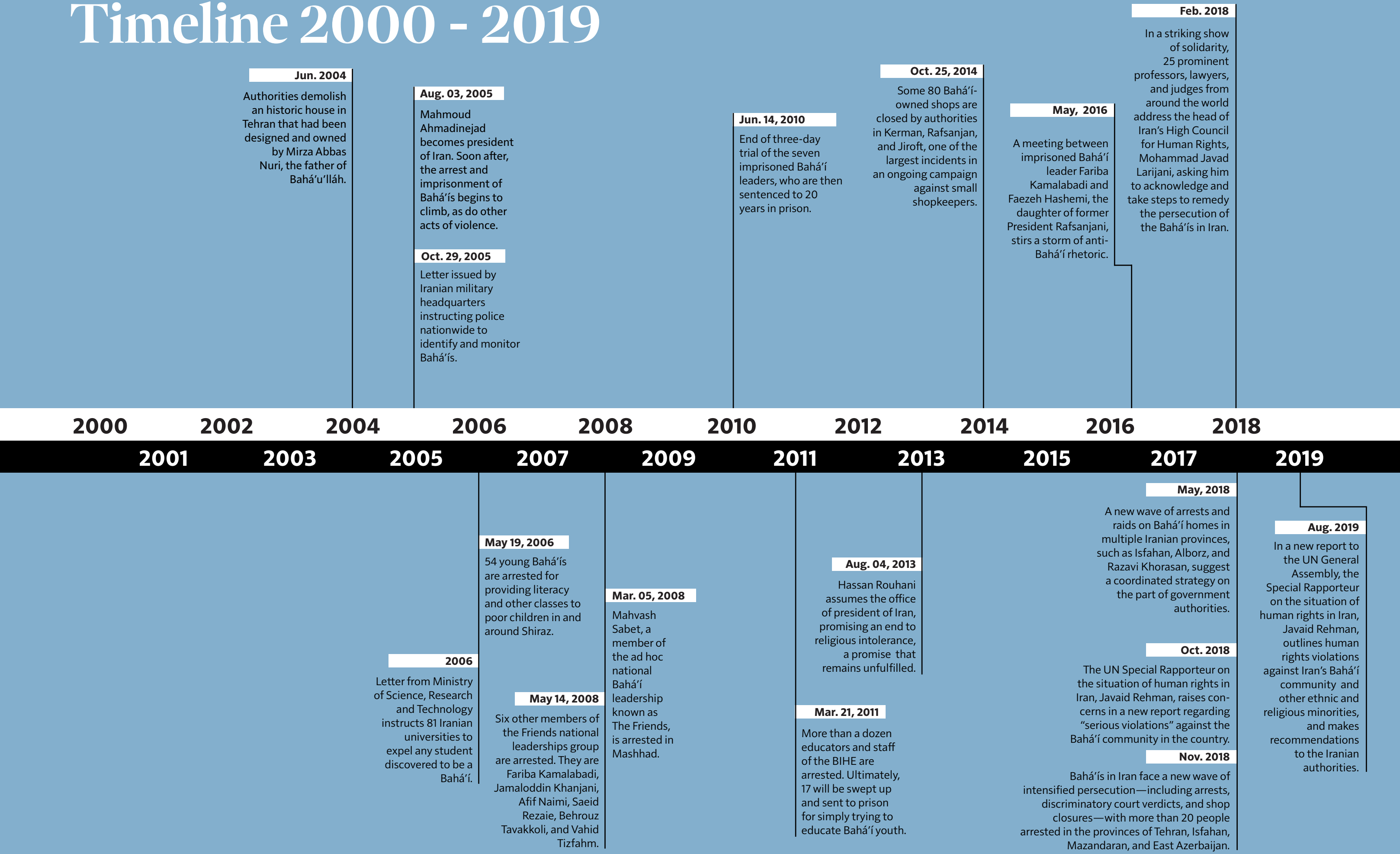
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Timeline 1800 - 2000



Timeline 2000 - 2019



Timeline 2020- 2024

Jun. 2020
Despite surging caseloads during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Iranian authorities target at least 71 Bahá'ís across the country as an official threatens to "uproot" the community in Shiraz. Bahá'ís also face surging numbers of new prison sentences, re-incarcerations, and a media campaign of hatred.

Nov. 2020
Over a hundred government agents raid the shops and homes of tens of Bahá'ís across Iran and demand that they hand over their property deeds. The simultaneous raids were staged in at least seven cities around the country and came just hours into a 15-day national covid pandemic lockdown.

Apr. 2021
Continuing Iran's decades-long campaign of persecution of its Bahá'í community from cradle to grave, the Iranian authorities ban the Bahá'ís of Tehran from burying their loved ones in a space previously allocated to them in Tehran's Khavaran cemetery.

Aug. 2021
A campaign, #StopHatePropaganda, calls on Iran's government to end 40 years of government-sponsored hate speech against the country's Baha'is—and reaches over 88 million people as it trends around the world.

Aug. 2021
A fresh wave of economic strangulation begins against the Bahá'ís as the Iranian authorities try to confiscate properties belonging to six Bahá'ís in the province of Semnan. Concerns later emerge that the new seizures are being coordinated by a parastatal body as a plan by Iran's leadership to enrich itself at the expense of the Bahá'í community.

Jul. 2022
Iranian agents enter a kindergarten in a major city in Iran, distribute Bahá'í books and pamphlets to its teachers, none of whom are Baha'is, then force the kindergarten staff to say, on camera, that Bahá'ís have brought these materials and distributed them to the teachers.

Aug. 2022
Iran's Ministry of Intelligence issues an appalling statement of hate propaganda against the Bahá'ís, claiming they were part of an "espionage party" that was "propagating the teachings of the fabricated Bahá'í colonialism and infiltrating educational environments" including kindergartens, in an attempt to justify the raids, arrests, and imprisonments on Bahá'ís across Iran.

Aug. 2022
Up to 200 Iranian government and local agents seal off the village of Roshankouh, in Mazandaran province, where a large number of Bahá'ís live, and use heavy earthmoving equipment to demolish their homes. Six homes are destroyed and over 20 hectares of land are confiscated.

Aug. 2022
Government officials, international and national media outlets, and dozens of prominent civil society actors and individuals rush to the defense of the Bahá'ís of Iran who, within just a few weeks, had faced hundreds of fresh incidents of persecution amidst a new crackdown on the community.



Feb. 2021
Leading Muslim figures around the world, government officials, and parliamentarians join a global outcry against the unjust confiscation of properties owned by Bahá'ís in a farming village, Ivel, in the northern Iranian province of Mazandaran.

Mar. 2021
A global campaign for the Bahá'ís in Iran, #ItsTheirLand, in response to property appropriations by the Iranian government, generate an unprecedented outpouring of solidarity from officials at the United Nations and the European Union, elected officials, religious figures including Muslim leaders, lawyers, prominent human rights advocates, farmers' associations, actors, and other prominent figures.

Dec. 2021
Thirteen irrigated farmland plots belonging to Bahá'ís in the village of Kata, in southwest Iran, are targeted by authorities seeking to further expropriate the assets of Bahá'ís in the country. The move comes as Iran faces a severe water crisis across the country.

Jun. 2022
A campaign by Iranian authorities to uproot the Bahá'í community in Shiraz takes a step forward when Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court sentences 26 Bahá'ís to a combined total of 85 years in prison. Many of the couples with young children.

Dec. 2022
Two Bahá'í women who had previously each spent a decade in jail, Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi, former members of the defunct Friends leadership group, are arrested again by the Iranian authorities. In December 2022, both women are each sentenced to a second decade in prison as the judge insults them during their trial. A third former member of the group, Afif Naimi, is also arrested.

May 2023
An agent of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence, Masoud Momeni, who had taken over the cemetery owned by the Bahá'ís in Tehran, barred Bahá'ís from using their own cemetery and then interred deceased Bahá'ís in a mass grave without the knowledge of their families and in violation of Bahá'í burial practices.

Jul. 2023
The Bahá'í International Community launches a new campaign, #OurStoryIsOne, marking the 40th anniversary of the execution of 10 Bahá'í women in Shiraz in 1983, connecting their story to the wider struggle for gender equality and human rights in the country.

Dec. 2024
In the first half of 2024, Iran's government intensified its persecution of the Bahá'í community, targeting youth, women, and property. Authorities razed dozens of Bahá'í graves and blocked access to a community cemetery, destroyed farmland, and escalated summonses and arrests particularly of women. Human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, condemned these actions as the "crime against humanity of persecution." Iranian thought leaders called for an end to this "historical shame" and imprisoned women wrote an open letter in support of the Bahá'í community.



Introduction: The persecution of Iran's Bahá'í community

Iran's Bahá'í community, the country's largest non-Muslim religious minority, has faced persecution since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Since the election of the late president, Ebrahim Raisi, in 2021, Iranian authorities have also adopted brutal new tactics in its persecution of the Bahá'í community. Between 2021 and 2024, incidents of persecution against Bahá'ís rose about 50 percent each year. The government's goal seems to be to sow fear and confusion, to disenfranchise and further impoverish Bahá'ís, to prolong the harassment of individuals, and to instill feelings of uncertainty. Bahá'ís across Iran are being robbed of peace and security in their daily lives.

By mid-2024 about two-thirds of all Bahá'í prisoners in Iran were women. A significant number of Bahá'ís, notably women, were arrested in the months after the 2022-23 "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests, with some being held without due process and their whereabouts unknown. The dramatic rise in persecution against Bahá'í women is an alarming escalation affecting a group of people who face intersectional persecution—as women and as Bahá'ís.

More than 200 Bahá'ís were executed in the first decade after the 1979 Revolution. Hundreds more were tortured or imprisoned. All formal elected Bahá'í institutions were banned. Tens of thousands of Bahá'ís lost jobs, access to education, and other rights, all because of their religious beliefs.

Iran is a signatory to international human rights covenants—such as the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—but it does not recognize the Bahá'í Faith. A 1991 policy document called for the progress and development of the Bahá'ís to be "blocked." Bahá'ís are denied education and face constant official-sponsored hate speech, economic oppression, property confiscation, and arbitrary imprisonment. The Iranian judiciary and security services claim, always without evidence, that the Bahá'ís constitute a political party and are spies for foreign governments working against Iran's national security.

International condemnation forced the Iranian government to stop executing Bahá'ís in the 1980s.



United Nations Human Rights Council
(Credit: Elma Okic)

The authorities devised a new plan: to suppress the community in all spheres of life. The 1991 policy document, titled "The Bahá'í Question" and signed by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, called for the progress and development of the Bahá'ís to be "blocked," for the community to be destroyed as a viable entity in Iran, and for this policy of persecution

to be exported beyond Iran's borders.

State-sponsored persecution

The 1991 policy document, "The Bahá'í Question," is the most infamous of numerous directives that have been revealed over the past 30 years and which expose the systematic and state-sponsored nature of Iran's persecution of the Bahá'ís.

"The Bahá'í Question" specifies that "the government's dealings with Bahá'ís must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked." Bahá'ís must be "expelled from universities" once their beliefs become known. The document also claims that Bahá'ís engage in "political" or "espionage" activities and that official

Iranian "propaganda institutions" should counter the activities of the Bahá'í community. Denial of employment and barring Bahá'ís from positions of influence are two other policies specified in the document.

A plan must also be devised, the document says, to

“confront and destroy their cultural roots outside the country.”

Systematic and sustained “crime against humanity of persecution”

More than 200 Bahá’ís were executed in the early 1980s during the first years of the Islamic Republic’s existence. But well beyond that, the Iranian government



A family seated before the rubble of their home in Roshankouh, Iran, after authorities destroyed several Bahá’í properties in the area. (Credit: Bahá’í International Community)

has for more than 45 years systematically deployed its resources to persecute the entire Bahá’í community by denying them access in the educational, economic, cultural, legal, and social spheres, and by making the judiciary, security services, propaganda institutions, educational institutions, and religious and other state authorities the means for the oppression of the Bahá’ís.

In a groundbreaking report published in April 2024, which surveyed more than 45 years of rights violations against the Bahá’ís, the prominent non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch concluded that the Iranian government’s systematic repression of the Bahá’í religious minority amounted

to the “crime against humanity of persecution” under international criminal law. The report, titled “‘The Boot on My Neck’: Iranian Authorities’ Crime of Persecution Against Bahá’ís in Iran,” documented in extraordinary detail the discriminatory laws, policies and practices used by the Iranian government to violate the fundamental human rights of Bahá’ís in the country.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javáid Rehman, in his final findings on “atrocities crimes” in Iran in the 1980s, before the July 2024 end of his mandate, said that the Bahá’ís had been “targeted with genocidal intent and persecution.”

And in his last report specifically to the UN Human Rights Council, in March 2024, Dr. Rehman said: “I am extremely distressed and shocked at the continuing, persistent persecution, arbitrary arrests, and harassment of members of the

Bahá’í community,” adding that “tragically, the Bahá’í minority is facing extreme persecution, targeting, and repression. ... I’ve warned the authorities to immediately stop these crimes ... for which they will be held accountable.”

Dr. Rehman also said Bahá’ís “continue to be the targets of discriminatory legislation and persistent persecution” because they are unrecognized by the Islamic Republic constitution. His written report documented in detail the widespread persecution against the Bahá’ís in Iran: “For over four decades, members of the Baha’í faith, as the largest non-Muslim and constitutionally non-recognized religious minority, have suffered from the most egregious forms of human rights violations, including executions, persecution, deprivation of property rights, desecration and destruction of cemeteries, violence and arbitrary arrests, denial of educational rights, closures of businesses, hate propaganda and social injustices, and inequalities in all fields of public and private life.”

A year earlier, in February 2023, Dr. Rehman reported that Bahá’ís “remained most severely persecuted” and were experiencing “a marked increase in arrests, targeting and victimization,” and that hundreds of Bahá’ís at that moment were awaiting court rulings or enforcement of sentences on cases covering “arbitrary arrests; imprisonment and ill-treatment; raids on homes and confiscation of personal belongings; temporary release in lieu of unjustly heavy bail guarantees pending the

Introduction: The persecution of Iran’s Bahá’í community

conclusion of their trials; expulsion from or denial of entry to universities; raids on, and sealing of, business premises or refusal to issue work permits; confiscation of properties owned by Bahá’ís; confiscation and destruction of Bahá’í cemeteries or continuous questioning of their ownership despite the presentation of legal deeds; prevention of the burial of deceased Bahá’ís; and many other instances that continue to entangle the Bahá’ís in the country’s unjust judicial system.”

Targeting women, children, the young and the old

Incidents of persecution against the Bahá’ís rose 50 percent every year, between 2021 and 2024, and by mid-2024 two-thirds of Bahá’í prisoners in Iran were women. In October 2023, 10 women from Isfahan, mostly in their twenties and thirties, were arrested. In the same month, 26 Bahá’ís, 16 of them women, received sentences totaling 126 years in prison, signaling the continued targeting of women across the Bahá’í community.

A month later, in November 2023, six more Bahá’í women from Isfahan were detained for a month, facing harsh conditions in the quarantine ward of Dolatabad prison. They experienced deliberate delays in receiving medical care, restricted access to warm water, and the denial of information about the reasons for their arrests or the charges against them. Ministry of Intelligence agents also engaged in an orchestrated campaign of coercion and intimidation of the neighbors of some of the Bahá’ís in order

to extract forced statements of complaint against the detained Bahá’í women.

In addition, the homes of five elderly women, between 70 and 90 years of age, were raided in the city of Hamadan. One of the women suffered from Alzheimer’s disease and another was rushed to intensive care in distress after the raid. The door to the home of an 82-year-old woman was also broken down, her home searched, her belongings upended, and her property damaged in her absence.

The Islamic Republic has a longstanding and tragic track record of targeting women and young people—including



A destroyed Bahá’í cemetery in Tehran (Credit: Bahá’í International Community)

within the Bahá’í community. Ten Bahá’í women were hanged in a single night in Shiraz, in 1983, because of their beliefs, in perhaps the largest single execution of women in the country’s history. The 2023 commemoration of these executions gave rise to the #OurStoryIsOne campaign marking efforts in Iran for justice and gender equality. The campaign was based on the principle of collective destiny and asked all Iranians to see themselves as integral threads in the tapestry of a diverse but single, interconnected group.

The persecution of two Bahá’í women in Iran has, since 2008, also exemplified the sufferings of all Iranian Bahá’í women. Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi, two of seven former leaders of the community, spent a decade in prison from 2008-18. In 2022 they were once again arrested and jailed, and later sentenced to prison for another 10 years. Both were jailed in Evin Prison, where they remain as of mid-2024, and where they have endured ill health, injuries under interrogation, overcrowding and other hardships.

Women with young children and babies have also been unjustly imprisoned, depriving

these children of their mothers during their formative years. Children from Bahá’í families, and young Bahá’í women as well as men, suffer the long-term effects of harassment in school and denial of higher education across the country.

Denial of education

Bahá’ís have been barred from Iranian universities since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Iranian government’s policy, as stated in the 1991

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memorandum, as well as in a 2007 directive, calls on universities to expel Bahá'ís either during applications or after admission once their religious beliefs become known. Thousands have been denied the right to higher education in this way—so much so that the Bahá'í community was obliged in 1983 to create its own informal higher education initiative to meet the needs of its young people.



Graffiti on the window of a Bahá'í-owned business (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

In 2023, at the start of the academic year, university hopefuls from the Bahá'í community who had passed the national entrance exam were asked to renounce key aspects of their religious beliefs and provide personal information including biographies on themselves and their relatives, their activities, and their travels abroad. Entrance to university hinged on complying with these demands. As of 2021, growing numbers of young Bahá'ís have been told their university applications were “rejected” due to not meeting the “general qualification” for study; meaning, in reality, that their religious convictions were unacceptable to the Iranian authorities. Belonging to a religion recognized by Iran’s constitution, i.e. Islam,

Christianity, Judaism or Zoroastrianism, is a general qualification stipulated on the education authority’s own website.

Denying young people the right to study shows that the government hopes to suppress, impoverish, and ultimately erase the Bahá'ís from Iranian society. Denying them the opportunity to realize their potential and to earn livelihoods in the future

is, in effect, an attempt to extinguish the Bahá'ís across the generations.

Since the 2022-23 “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests, thousands of students and educators in Iran, from beyond the Bahá'í community, have been expelled from universities because of their support for equality and justice. These expulsions recall the purge of Bahá'í professors, schoolteachers, and university students, which began soon after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The injustice of being denied higher education, which has affected Iranian Bahá'ís for decades, is now also the grim fate of Iranians of all backgrounds.

Denial of burial rights and destruction of cemeteries

Bahá'ís across Iran have suffered repeated violations of their funerals and denial of their burial rights since the 1979 Islamic Revolution—part of a systematic plan to “block” the “progress and development” of the Bahá'í community in every area of life. Many Bahá'í cemeteries have been desecrated.

One example of this outrage occurred in February 2024, when more than 30 new graves of deceased Bahá'ís at a Tehran mass grave were razed by the Iranian authorities, with grave markers removed and bulldozers used to flatten the resting places.

Before the Revolution, Tehran’s Bahá'í cemeteries occupied an 80,000 square meter site at a location known as Khavaran and a 1.5 million square meter cemetery at Kabirabad. Both properties were confiscated in the 1980s by the Islamic Republic and at least 15,000 graves were demolished at Khavaran. A smaller property—adjacent to a mass grave of thousands of political prisoners executed by the government in the 1980s—was later given to the Bahá'í community.

In 2021, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence took over that latest site and made it difficult or impossible for Bahá'ís to access or use. A year later, in 2022, agents then began to forcibly bury deceased Bahá'ís in narrow plots—the same graves later destroyed in the March 2024 incident—that were part of the mass grave site. Bahá'ís were appalled at this effort to use the remains of their loved ones to erase the

Introduction: The persecution of Iran's Bahá'í community

history of a burial site which contained the loved ones of many other Iranians.

Hate speech, propaganda, and stigmatization campaigns

The Iranian government’s cultural institutions, covering every part of traditional and digital news media, popular broadcasts, educational literature, and religious sermons, have relentlessly waged successive campaigns of hate speech against the Bahá'ís since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

In August 2022, for example, the Bahá'í International Community revealed reports of a shocking and outrageous propaganda ploy designed to incriminate the Bahá'ís in Iran through a staged video production filmed in a kindergarten. The Iranian government has on many occasions attempted to frame Bahá'ís as converting Muslim children. The latest example involved Iranian government agents entering a kindergarten in a major city and distributing Bahá'í books and pamphlets to its teachers. The agents then instructed and forced the kindergarten staff, none of whom were Bahá'ís, to say on camera that Bahá'ís had brought the materials and distributed them to the teachers in an effort to “convert” the children.

A month earlier, Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence had also issued an appalling statement of oppressive hate propaganda against the Bahá'ís, in an attempt to justify raids on the homes and businesses of Bahá'ís across Iran and the arrest

or imprisonment of several people.

These campaigns have increased in severity in recent years. Hundreds of websites, Instagram accounts, Telegram channels, and Clubhouse rooms, with content such as “Bahá'ís are unclean and enemies of your religion,” “Associating with Bahá'ís is banned,” “Purchasing any goods from a Bahá'í store is forbidden,” as well as “The modern ‘Human Rights’ is a big lie,” and many others, have produced hundreds of thousands of pieces of disinformation reaching millions of Iranians. Blatant and outrageous calumnies are routinely used to incite hatred and violence against the Bahá'ís.



A Bahá'í-owned business pillaged and sealed by the Iranian authorities (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

Websites and social media channels are augmented by videos, print newspaper articles, and other written media, books, seminars, exhibitions, and graffiti from both official outlets and others sponsored by the government but purporting to be independent.

Economic oppression and denial of livelihoods

All Bahá'ís in public sector roles were dismissed from their jobs after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Their means of earning a living are blocked, frustrated, and in some cases, outright shut down, in an ongoing effort to oppress and eliminate the Bahá'ís by making it impossible to earn a basic livelihood.

Bureaucratic delays are used to hinder Bahá'ís trying to run small businesses. The authorities also, often without warning, close Bahá'í-owned businesses on some fabricated legal basis. Other business owners are sometimes pressured by the authorities to dismiss any

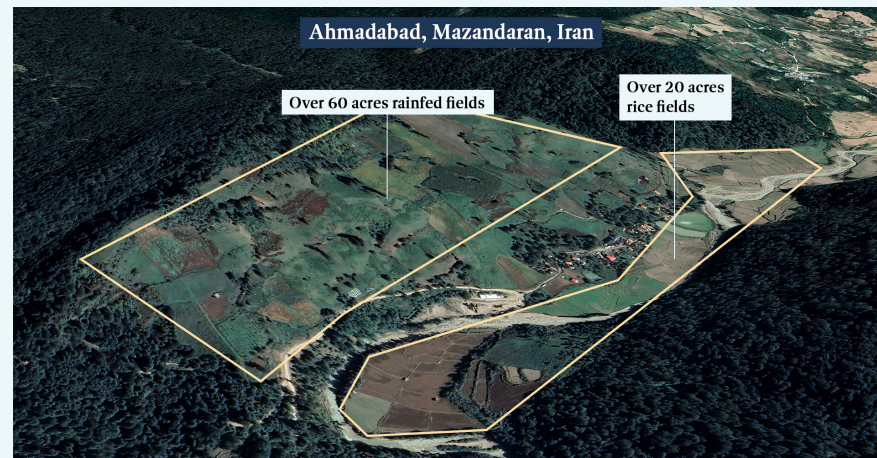
Bahá'í employees and are penalized if they fail to comply. And the fundamentalist religious dogma espoused by the authorities, that Bahá'ís are “unclean,” also excludes them from the food services, hospitality, health care, and other sectors, before the denial of their right to even train in such fields.

Introduction: The persecution of Iran's Bahá'í community

Arbitrary confiscation and destruction of property

Seizing Bahá'í-owned properties and turning them over to state-controlled foundations has been a systematic strategy used by the Iranian authorities since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

who claimed the lands for the government. No compensation or official documents justifying the seizures were provided by the agents who conducted the raid. The raid was similar to a 2021 raid in Iran's southwest where security agents seized irrigated farmlands during a water crisis.



The strategy continues almost every day to deprive Bahá'ís of property assets and homes.

Bahá'í-owned rice fields in the village of Ahmadabad, Mazandaran province, fenced-off and later destroyed by the Iranian authorities (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

In May 2024, Iranian government agents bulldozed rice paddies owned by Bahá'ís in the village of Ahmadabad, Mazandaran province, destroying crops and irrigation berms in the attack. Local Bahá'í residents in the rural area had owned and worked the lands for generations. During the attack, videos and photos of which were published online, a large excavator flattened and destroyed crops and irrigation, while Bahá'ís, including an old woman whose son was killed while serving in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, pleaded with the agents to stop.

In January 2024, farmlands, rice paddies, and walnut orchards belonging to Bahá'í families in the same village, a lush and fertile agricultural community, were forcibly seized by Iranian officials

Hundreds of agents with earth-moving equipment razed the homes of six Bahá'í families in Roshankouh, Mazandaran province, in August 2022. Two years earlier, in 2020, two Iranian courts issued orders that declared the ownership of land owned by 27 Bahá'ís in the village of Ivel, Mazandaran, to be illegal. The court documents indicated that the confiscation of the land was because of the religious beliefs of the Bahá'í owners. And in November of the same year, over a hundred government agents raided the shops and homes of dozens of Bahá'ís, and demanded that they hand over their property deeds.

A parastatal body called the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order, also known as Setad and which controls extensive assets across Iran, has orchestrated

many of the rising number of Bahá'í-owned property confiscations. Officials have also made improper use of Iranian law to justify the confiscations and to hide the religiously-motivated purpose behind the seizures.

Arbitrary imprisonment of well-known Bahá'ís just for practicing their religion

Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi are among two of the most prominent Bahá'ís to be arrested, first in 2008, and again in 2022; both times, without just cause. Sabet and Kamalabadi were both members of an informal leadership group which took pastoral care of the Iranian Bahá'í community's basic needs, with the full knowledge of the government, until all seven members of the group were arrested in 2008 and jailed for a decade. In 2022, five years after their release, Sabet and Kamalabadi were detained once again and have now been sentenced to a second decade in prison.

A third former member of the leadership group, 90-year-old Jamaloddin Khanjani, who had also spent 10 years in prison between 2008-18, was arrested in August 2023 and detained for several weeks despite being in ill health.

Numerous other well-known Bahá'ís in Iran have also been detained in the past as well as in more recent years and months—in a routine tactic used by the authorities in their efforts to terrorize the Bahá'í community.

Introduction: The persecution of Iran's Bahá'í community



More than 200 Bahá'ís were executed by the Islamic Republic after the 1979 Revolution. Officials even desecrated and defaced some remains with anti-Bahá'í slurs

Introduction: The persecution of Iran's Bahá'í community



Archives of Bahá'í persecution

The Bahá'í International Community established the Archives of Bahá'í Persecution to record the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran—in response to rising interest internationally and within Iran to understand the depth and breadth of this persecution. The documents shed light on the decades-long, systematic, and ongoing persecution of the Baha'is, instigated by the clergy and by the government.

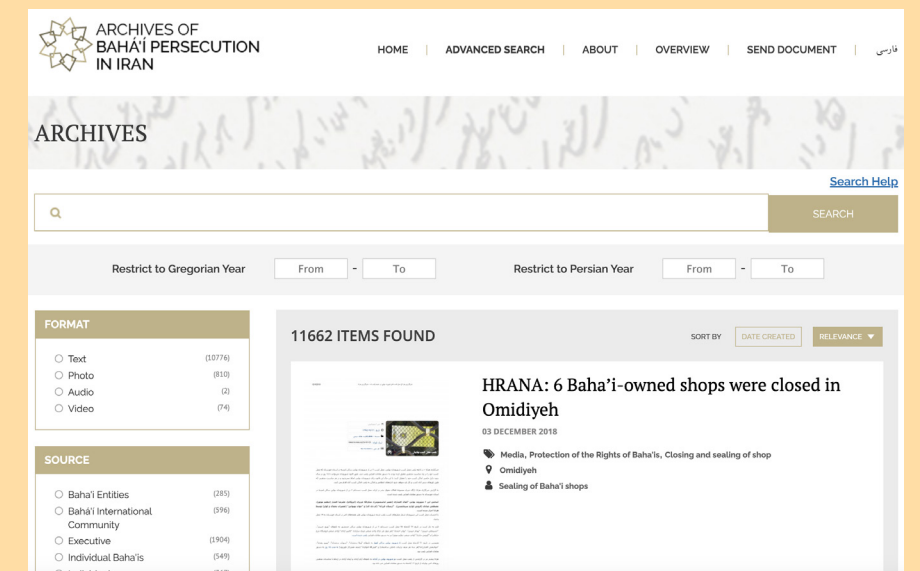
More than 11,500 documents are included in the Archives and nearly 1,000 photographs.

Although most of the documents on this website are related to the decades following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there are many that date back a long time prior to the Revolution.

They cover a wide range of persecutions, including systematic discrimination, arrest and imprisonment, execution, economic oppression, exclusion from education, acts of destruction and violence, and incitement to hatred. Over time, the archive will contain thousands of documents, mostly text documents, but also audio and visual records, many of which are being made publicly available for the first time.

Each document is available as a digital scan of the original and in a text-searchable format. All materials will, in time, be available in both Persian and English.

Visit the Archives at iranbahaipersecution.bic.org or [@PersecutionIran](https://www.instagram.com/PersecutionIran) on Instagram and Twitter/X.



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

PERSECUTION OF BAHÁ'IS IN IRAN Brief History

The Bahá'í Faith was born in 19th century Persia with the appearance of two prophetic figures—the Báb and Bahá'ulláh. The Báb's mission was to prepare the way for the coming of a Promised One foretold in all the world's religions. Bahá'ulláh claimed to be that Promised One with a divine mission to usher in a new stage of humanity's unity as a single entity living in a common homeland. His teachings outlined a framework for the emergence of a global civilization that would advance both the spiritual and material dimensions of life. Among those teachings are the oneness of the entire human race; the independent search after truth; the abolition of all forms of prejudice; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; and the equality of men and women. For more information about the Bahá'í Faith visit the [official website](http://www.bahai.org).

The Early Period

The teachings of the Báb — and their popular appeal — were seen by Iran's religious establishment and the Qajar Kings as a threat to their power and authority. Thousands of early followers of the Báb were killed at the urging of religious leaders, and the Báb was executed by the government in 1850.

The Iranian religious orthodoxy subsequently responded to the message of Bahá'ulláh, as it spread within and outside of Iran, with a renewed determination to extinguish the new religion and force its followers back to Islam. Bahá'ulláh was exiled, sent to the prison city of Akka in what was then Ottoman Palestine, while His followers in Iran continued to face successive outbreaks of persecution. In 1903, for example, 101 Bahá'ís were killed in the city of Yazd after the persecution was instigated by hostile mullahs.




Screenshots (above and below) from iranbahaipersecution.bic.org

 **Accusation & False Charge**

Bahá'ís face no official discrimination. Rather, Iranian officials allege that Bahá'ís enjoy the same rights as other Iranians.

“You know Bahá'ís are a minority in Iran, and ... they are dealt under the so-called citizen’s contract. Under this citizenship contract, they enjoy all the privileges of any citizen in Iran.” — Mohammad Javad Larijani to the UN Human Rights Council, 31 October 2014

 **Fact**


 **Bahá'ís are deprived of virtually all citizenship rights. They have no constitutional protection and are subject to a well-documented government policy of discrimination.**

 **Accusation & False Charge**

Iran recognizes its obligations to educate all its citizens, and Bahá'ís are free to attend university. “They have professors at universities. They have students at university. So they enjoy all the possibilities and privileges.”

— Dr. Larijani, 31 October 2014

 **Fact**

 **Bahá'ís are blocked from obtaining higher education through a series of bureaucratic ruses and mandated expulsions if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís.**

 **Accusation & False Charge**

If Bahá'ís are arrested or imprisoned, it is for political or other crimes, not for legitimate religious belief. “No Iranian citizen has been arrested or put in jail because of being a member of the Bahá'í community... Iran’s judiciary deals with them as it does regarding other citizens if they commit a crime.”

— Dr. Larijani, quoted by the Iranian Students’ News Agency on 15 May 2011

 **Fact**


 **Bahá'ís do not participate in partisan politics, and charges against them almost always refer to their religious identity.**

 **Accusation & False Charge**

Iran condemns religious intolerance of all kinds, and Bahá'ís are free to worship. “They cannot propagate Bahá'ism among non- Bahá'ís. It is against the law. But they can have their own preaching within themselves. They have their own meetings, in their own worship places.”

— Dr. Larijani, 6 March 2016

 **Fact**


 **The government sponsors and condones anti-Bahá'í propaganda in the media, contrary to international law.**

 **Accusation & False Charge**

Bahá'ís face no discrimination in economic activity and, in fact, are wealthy and prosperous. “Bahá'ís are very much affluent people economically in Iran. They have huge companies. And a lot of successful business.”

— Dr. Larijani, Press TV interview, 6 March 2016

 **Fact**

 **Bahá'ís are deprived of virtually all citizenship rights. They have no constitutional protection and are subject to a well-documented government policy of discrimination.**

 **Accusation & False Charge**

Bahá'ís have played a pernicious and destructive role in Iran’s history, supporting colonialism, Zionism, and other allegedly anti-regime political movements. “Bahá'ism is not a religion in Iran but a diversionary sect and that based on Iran’s law, publicity in favor of Bahá'ism is a crime, but Bahá'ís enjoy complete freedom in their personal issues and nobody opposes them.”

— Dr. Larijani, 15 May 2011

 **Fact**

 **The Bahá'í Faith emerged in Iran in 1844 as a new and independent religious movement. Its teachings advocate non-violence and peaceful solutions to all forms of conflict, and call on its followers to promote the betterment of society wherever they reside.**



Who are the Bahá'ís?

Bahá'ís consider selfless and constant service to humanity to be their duty, and they are committed to the betterment of society. This intention characterizes the spirit of Bahá'í communities everywhere and is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the birthplace of the Faith: Iran. Iranian Bahá'ís have, as far back as the Faith's beginnings, dedicated their lives to the progress and upliftment of their society. Yet they continue to endure intense persecution and ceaseless threats because of their beliefs.

“Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind and bettereth the condition thereof...”

— Bahá'u'lláh

Iran holds great significance for the Bahá'í Faith. It was in this land where the Faith's Herald, the Báb, announced in the middle of the 19th century that a Messenger from God, Bahá'u'lláh, would usher in a new age of unity, peace, and justice. Bahá'u'lláh, a Persian nobleman from Tehran, left a life of princely comfort and security to bring to humanity a new message of peace and unity. In doing so, He suffered immense persecution and deprivation. Claiming to be nothing less than a new and independent Messenger from God, Bahá'u'lláh's life, work, and influence parallel that of Abraham, Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ, and Muhammad. Bahá'ís view Bahá'u'lláh as the most recent in this succession of divine Messengers.

Bahá'u'lláh taught that there is one God, and one human race, and that each of the world's religions represent stages in the revelation of God's will and purpose for humanity. He said that this moment in history represents humanity's transition to its collective coming of age—a stage foretold in scriptures of other world religions, where humanity comes to acknowledge its oneness and begins to take steps to bring about a united, peaceful, and integrated global society.

“The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens,” Bahá'u'lláh wrote.

For a global society to flourish, Bahá'u'lláh said, it must be based on certain fundamental principles. These include the elimination of all forms of prejudice; full equality between the sexes; recognition of the essential oneness of the world's great

religions; the elimination of extremes of poverty and wealth; universal education; the harmony of science and religion; a sustainable balance between nature and technology; and the establishment of a world federal system, based on collective security and the oneness of humanity.

The Bahá'í Faith is the second-most widespread independent world religion, with over five million followers residing in virtually every nation on earth in more than 100,000 localities. Its membership represents a cross-section of humanity, with Bahá'ís hailing from more than 2,100 diverse ethnic and tribal groups and every walk of life, including countless cultures, professions, and social or economic backgrounds. Its membership reflects the

“The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”

— Bahá'u'lláh

Faith's all-encompassing scope and commitment to the oneness of humanity, and it continues to be among the fastest growing of the world's religions.

Across the globe, Bahá'ís seek to contribute to the upliftment of their societies through social and economic development projects to promote the material, social, and spiritual well-being of humanity. Their efforts are

aimed at building peaceful and cohesive communities and societies. They dedicate their energies to offering prayer gatherings for individuals and communities from all religious backgrounds to deepen spiritual roots and strengthen social ties, and they work to offer programs of moral education for children and young adolescents, as well as study circles aimed at the spiritual empowerment of youth and adults. They also seek to contribute to the search for new ideas and the development of practical solutions to the global challenges facing humanity by engaging in numerous discourses of society such as peace, human rights, the advancement of women, and the environment, to name a few, all while working shoulder-to-shoulder with others.

Sharing a common goal of serving humanity—and continually striving to refine their inner lives and characters as well as their personal, family, and collective lives to accord with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh—Bahá'ís invite the participation of every member of society to contribute to the betterment of the world.

The Bahá'í community is one of learning and action, free from any sense of superiority or claim to any exclusive understanding of truth. It is a community that strives to cultivate hope for the future of humanity, to foster purposeful effort, and to celebrate the endeavors of all those in the world who work to promote unity and alleviate human suffering.



Working for social change in Iran

The teachings of the Bahá'í Faith counsel its followers to spend their entire lives working for the cause of justice and unity. Despite decades and generations of persecution—since the beginning of the Bahá'í Faith in the 19th century—the Bahá'ís in Iran have striven to serve their beloved homeland by building a country that is advancing for all and that is united in its great diversity. Achieving equality and justice for all Iranians has become the cause of women and men across the country, of every faith or none, and the Bahá'ís stand in solidarity with their compatriots in their peaceful efforts for social change. The #OurStoryIsOne campaign launched by the Bahá'í

International Community in 2023 reflects this effort and this growing sense of solidarity.

Bahá'ís work for the ideals of justice, equality, and unity in diversity by striving to be examples of these principles; by living out their ideals in their personal actions.

Embodying and applying these principles can and does require sacrifice. The Bahá'ís in Iran could, at any point, avoid persecution by denying their beliefs or leaving their homeland. Access to higher education, business licenses, and public sector jobs would all become possible, and the threat of property confiscations, home destructions, or arbitrary detention would all fade.

Yet, the Bahá'ís choose to stay in Iran, and hold true to their beliefs and ideals, committed to the upliftment of their beloved country.

Humanity is “organic with the world,” the Bahá'í teachings state. Our inner lives mold our social environments and are also affected by them. Bahá'ís strive to transform themselves, as individuals and communities, by serving humanity and by working to manifest the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in their personal and collective lives.

Changing the prevailing relationships in society—between individuals, their communities, and their governing institutions—is therefore where Bahá'ís

believe the work of personal and collective transformation takes shape. The Bahá'í community knows this is a difficult path. But it also knows that walking this path is essential if Iran is to achieve the fundamental changes needed in the values and relationships that define its society.

“Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.”

— Bahá'u'lláh

As part of this process, the Bahá'ís in Iran, as in every part of the world, are striving and learning, together with others, to give expression to the principles outlined in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. In doing so, they are seeking to answer questions such as: How does humanity ensure that peoples and groups are not pitted one against another? How can we raise and support institutions that are trustworthy, and work for the betterment of all? How can economic relationships become just and free of corruption? How can prejudices of all kinds be eliminated? How can people ensure that no individual or group is exploited for the benefit of others? How do individuals search for solutions in a united

commitment to truth, and not through contention or the distortion of the views of other people?

Answering these questions requires the independent investigation of truth, systematic exploration, and consultation with others, as well as sustained effort.

There are numerous accounts of Iranian Bahá'ís, who, motivated by service, sacrifice, love, and goodwill toward their fellow citizens, have explored these questions and have consecrated their energies to educational, medical, industrial, and agricultural advancements within the country. From the earliest

development and prosperity of cities and villages, to further industry and agriculture, and to exalt and celebrate the arts and crafts of Iran.

Despite their continued contributions to Iranian society, Iranian Bahá'ís experience constant persecution and ceaseless threats because of their beliefs. Yet, out of loyalty and their moral commitment to promote unity, as well as their deep love for Iran and its people, they sacrifice not only their time and their possessions but their very lives, choosing to remain in their homeland, to which they share allegiance with



Before they were closed by government decree in 1934, non-religious Bahá'í schools in Iran attracted thousands of students. Shown here are participants in Bahá'í classes in Tehran with their teachers, in a photograph dated 13 August 1933

days of the Faith in Iran, they established schools in the remotest parts of the country, with the aim of eliminating illiteracy, and founded and built hospitals and dispensaries, so that, with the aid of modern medical science and new inventions, they might contribute to the health and well-being of their compatriots. They have also exerted great efforts to contribute to the

their fellow Iranian citizens. They continue to dedicate their lives to the flourishing of Iran, even amid the very real threats to their safety and security, indeed to their very existence.



Why does the Iranian government persecute the Bahá'í community?

The government of Iran is bound by international law to respect the rights of all its citizens, including religious minorities, an obligation which it adopted of its own accord. Why does it continue to blatantly violate the terms of its obligations?

Iran's clerics have been opposed to the spiritual renewal called for by the Bahá'í teachings since its inception. The persecutions and discriminatory policies and laws of the Islamic Republic attest to this opposition. The Iranian government has, since 1979, felt challenged by Bahá'í principles such as the equality of women and men and harmony between science and religion, as well as the that the Bahá'í community has elected institutions instead of a clerical class and that it encourages universal participation of all Bahá'ís in community and social life. Iranian authorities have therefore systematically sought to suppress and even eliminate the Bahá'í community—often in violent and dehumanizing ways.



Roots of the persecution

Even after signing and ratifying international covenants that explicitly outline its duty to protect citizens, why does the government of Iran persist in its persecution of the Bahá'ís?

The animosity directed by Iran's leaders to Bahá'ís must be understood by looking back to the origins of the Faith in Iran and what it represented to many religious leaders at the time. The idea that God would have sent a new Messenger, delivering a new Revelation—as proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh—runs counter to the understanding of many Shia Muslim leaders, who believe that Muhammad was

the “Seal” of the Prophets. Many believe that Islam is God’s “final” religion, whose full flowering will come when the Twelfth Imam emerges from hiding (or occultation) to uphold the basic principles outlined by Muhammad in the Qur’an. Bahá'ís believe this promised unveiling has in fact culminated through Bahá'u'lláh's mission and teachings.

The initial message of the Bahá'í Faith was delivered by its Forerunner, a 25-year-old merchant from Shiraz, Iran, who took the title “the Báb,” which means “gate” or “door” in Arabic. It was on

23 May 1844 when the Báb proclaimed to a young seeker that He was the Promised One, as prophesied in the sacred scriptures of Islam. News of this bold proclamation soon spread throughout Iran, attracting thousands of followers.

But the teachings of the Báb went far beyond what many Shia expected. At a time when Iran was experiencing widespread moral breakdown, and was stagnating in its material progress, the Báb began to reveal new scriptures, advocating new rights for women as well as the poor, while abrogating certain laws of the Qur’an.

Unsurprisingly, these new ideas aroused excitement and hope among all classes, rapidly attracting thousands of followers. The Báb's revolutionary prescription for spiritual renewal, and its vast appeal to the Iranian populace, was seen by Iran's religious establishment as a threat to their power and authority. As a result, thousands of early followers of the Báb, known as Bábís, were killed at the urging of religious leaders. The Báb was also executed by a government order, also instigated by clerics, in 1850.

All this was only the beginning of the countless persecutions which continue to beset the Bahá'í community in Iran.

The Báb prepared the way for the imminent appearance of another Messenger of God, Bahá'u'lláh, Whose mission was to usher in an age of peace and justice promised in all the world's religions. At the heart of Bahá'u'lláh's message are the teachings that there is only one God, that all the world's

religions are expressions of the Creator's will, that humanity is a single race, and that the time has come for humanity to unite and create an “ever-advancing civilization.”

Iran's religious orthodoxy responded with a renewed determination to extinguish the religion brought by Bahá'u'lláh and to force its followers back to Islam. Bahá'u'lláh suffered 40 years of imprisonment, torture, and exile, and was sent to the prison city of Akka (now Acre, in Israel) in what was then Ottoman Palestine. His followers in Iran continued to face successive outbreaks of persecution.

In 1903, for example, 101 Bahá'ís were killed in the city



of Yazd after the populace was incited by hostile clerics.

Tens of thousands of Bábís – members of the movement which preceded the Bahá'í Faith, such as those picture here – were murdered in the late 19th century

In the 1930s, the government of Reza Shah Pahlavi ordered owners of Bahá'í-established schools—which were open to all—to continue operating on Bahá'í holy days, even though Bahá'ís suspend work on the holy days outlined by their faith. All religious communities do the same. When the Bahá'ís declined, based on principle, to keep their schools open on religious holidays, government

officials shut down all Bahá'í-run schools in the country, which at the time numbered more than 50 and enrolled thousands of students.

In 1955, the Pahlavi regime allowed the nation-wide broadcast of a series of incendiary sermons against the Bahá'ís by a leading Shia preacher in Tehran, Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Falsafi, apparently hoping to make the Bahá'ís a scapegoat to deflect attention from unpopular government policies. The incitement created an uprising against the Bahá'í community, which resulted in the deaths of seven Bahá'ís and the widespread destruction of many Bahá'í homes, properties, and businesses. Sheikh Falsafi was joined by the

Shah's Minister of Defense in demolishing the dome of the Bahá'í national headquarters in Tehran with pickaxes.

These are just a few examples of the earlier attacks experienced by the Bahá'í community in Iran—which then continued to take on a new degree of sophistication following the 1979 Revolution in Iran.



BBC فارسی

Brutal killings and then a shift in tactics: 1979 and beyond

In the period immediately preceding the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Bahá'ís in Iran experienced a surge of attacks presaging the wholesale persecution yet to follow. In 1978, at least seven Bahá'ís were killed, mainly owing to mob violence incited by religious leaders. Then,

became official government policy.

Whereas attacks in the past had typically been spasmodic, and the government's support for them had been based on political expediency, the clerics who came to power during the Iranian revolution

Zoroastrian minorities in Iran were specifically mentioned and protected. No mention whatsoever was made of the rights of the Bahá'í community, Iran's largest religious minority. Under Iran's concept of an Islamic government, this exclusion means that Bahá'ís enjoy no rights of any sort and that they can be attacked and persecuted with impunity. Courts in the Islamic Republic have denied Bahá'ís the right of redress or protection against assault, killings, theft, the destruction of personal property, or other forms of persecution, and have ruled that Iranian citizens who kill or injure Bahá'ís are not liable for damages because their victims are "unprotected infidels."

Without any claim to civil rights, the Bahá'í community saw rapid deterioration of its position within Iranian society. The house of the Báb, the holiest Bahá'í site in Iran, was destroyed in September 1979. Then, a November 1979 edict from the Ministry of Education required not only the dismissal of all Bahá'í teachers from schools, but also held them responsible for the repayment of all salaries they had previously received. At least seven Bahá'ís were killed that year. Two were executed by the government. One was hanged in prison. Others were beaten to death or killed in local incidents.

The government then began to systematically imprison and execute the elected and appointed leadership of the Iranian Bahá'í community. On 21 August 1980, all nine members of the national Bahá'í governing council, known as the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of



Mona Mahmudnizhad, a 17-year-old Bahá'í woman from Shiraz, was executed along with nine other women in 1983

with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran the following year, the attacks on the Bahá'ís in the country reached a new level; they

brought with them a deep and abiding prejudice against Bahá'ís. When the Republic's new constitution was drawn up in April 1979, which itself was based on the 1905 constitution, certain rights of the Christian, Jewish, and

Left: Seven of the nine-member National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, after their 1981 disappearance, during the trial which later led to their execution. Two other members of the Assembly, both women, were not part of the trial (Credit: BBC Persian documentary "Revolutionary Justice", 2015)

Iran, were abducted and disappeared without a trace; their whereabouts are still unknown. It seems certain that they were executed. At least 24 Bahá'ís were killed that year. Twenty were executed by the government and the rest were stoned, assassinated, or burned to death.

In the following year, at least 48 Bahá'ís were killed in Iran. That number included the so-called “second” National Spiritual Assembly, which had been reconstituted to replace the first. Eight of its members were executed on 27 December 1981.

At least 32 Bahá'ís were executed or killed in 1982. Twenty-nine in 1983. And 30 in 1984. Again, the targets of these executions were often members of Bahá'í governing assemblies. Four members of the “third” National Spiritual Assembly were executed in 1984, even after the institution had been disbanded in accordance with a government decree and the individuals held no official position in the Bahá'í community.

One of the most dramatic episodes came in June 1983, when ten Iranian Bahá'í women in Shiraz, one aged just 17 and most in their 20s, were hanged. The primary charge against them was teaching Bahá'í children's classes. The women were subjected to intense physical and mental abuse to coerce them to recant their Faith—a tactic often used on Bahá'í prisoners. Yet, like most Bahá'ís who have been arrested in Iran, they refused to deny their beliefs. The fact that so many imprisoned Bahá'ís were given this option of recanting, with the promise of release

if they did so, is among the strongest proofs that the persecutions were based solely on religious beliefs.

The tragic execution of these 10 women was commemorated in 2023 through the **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign. The Bahá'í International Community launched the global campaign on 18 June 2023 in honor of the 40th anniversary of the execution of 10 women and it dedicated the anniversary and the campaign to all Iranian women who, regardless of faith and background, have yearned for gender equality and who continue to face oppression for seeking justice. The campaign elicited statements of support from human rights luminaries in Iran and around the world, as well as from other prominent figures and ordinary people. The campaign also inspired artwork produced by professional artists and the general public.

As the 1980s executions and other horrors became known, an outcry against the persecution arose in the international news media, at the United Nations, and among governments and human rights organizations. Iran stopped its wholesale execution of Bahá'ís in response and reduced the number of Bahá'ís in prison. Instead, it refocused its policies toward economic, educational, and cultural restrictions aimed at blocking the development of the Bahá'í community. The new policy was defined in a 1991 government memorandum titled “The Bahá'í Question”—an effort that remains in force.

Today, Bahá'u'lláh's life and mission are becoming increasingly well-known

around the world. Millions of people are learning to apply His teachings to their individual and collective lives for the betterment of society. Yet, the persecution of His followers in Iran continues unabated.

Brutal killings and then a shift in tactics: 1979 and beyond

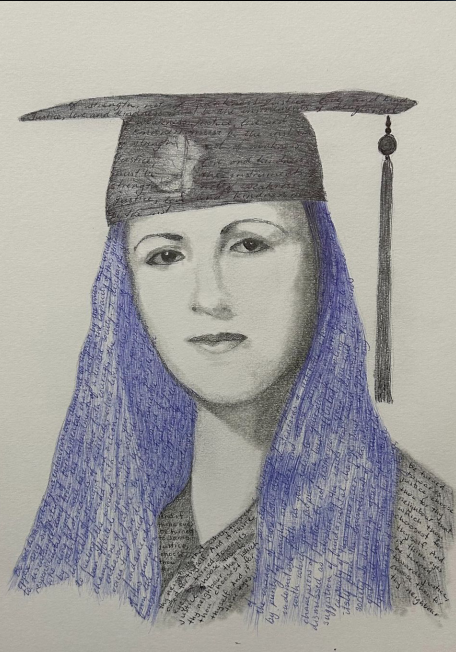
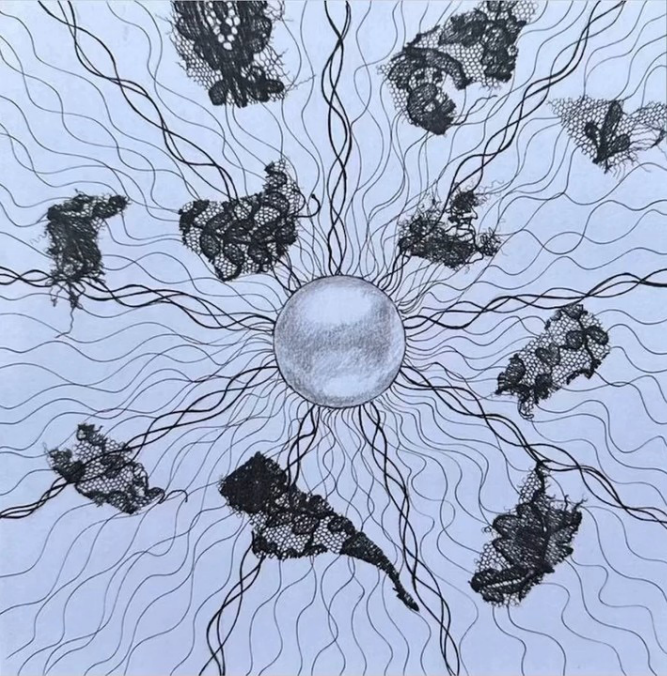


In 1979 a mob of fanatics, incited by a Muslim cleric, destroyed the historic 19th century home of the Báb, a sacred site for Bahá'ís (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

Brutal killings and then a shift in tactics: 1979 and beyond

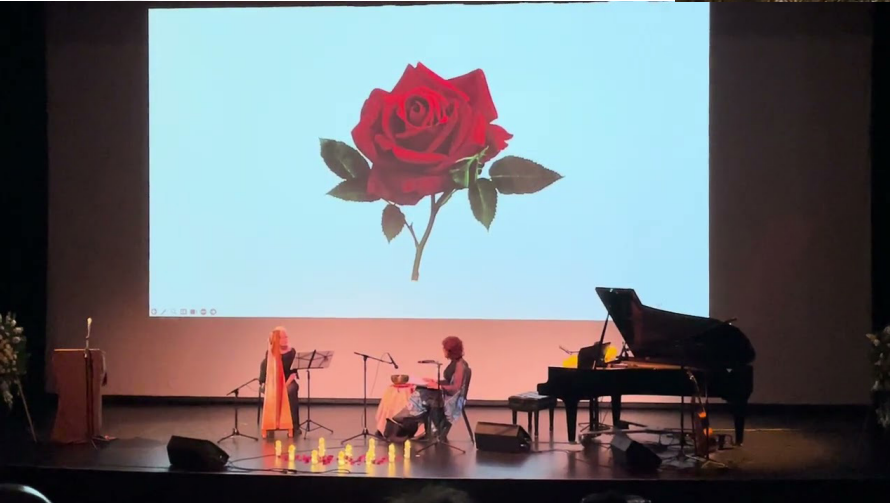
OUR STORY

DARIUSH RASHIDI



Each and Every Stone
par What Might They Chorus
1. Each and Every Stone

00:00 04:18



ONE
BY
ONE

to the
10 Bahá'í women of Shiraz
#ourstoryisone



Artwork contributions from the #OurStoryIsOne campaign commemorating the 10 Bahá'í women executed in 1983 in Shiraz





Iran's obligations under international law

“They have sustained every tribulation and displayed patience in the face of grievous injustice. They have forsaken all comfort and prosperity, have willingly submitted to dire suffering and adversity in the path of Thy love, and are still held captive....”

— ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Iranian government has a direct obligation under international law to protect its citizens from discrimination and persecution, and to prosecute those who break the law, an obligation to which the government itself acceded when it signed and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Under the ICCPR, which Iran signed in 1968 and ratified in 1975, never revoking these after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's government is bound by the following obligations:

Non-discrimination

The ICCPR spells out the obligation to “respect and ensure all individuals in its territory” receive all rights agreed to in the ICCPR “without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” **[Article 2]**

Protection from murder

The ICCPR guarantees the “inherent right to life,” which shall be “protected by law.” “No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.” **[Article 6]**

Freedom from torture or degrading treatment

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” **[Article 7]**

Protection from arbitrary arrest

The ICCPR states “Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention.” **[Article 9]**

Guarantees of due process

“Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest...” and they “shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law...” **[Article 9]**

The right to a fair trial

This includes that “all persons shall be equal before the courts,” that they “have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence and to communicate with counsel of his own choosing,” “not to be compelled to testify against himself,” and that they be “tried without undue delay.” **[Article 14]**

Freedom of religion

The ICCPR states that “[e]veryone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.” **[Article 18]**

Non-coercion in matters of religion

Freedom of religion includes that “[n]o one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.” **[Article 18]**

Protection from incitement

The ICCPR also imposes an affirmative obligation on the government to ensure that “[a]ny advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.” **[Article 20]**

Protection for minorities

Religious minorities “shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group ... to profess and practice their own religion.” **[Article 27]**



How does the Iranian government persecute the Bahá'ís?

Iranian government officials claim that Iran's Bahá'ís enjoy all citizenship rights. Such claims are contradicted not only by the number of Bahá'ís who, in recent years, have been arrested, imprisoned, assaulted, discriminated against economically, or expelled or blocked from university, but also by official documents that spell out a systematic national policy designed to prevent the development of the Bahá'í community at every turn. These claims are further contradicted by the fact that the persecution of an individual can stop if they recant their faith.

Persecution through Iranian law and government documents

Discrimination against Bahá'ís is embedded in Iran's constitution. Defining the country's laws according to Islamic criteria, and listing other religious minorities but not the Bahá'ís in the

minorities." Yet the Bahá'í Faith—Iran's largest non-Muslim religious minority and religion—was excluded from similar constitutional protection. The result, as noted by Shahin Milani, a legal analyst at the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, in a paper in the *Columbia University's Journal*

“The legal and jurisprudential framework within which the rights of the Bahá'í community are violated in Iran can be directly linked to the country's aims of maintaining a national identity as an Islamic Republic,” writes Mr. Milani. **“The Iranian constitution and other existing laws institutionalize religious discrimination. Religious edicts by Iran's Supreme Leader and other senior clerics further reinforce a systemic basis for the marginalization of the Bahá'ís.”**

constitution, has left the Bahá'ís exposed without any protection under Iranian law:

- **Article 4** of the Iranian constitution states clearly, that all “civil, penal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria.”

- **Article 13** offers some protections for Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Specifically, it says “Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious

of International Affairs, is “institutionalized religious discrimination” against Bahá'ís.

- **Article 19** states that “[a]ll people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; color, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege.” Conspicuously absent, however, is any reference to religion, an absence that opens the door to discrimination based on religious belief.

The 1991 memorandum on The Bahá'í question

Over the years, the United Nations and human rights groups have discovered and made public several secret documents of the Iranian authorities that outline Iran's policy of oppression toward Bahá'ís, making the persecution toward the community irrefutable. Foremost among such documents is a high-level 1991 memorandum that specifically and ominously refers to the “The Bahá'í question” as a problem to be addressed.

Drafted by the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council and signed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the policy document establishes a national policy to promote the gradual eradication of the Bahá'í community as a viable entity in Iranian society. “The government's dealings with [Bahá'ís] must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked,” states the memorandum, which was obtained by the UN and released in 1993. In its specifics, the memorandum outlines a series of measures to restrict the educational, economic, and cultural life of Iranian Bahá'ís, targeting every stage of an individual's life.

For instance, regarding education, it states that Bahá'í children should only be enrolled in schools with a “strong and imposing religious ideology” and outlines that students must be expelled from universities if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís. As for work opportunities, it specifies that anyone who identifies as a Bahá'í must be denied employment.

surfaced in 2006. The letter directs various intelligence agencies, police organizations, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps “to identify persons who adhere to the Bahá’í Faith and monitor their activities.”

Discrimination at local and provincial levels

The national policy of official discrimination against Bahá’ís is also echoed in documents that deal with provincial and local administration.

• A 21 September 2020 directive instructing local authorities in the city of Sari, in the northern province of Mazandaran, to “conduct strict controls” on the Bahá’ís in the city by “monitoring their operations,” and introduce measures to “identify Bahá’í students” to “bring them into Islam.”

• A 15 March 2009 letter from the Public Places Supervision Office of Kerman Province to Rafsanjan police commanders instructs them to restrict real estate purchases by Bahá’ís. “[I]n order to prevent the extensive presence of the adherents of the perverse Bahaist sect in trades and organizations, and their activities in high-income businesses, they should only be allowed to have enough income to survive,” the letter states. “Therefore, the heads of unions and relevant trade organizations should be sufficiently informed to prevent them from purchasing properties and real estate near each other in one location.”

Public Places Supervision Office to police commanders nationwide. The letter uses language similar to the 1991 memorandum banning Bahá’ís from a series of specific professions, noting that their activities in “high-earning businesses should be halted, and only those work permits

The memorandum also laid the groundwork for a sustained hateful propaganda campaign, which directed the government to establish an “independent section” within its propaganda apparatus to “counter” the religious activities of Bahá’ís.

“All members of the perverse Bahaist sect are condemned as blasphemous and ritually unclean. Any food items or other objects that have been in contact with contagious dampness [sic] and have been touched by them should be avoided. It is incumbent upon the believers to counteract the machinations and perversity of this misguided sect.”

— Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in an undated fatwa

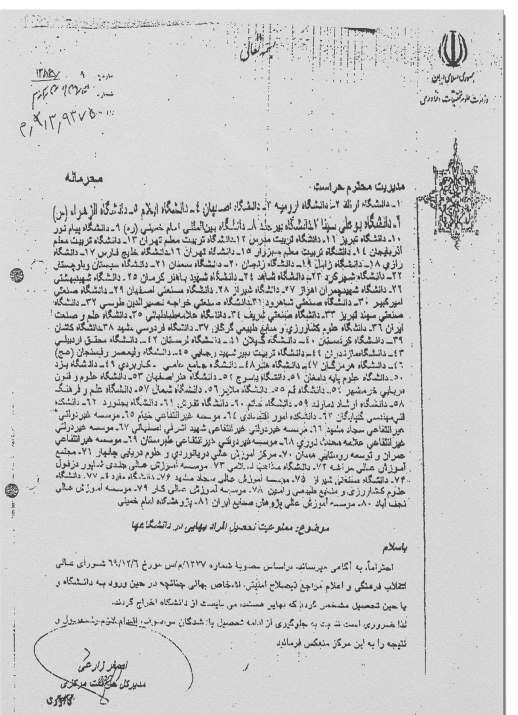
that would provide them with an ordinary livelihood should be allowed,” and describing specifically the importance of “ongoing monitoring and supervision” of the activities of Bahá’ís.

• A 2006 letter from Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology to 81 Iranian universities, instructing them to expel all Bahá’í students. The letter explicitly states that its directive is “in accordance” with the 1991 memorandum.

Still in force today

Iran routinely denies persecuting or discriminating against Bahá’ís. If this were true, why has the 1991 document never been rescinded? And why have subsequent policy documents reinforced the existence of the 1991 memorandum and extended the oppressive directives further? Examples are listed below and a full reproduction of these documents appear in the Annexes.

• A 9 April 2007 letter from the security unit of the



English translations of the Iranian government’s 1991 memorandum “The Bahá’í Question” (Persian original inlaid) detailing policies to “block” the progress and development of the Bahá’í community

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator’s notes appear in square brackets]
[Personal information has been redacted.]

[Emblem]
In the Name of God
Islamic Republic of Iran
The Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council
Number: [illegible]/1327
Date: 6 Esfand 1369 [25 February 1991]
Enclosure: -----
[Stamp] CONFIDENTIAL

Hojjatol-Islam Mr. Mohammad Golpayegani
Head of the Office of the Esteemed Leader [Khamenei]
Greetings!

After greetings, with reference to the letter number 1-7835 dated 10 Dey 1369 [31 December 1990], concerning the instructions of the Esteemed Leader which had been conveyed to the Respected President regarding the Baha’i question, we inform you that, since the respected President and the Head of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council had referred this question to this Council for consideration and study, it was placed on the Council’s agenda of session number 128 on 16 Bahman 1369 [5 February 1991] and session number 119 of 2 Bahman 1369 [22 January 1991]. In addition to the above, and further to the [results of] the discussions held in this regard in session number 112 of 2 Mordad 1366 [24 July 1987] presided over by the Esteemed Leader (head and member of the Supreme Council), the recent views and directives given by the Esteemed Leader regarding the Baha’i question were conveyed to the Supreme Council. In consideration of the contents of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the religious and civil laws and general policies of the country, these matters were carefully studied and decisions pronounced.

In arriving at the decisions and proposing reasonable ways to counter the above question, due consideration was given to the wishes of the Esteemed Leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran [Khamenei], namely, that “in this regard a specific policy should be devised in such a way that everyone will understand what should or should not be done.” Consequently, the following proposals and recommendations resulted from these discussions.

The respected President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the Head of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, while approving these recommendations, instructed us to convey

them to the Esteemed Leader [Khamenei] so that appropriate action may be taken according to his guidance.

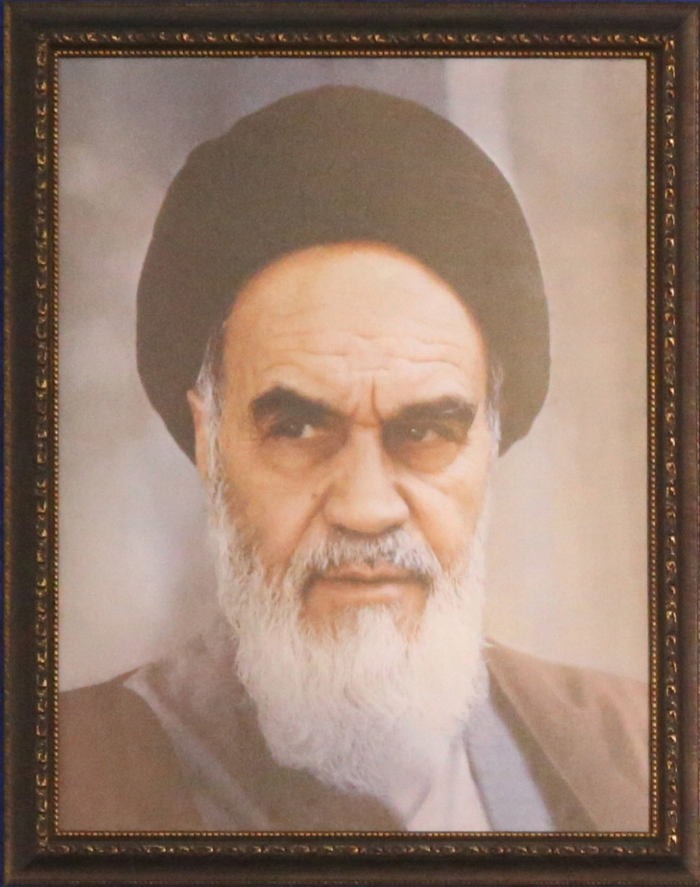
Summary of the results of the discussions and recommendation

A. General status of the Baha’is within the country’s system
1. They will not be expelled from the country without reason.
2. They will not be arrested, imprisoned, or penalized without reason.
3. The government’s dealings with them must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked.

B. Educational and cultural status
1. They can be enrolled in schools provided they have not identified themselves as Baha’is.
2. Preferably, they should be enrolled in schools which have a strong and imposing religious ideology.
3. They must be expelled from universities, either in the admission process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Baha’is.
4. Their political (espionage) activities must be dealt with according to appropriate government laws and policies, and their religious and propaganda activities should be answered by giving them religious and cultural responses, as well as propaganda.
5. Propaganda institutions (such as the Islamic Propaganda Organization) must establish an independent section to counter the propaganda and religious activities of the Baha’is.
6. A plan must be devised to confront and destroy their cultural roots outside the country.

C. Legal and social status
1. Permit them a modest livelihood as is available to the general population.
2. To the extent that it does not encourage them to be Baha’is, it is permissible to provide them the means for ordinary living in accordance with the general rights given to every Iranian citizen, such as ration booklets, passports, burial certificates, work permits, etc.
3. Deny them employment if they identify themselves as Baha’is.
4. Deny them any position of influence, such as in the educational sector, etc.

Wishing you divine confirmations
Secretary of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council
Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Golpayegani
[Signature]



“You should avoid any association and dealings with this perverse and misguided sect.”

— Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a fatwa issued on 26 March 2018

“Bahá'ís are unclean and association with them must be avoided.”

— Ayatollah Behjat, in an undated fatwa

“Members of the perverse sect are [not considered] Muslims, and any form of association with them is religiously prohibited, except in cases where there is hope of guiding them [to the right path].”

— Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, in a fatwa dated 17 May 2007

“It is a misguided sect and absolutely perverse. They are even more unclean than dogs. It is a man-made sect.”

— Ayatollah Nouri Hamadani, in a fatwa circulated in 2010



Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei signed the 1991 “Bahá'í Question” memorandum which called for the progress and development of the Bahá'ís to be “blocked”. (Credit: Reuters / Majid Asgaripour)



Surveillance, identification, and monitoring

In a clear invasion of privacy and an affront to human dignity, the government has directed authorities and police, through various government documents, to carefully identify and monitor Bahá'ís.

A disturbing example of the government-mandated nature of such invasive activities can be seen in the confidential letter from Iranian military headquarters, dated 29 October 2005, directing various intelligence agencies, police organizations, and the Revolutionary Guard “to identify persons who adhere to the Bahá'í Faith and monitor their activities.”

Asma Jahangir, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of

religion or belief at the time, who first broke news of the letter, expressed her concern in a March 2006 press release on the issue.

“The Special Rapporteur is apprehensive about the initiative to monitor the activities of individuals merely because they adhere to a religion that differs from the state religion,” said Ms. Jahangir. “She considers that such monitoring constitutes an impermissible and unacceptable interference with the rights of members of religious minorities. She also expresses concern that the information gained as a result of such monitoring will be used as a basis for the increased persecution of,

and discrimination against, members of the Bahá'í faith, in violation of international standards.”

The 9 April 2007 letter to police commanders, referenced earlier, also speaks specifically about the importance of “ongoing monitoring and supervision” of the activities of Bahá'ís.

In 2021, the League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran and the International Federation for Human Rights uncovered an official Iranian directive which instructs local authorities in the city of Sari,

document was issued by the Commission on Ethnicities, Sects, and Religions in Sari, which operates under the aegis of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council—a body chaired by Iran’s president and those responsible for security matters. The directive was issued to local and provincial police, the head of Sari’s Intelligence Department, the commander of the local Basij paramilitary force, the head of education, school and university officials, as well as to the Departments of Industry, Mining and Trade, Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism.



Asma Jahangir, Pakistani human rights lawyer and activist, and former UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief (Credit: UN Photo / Jean-Marc Ferré)

Surveillance, identification, and monitoring

“The Special Rapporteur considers that such monitoring constitutes an impermissible and unacceptable interference with the rights of members of religious minorities. She also expresses concern that the information gained as a result of such monitoring will be used as a basis for the increased persecution of, and discrimination against, members of the Bahá'í faith, in violation of international standards.”

— Asma Jahangir, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

in the northern province of Mazandaran, to “conduct strict controls” on the Bahá'ís in the city by “monitoring their operations,” and introduce measures to “identify Baha'i students” so as to “bring them into Islam.” The directive, dated 21 September 2020, adopted a “detailed plan” to ensure that the Bahá'í community is “rigorously controlled,” including through their “public and private meetings” as well as “their other activities.” The

In 2022, in Sanandaj, and several other small cities in the ethnic Kurdish region of western Iran, members of the Bahá'í community were under constant surveillance and harassment, and were threatened because of their beliefs. And in August 2023, authorities in Sistan and Baluchistan province installed surveillance cameras aimed at the homes of Bahá'ís in order to monitor their activities and visitors.

For those who have been wrongfully arrested without any supporting evidence, degrading ankle-band monitoring has also been used to surveil their movements.

Such affronts are strikingly reminiscent of examples throughout history when governments have monitored minorities with draconian measures ahead of even more sinister actions.



Executions: The 10 women in Shiraz executed on 18 June, 1983

The most heinous acts faced by the Bahá'í community in Iran have been numerous government-mandated executions. Few incidents are more shocking—or revealing of the religious basis of the persecution against Bahá'ís and the courage with which they face it—than the group hanging of 10

Guard) Detention Centre and then transferred to Adelabad Prison. They suffered harsh interrogations and torture by Revolutionary Guard coercing them to recant their faith. Each of them was asked multiple times, “Islam or death,” but none of them agreed to sign the statements authorities prepared for

to execution by hanging on charges of “Zionism,” “spying for Israel,” and teaching moral education classes for children.

On 18 June 1983, the 10 women were taken in secret, before dawn, to the Chowgan Square polo field in Shiraz, where they were hanged. Ranging in age from 17 to 57, they were led to the gallows in succession, each forced to watch the next woman's death in a harrowing attempt to coerce them a final time into recanting their faith. According to an eyewitness report, however, the women went to their fate singing and exhibiting immense courage and faith.

One of the men attending the gallows confided to a Bahá'í: “We tried saving their lives up to the last moment, but one by one, first the older ladies, then the young girls, were hanged while the others were forced to watch, it being hoped that this might induce them to recant their belief. We even urged them to say they were not Bahá'ís, but not one of them agreed; they preferred execution.”

After the brutal executions, it was reported that wounds

“We tried saving their lives up to the last moment, but one by one, first the older ladies, then the young girls, were hanged while the others were forced to watch, it being hoped that this might induce them to recant their belief. We even urged them to say they were not Bahá'ís, but not one of them agreed; they preferred execution.”

— One of the men attending the gallows

Bahá'í women in Shiraz on 18 June 1983. Their crime: teaching moral empowerment classes to Bahá'í youth and children. The Bahá'í International Community commemorated these tragic executions in 2023 with the #OurStoryIsOne campaign, which demonstrated the women's connection with Iranians' broader and historic struggle for gender equality and justice.

The 10 women were arrested in October and November 1982. Many were first held at a Sepah (Revolutionary

them to escape execution. They were refused the right of access to a lawyer, denied

“Whether you accept it or not, I am a Bahá'í. You cannot take it away from me. I am a Bahá'í with my whole being and my whole heart.”

— Zarrin Moghimi-Abyaneh

a trial in a public court, and ultimately sentenced by the Sharia judge of Shiraz

could still be seen on the bodies of the women as they lay in the morgue, wounds

from the torture they faced in the months leading up to their execution.

The youngest among the women was Mona Mahmudnizhad, a 17-year-old schoolgirl who, because of her youth and obvious innocence, became a symbol of the group. In prison, she was lashed on the soles of her feet with a cable and forced to walk on her bleeding feet. Yet, she never wavered in her faith, even to the point of kissing the

bodies were not returned to their families, and they did not receive dignified burials with religious rites. It is believed that they were buried in the Bahá'í cemetery in Shiraz by the authorities. The cemetery was later demolished and made into a "cultural and sports building" for the Revolutionary Guard in 2014.

Two nights prior, six Bahá'í men (some of them relatives of these 10 women) were executed in that same square.

“I will not exchange my faith for the whole world.”

— **Roya Eshraghi**

hands of her executioner and then kissing the noose itself, before putting it around her own throat.

Another young woman, Zarrin Moghimi-Abyaneh, 28, told the interrogators, whose chief goal was to force her to disavow her faith: “Whether you accept it or not, I am a Bahá'í. You cannot take it away from me. I am a Bahá'í with my whole being and my whole heart.”

During the trial of another of the women—Roya Eshraghi, a 23-year-old veterinary student—the judge said: “You put yourselves through this agony only for one word: just say you are not a Bahá'í and I'll see that ... you are released.” Ms. Eshraghi responded: “I will not exchange my faith for the whole world.”

Their families were not even notified of their deaths, their

More than 200 Bahá'ís were executed by the Iranian authorities in the years immediately after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Human rights groups and ordinary citizens around the world were shocked and outraged at these barbaric acts by the Iranian authorities. Global leaders, at the time, led a wave of appeals calling for condemned Bahá'í women and men to be released from their death sentences.

The international outcries did stop the killings in the 1980s, and served as an important safeguard for the physical lives of Iranian Bahá'ís. Nevertheless, more action is needed, as the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran continues in different forms, and with impunity, to this day.

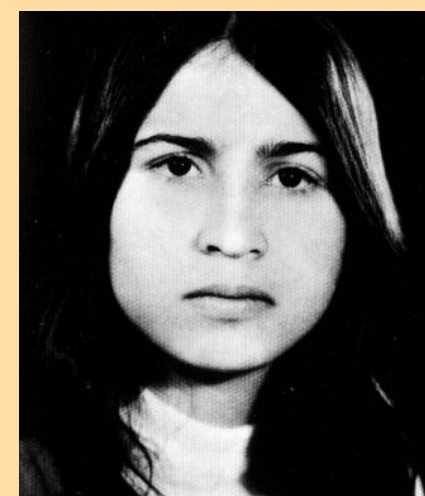
Executions: The ten women in Shiraz executed on 18 June, 1983



Nosrat Ghufrani Yaldaie
Born: 1937, Nayriz, Fars
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983



Ezzat Janami Eshraghi
Born: 02 March 1926, Najafabad, Isfahan
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983



Akhtar Sabet
Born: 1958, Sarvestan, Fars
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983



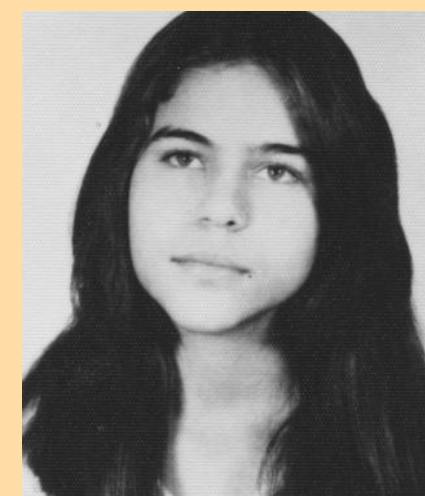
Simin Saberi
Born: 2 March 1959, Dolat Abad, Fars
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983



Shahin Dalvand
Born: 25 December 1957, Shiraz
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983



Mahshid Niroumand
Born: 10 December 1955, Sarvestan, Fars
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983



Mona Mahmudnizhad
Born: 10 September 1965, Aden, Yemen
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983

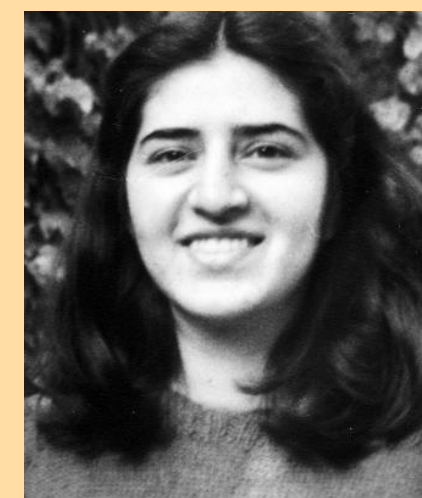


Tahereh Arjomandi Siyavushi
Born: 1953, Tehran
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983

Executions: The ten women in Shiraz executed on 18 June, 1983



Zarrin Moghimi-Abyaneh
Born: 23 August 1954, Abyaneh, Isfahan
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983



Roya Eshraghi
Born: 1960, Shiraz
Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983



Detentions and imprisonments

Arbitrary Detentions

Since 2021, the Iranian authorities have adopted brutal new tactics in the persecution of the Bahá'í community. **Incidents of persecution against Bahá'ís rose about 50 percent each year, between 2021 and 2024**, with the apparent aims of sowing fear and confusion within the Bahá'í community, disenfranchising and further impoverishing them, and prolonging the harassment of individuals. Bahá'ís across Iran have been robbed of peace and security in their daily lives.

In the months following the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests, a significant number of Bahá'ís, notably women, were arrested for no reason other than their Bahá'í beliefs. Many of them were held without due process and their whereabouts were unknown. The general crackdown on women by the authorities also impacted Bahá'í women—an alarming escalation affecting a group of people who face intersectional persecution as women and as Bahá'ís.

Sadly, many Bahá'ís in Iran know how it feels to be detained on false charges, or without due process, and then harshly interrogated and mistreated. They face physical harm, sometimes violent treatment by prison guards and officials, amidst poor conditions. Experiences of extreme verbal or psychological abuse are also common while detained. Many are held for long periods and are often detained for weeks or months before trial or are

Left: Mahvash Sabet, one of seven former Bahá'í leaders imprisoned in 2008 in Iran, who was arrested and jailed again in 2022 (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

released only after posting exorbitantly high bail demands, which often require families to hand over deeds to their properties or business licenses. There have been incidents of torture and beatings while in detention, and hundreds of cases where individuals have been subjected to long periods of solitary confinement, both during pre-trial detention

ones who have been detained, and they are made to wait for information in a perpetual state of distress. Widespread detentions often follow when there is broader unrest within the country. In response to such civil discontent, the government often casts the Bahá'ís as a scapegoat, as if the Bahá'ís were to blame for all the ills



Portraits of Bahá'í woman targeted by Iranian authorities (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

and after sentencing. And even when not in prison, the Bahá'ís face great degrees of psychological turmoil from the ongoing threat and very real possibility of being detained at

of society, even though the teachings of their Faith call on them to practice obedience

The Bahá'ís are the wellwishers of the government, obedient to its laws and bearing love towards all peoples.”

— ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

any given moment throughout their lives. Families are often left without any news as to the whereabouts of loved

to their government. Rather than addressing the underlying challenges facing Iranian society and responding to

the aspirations of the Iranian people, the government has, grotesquely, continued to blame the Bahá'ís, whose purpose is shaped by constructive service to society and who refuse to adopt approaches to social change that are adversarial, such as violent protest and upheaval.

Wave upon wave of unjustifiable arrests between 2021 and 2024 serve as striking examples of this destructive trend.

In May 2024, a surge in attacks on Bahá'í women across Iran saw dozens of women summoned to court, facing baseless criminal charges and years in prison, separating them from their families and exposing them to the cruelty and violence of the Iranian judicial system. Seventy-two of 93 Baha'ís summoned to court or prison from early March to mid-May—more than three-quarters—were women.

On 12 February 2024, in Qaemshahr, a group of young Bahá'ís had gathered in a private home, owned by a Bahá'í woman, when 15 agents of the Ministry of Intelligence

“... freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”

— Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

raided the premises in an attack on the simple act of working to acquire knowledge. The young Baha'ís were at that home to sit for an exam

government bars young Baha'ís from entering the country's established universities—forcing Baha'ís to meet in private homes and through informal groups to pursue

university-level studies. In October 2023, dozens of incidents targeting mostly women took place, with 10 women in Isfahan, central Iran,

as part of their informal studies in the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education. Iran's

most of them young, arrested as part of these incidents. Twenty-six others, 16 of



Afif Naeimi (centre), one of seven former Bahá'í leaders imprisoned in 2008, after his 2018 release. He was detained and jailed again in July 2022 (Credit: Bahá'í World News Service)

Detentions and imprisonments



Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi, two of the seven former Bahá'í leaders, both of whom were jailed for 10 years in 2008 and arrested again in 2022 (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

whom were also women, were sentenced to a total of 126 years in prison. The home of an elderly Bahá'í woman, whose husband had been executed in the 1980s for being a Bahá'í, was also raided. The arrests took place after homes were raided and the personal property of several individuals was confiscated, including electronics, books, cash and gold.

Additionally, in November 2022, two months into the “Woman, Life, Freedom” period of nationwide protests, dozens of Bahá'ís were arrested as part of a crackdown, even as the Iranian government faced unprecedented scrutiny around the world over its human rights record. The crackdown had begun in July, with raids on Bahá'í homes and arrests around the country, including the unbelievable cruelty of the arrests of Mahvash Sambet and Fariba Kamalabadi, two women who had already each spent a decade in prison from 2008-18.

Two young men, aged just 16, were detained in October 2022 and held for several hours without any information being given to their families. They were interrogated and beaten.

Their homes were searched, and personal items were confiscated before they were released.

A Bahá'í who had been in detention without due process

In March and May 2008, seven Bahá'í leaders were arrested and later sentenced to 10 years in prison apiece. Four of them were re-arrested in 2022 and the two women each sentenced to a second decade in prison.

since September 2022 reported that he had been charged with “propaganda against the Bahá'í Faith,” “propaganda against sacred Islamic Sharia,” and “communicating and cooperating with foreign media through interviews and sending news of human rights violations and inciting people to create ongoing protests through cyberspace.” He had also been beaten and denied

requests to be examined by a doctor. Reports indicate that interrogators tried to extract a forced confession from him for a crime he did not commit, and that he was denied access to a lawyer.

Another report indicated that, because of overcrowding in Iran's prisons following increased arrests, one detained Bahá'í was held with 16 other individuals in a small cell almost comparable in size to those used for solitary confinement. The individual was forced to receive a visit from his wife in a prison stairwell because no other space was available.

Unjust Imprisonments

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, hundreds of Bahá'ís have been arrested, detained, and spent time in

pre-trial detention or have served prison sentences. The below examples offer just a few snapshots of the arrests and imprisonments that thousands of Iranian Bahá'ís have faced over 45 years.

Contrary to the official line by the government, Bahá'ís in Iran are imprisoned solely for their religious beliefs, not any other crimes. Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment are flagrant violations of human rights.

Detentions and imprisonments

Iranian Bahá'ís continue to be arrested, tried, and imprisoned on false charges such as espionage or other alleged “political” crimes—even though the principles of their Faith forbid partisan political involvement. The arrest, detention, and imprisonment of Bahá'ís is undertaken as a state policy—one that appears largely designed as a warning to others to not deviate from Iran’s official religion—and is supported by a system of judicial and prosecutorial misconduct that demonstrates a national effort to discriminate against Bahá'ís at every stage of life.

A surge in arbitrary arrests and home raids, specifically targeting young female Bahá'ís, was seen since the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests.

Over two-thirds of those currently in prison as of mid-2024 were Bahá'í women, highlighting a deliberate and gender-targeted strategy by the Iranian government following the protests. Brutal tactics in raiding, detaining and harassing Bahá'ís led to a significant rise in the imprisonment of Bahá'í women, many of whom are detained without proper adherence to legal procedures.

The Iranian government also used the pretext of the protests to intensify the persecution of Bahá'í women. A significant number of Bahá'ís, notably women, were arrested in the months after the protests began, some held without due process and their whereabouts unknown.

In Tehran, Ayda Rasti, detained in Qarchak Varamin prison from 27 September to 6 December

2022, faced health issues and dangerous weight loss, and was denied the opportunity to post bail. Her trial date was unknown as of mid-2024 and family access has been denied. In Isfahan, as of mid-2024, musician Elmira Rahmani, who had been arrested on 18 January 2023, remains in Dowlatabad Prison, charged with “propaganda against the regime” and incitement,

“I am the head of the legal team representing these seven Bahá'ís. I have studied their files thoroughly. There is not a shred of evidence for the charges leveled against them.”

— Dr. Shirin Ebadi

and also denied bail. Her cello was confiscated; despite her musical affiliations with the Isfahan National Orchestra, the Revolutionary Court rejected requests for the release of the cello. On 10 February 2023, the Karaj Revolutionary Court sentenced 11 Bahá'ís, including 8 women, to over 36 years of imprisonment, imposing fines, residence bans, travel restrictions, and other penalties.

In October 2023, 10 women from Isfahan, predominantly in their twenties and thirties, were arrested, mirroring the discriminatory and oppressive approach witnessed during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” uprising. Twenty-six more Bahá'ís, with 16 of them being women, received sentences totaling 126 years in prison, signaling the continued targeting of women in the

Bahá'í community. The situation worsened as of 22 November 2023, when it was reported that six more Bahá'í women from Isfahan had been detained for a month, facing harsh conditions in the quarantine ward of Dowlatabad Prison. The deliberate delays in medical care, the restricted access to hot water, and the lack of information about the reasons for their arrests

or charges against them highlighted concerning escalations in the Iranian government’s persecution tactics.

Looking further back, another example of the arbitrary and harsh basis of imprisonments included an instance in 2018, when a resident of Tehran, who had been arrested in October/November 2017 because of hosting a Bahá'í holy day celebration, was tried and sentenced to 10 years in prison by Branch 26 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court for alleged “formation and management of an illegal Bahá'í group with intent to disturb national security.” Such a sentence is in direct contravention of Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which outlines the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and

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religion—an obligation which the government of Iran has freely consented to abide by, yet consistently fails to uphold.

And in January 2016, 24 Bahá'ís in Gorgan, Golestan province, were sentenced to a collective 193 years in prison. Arrested in 2012, some had been harassed or tortured during their interrogations.

The fact that religion was at the heart of their alleged crimes was made clear by the judge’s ruling in the case. The 5 January 2016 judgment issued by the Revolutionary Court of Gorgan against the 24 explicitly states that belief in the Báb, the Prophet-Herald of the Bahá'í Faith, “certainly constitutes propaganda against the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran.” Such court rulings, of which there are many, contradict the claim of Iranian officials that no

Bahá'ís are sent to prison for their religious beliefs. The charges against the 24, some of which are listed below, were unmistakably based on religious issues.

- **Forming and managing an unlawful administration and anti-security propaganda to advance “Baháism”**
- **Creating propaganda in favor of “Baháism” and against the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran**
- **Collaborating with hostile anti-Islamic and anti-Shia entities by way of assistance and effective involvement in advancing their goals**

The court documents also made it clear that the government was concerned with the fact that many of the 24 Bahá'ís in Gorgan were e

engaged in study groups or youth programs designed to assist individuals to serve their communities and to work for the betterment of society. These activities, however, meet the common-sense definition of religious belief and practice. They are protected under international law, which upholds the right to freedom of religion or belief: “... freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”

Yet in today’s Islamic Republic of Iran, these activities amount to crimes against the state, punishable by long prison sentences.

Harassment of lawyers who defend Bahá'ís is also common. In the case of the 24 Bahá'ís

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Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate (Credit: Center for Human Rights in Iran)

in Gorgan, for instance, their lawyer was threatened during a meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Intelligence and a cleric. When the defendants were finally summoned to court, their lawyer was given only 15 minutes to read 5,000 pages of court documents prior to the court hearing.

In a similar case in Hamadan, where 10 Bahá'ís were arrested and charged with “propaganda against the regime,” a lawyer who was following the appeal of their conviction was summoned to the local office of the Ministry of Intelligence, where he was threatened and told to resign. The 10 from Hamadan had been arrested in 2015 and put on trial in late July that year. During the trial, the judge—who was a member of the religious clergy—repeatedly questioned the defendants about their beliefs, openly demonstrating his animosity and religious prejudice against Bahá'ís. At one point, upon hearing that the Bahá'í fasting period lasts 19 days and takes place in March every year, the judge suggested that Bahá'ís had purposefully chosen these dates for the month of fasting so that Muslims would change their religion and become Bahá'ís, allured by the prospect of not having to fast for a longer period of time during the hot summer heat. At another point, the judge refused to examine Bahá'í books offered as evidence of the peaceful nature of the Bahá'í teachings, stating that he was “not mentally prepared” to read the books and was fearful of being led astray. For their alleged crimes, the 10 received either one- or two-year prison sentences.

In 2016, a Bahá'í in Isfahan went to obtain his criminal record from the city's identity verification office. It contained a reference to his imprisonment in the 1980s. The record, dated 29 May 2016, said that the charge against him was “Baháism.”

Imprisoned for Helping Underprivileged Children

Many efforts by Iranian Bahá'ís to help their fellow citizens quite naturally take place out of the spotlight. But one project received international attention after participants were arrested en masse for trying to help Iranian children living in poverty.

In May 2006, 54 Bahá'ís and 10 Muslims were arrested in a dramatic sweep at six locations in and around Shiraz. While most were eventually released, three leaders of the effort were sentenced to prison terms of four years. Haleh Rouhi, 29; Raha Sabet, 33; and Sasan Taqva, 32; were charged with “propaganda against the regime” for helping to initiate a social service project that sought to address low literacy rates and other problems facing poor children in and around the city. Beginning in 2005, members of the group met with the children every Friday morning for four hours. Project tutors—including Muslim youth—would lay out rugs in front of the houses of the parents so that the families could feel at ease observing the lessons and seeing that the only intention of the initiative was to serve the children. The group started working with 20 children, but because of an appreciation for the efforts within the community, the number quickly swelled to

120. At the end of the school term, the parents of the children asked whether the activities could continue. The group decided to extend their services to include assisting the children to acquire social and moral skills so that they themselves could become the agents of advancement in their own lives and society.

By summer 2005, the number of children involved in the program had increased so significantly that it was necessary to divide them into two groups, each group comprising more than 100 students and 30 tutors. Similar projects were soon launched in Sahlabad and Shiraz itself, each involving about 100 children. The latter project was carried out within the ambit of the program, “Protection of the Rights of Children” in Shiraz, which was registered with the Ministry of the Interior. The group also organized art classes for young cancer patients at a hospital in Shiraz and made regular visits to orphanages and facilities for children with physical and intellectual disabilities. These efforts continued for another year.

Then, on 19 May 2006, tutors and project leaders in six locations were simultaneously arrested by the police. The Muslim individuals involved were released immediately together with one Bahá'í from the group; the remaining 53 Bahá'ís were released over the course of the following few days and weeks. Ms. Rouhi, Ms. Sabet, and Mr. Taqva were held for nearly a month and later sent to prison, convicted of “offenses relating to state security.” Acts of service to uplift the plight of children

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in unstable circumstances were reframed by the Iranian government as a threat.

Jailing Seven Baha'í Leaders for Ten Years

The most notable case of unjust detention was the arrest and imprisonment of seven national-level Bahá'í leaders in 2008, a story which has resumed in 2022 with manifest injustice.

In May 2008, international human rights monitors went on high alert over the arrest of seven Bahá'ís in Iran, known as the “Friends” (“Yaran” in Persian)—an ad hoc committee already known to the government whose primary purpose was to tend to the spiritual and social needs of the Iranian Bahá'í community. The individuals had been appointed to carry out this work in the

absence of a formally elected council that would administer the affairs of Bahá'ís at the national level. Such a body is present in virtually every country in the world today, excluding Iran, where Bahá'í administration, both at the national and local levels, was declared “illegal” by Iranian authorities in 1983.

Six of the seven members of the Friends were arrested in the early morning of 14 May 2008, roused from their homes in Tehran by intelligence agents. The seventh member of the Friends had been arrested two months prior in Mashhad, on 5 March 2008. The manner of their arrests, and the fact that all seven were initially held incommunicado after their seizure, led many to worry that they would suffer the same fate as the last group of national level Bahá'í leaders, who had

The seven Bahá'í leaders arrested in March and May 2008 and later sentenced to 10 years in prison apiece. Left to right:

Behrouz Tavakkoli, Fariba Kamalabadi, Vahid Tizfahm, Mahvash Sabet, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Saeid Rezaie, Afif Naimi.

(barring one) been arbitrarily arrested, executed, and buried in unmarked graves some 25 years earlier. The seven members include:

Fariba Kamalabadi, a high school honors graduate who was denied the opportunity to attend regular university. Nevertheless, she obtained a degree in developmental psychology through informal study.

Jamaloddin Khanjani, a successful businessman and industrialist who established Iran's first automated brick factory.

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Afif Naimi, who wished to be a doctor, but was denied entry into medical school as a Bahá'í. He later went on to manage his father-in-law's textile factory.

Saeid Rezaie, an agricultural engineer who ran a successful farming equipment business in Fars province for more than 20 years. He also authored several books.

Mahvash Sabet, a teacher and school principal who was dismissed from public education because she was a Bahá'í. She later rose to international prominence for the poetry she wrote during her imprisonment.

Behrouz Tavakkoli, a social worker who was fired from his government job in the early 1980s because of his Bahá'í beliefs and who subsequently turned to carpentry to support his family.

Vahid Tizfahm, an apprentice in optometry who later became an owner of an optometry shop in Tabriz.

International pressure was marshaled and the seven Bahá'ís arrested in 2008 were, after about a month in jail, allowed to make outside contact. All of them were held in Tehran's Evin Prison—one of the primary sites known for holding prisoners of conscience, and where serious human rights abuses have been known to be committed against detainees and inmates. After another two months of imprisonment, allegations emerged that the Friends were operating an "illegal organization" with ties to Israel. A whole year passed before formal charges were made and the individuals were allowed

to meet with lawyers—a grave violation of national and international human rights and due process.

Finally, in 2010, the seven were put on trial. Over a period of six days strung out over six months, the seven were shuttled in and out of a closed courtroom and accused of six specific crimes.

1. Forming or managing a group aimed at disturbing national security;

2. Spreading propaganda against the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran;

3. Gathering classified information with the intention of disturbing national security;

4. Engaging in espionage;

5. Collaborating with foreign governments hostile against Iran;

6. Conspiring to commit offenses against national security.

Following the first session of their trial, their lawyer, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr. Shirin Ebadi, who had hardly an hour of access to her clients, explained that she had read the dossier of charges against them and found no proof to sustain their criminal charges. "I am the head of the legal team representing these seven Bahá'ís. I have studied their files thoroughly," said Ms. Ebadi at the time. "There is not a shred of evidence for the charges leveled against them."

During their trial, remarks from the bench indicated extreme prejudice on the part

of the judge. According to another one of their lawyers, Mahnaz Parakand, "the bill of indictment... was more like a political statement ... It was a 50-page document ... full of accusations and humiliations leveled against the Bahá'í community of Iran, especially our clients. It was written without producing any proof for the allegations." All the accusations were absurd and baseless. Allegations that the group were spies for Israel, for instance, stemmed from the historical fact that the religious and spiritual center of the Bahá'í Faith has been in the city of Haifa since 1868, a fact which was the result of successive banishments of the Faith's prophet-founder by Islamic leaders of the time.

The individuals were convicted on three of the charges—and each ultimately sentenced to 20 years in prison. That sentence was later revised to 10 years, in accordance with the provisions of a new 2013 penal code. In late December 2018, the last imprisoned member of the Friends, Afif Naimi, a father of two, was released from prison after serving an unjust 10-year prison sentence merely for practicing his faith. While detained, Mr. Naimi experienced severe health problems and received inadequate medical treatment. Authorities made a cruel determination that the time Mr. Naimi spent recovering in a hospital would not be counted as part of his sentence.

Yet, the 10 years stolen away from each of these Bahá'ís by the authorities, and the peaceful resilience exhibited by them as they endured these baseless sentences, regrettably, do not conclude this cruel saga.

The two women, Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi, now regarded as symbols of resilience in Iran after spending 10 years each in prison, have since their 2018 release been arrested again and sentenced to a second 10-year imprisonment. Detained on 31 July 2022 at the start of another crackdown on hundreds of Iran's Bahá'ís, the women were put on trial four months after their second detention. During an hour-long trial, the presiding judge of the Revolutionary Court's Branch 26 in Tehran rebuked the two women for "not having learned their lesson" from their previous imprisonment.

On 10 February 2023, the Karaj Revolutionary Court also sentenced Afif Naimi, together with 12 other Bahá'ís in Alborz province, in a jointly heard case. The sentences ranged between two and seven years in prison, together with bans on residing in Alborz, leaving Iran, and participating in educational and cultural activities. Monetary fines, as well as the deprivation of various social rights and other punishments, were also imposed.

And, on 13 August 2023, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, a fourth member of the Friends, who was 90 years old at the time and suffering from cancer, was also re-arrested and detained in Evin Prison. Mr. Khanjani was subsequently released after nearly three weeks in detention, but only after being required to post an exorbitant bail equivalent to 15 years of the average Iranian civil service salary.

Discriminated Against in the Courts

The Bahá'ís who are brought to court and put on trial based on false and unjust allegations are often mistreated and do not enjoy due legal process. Many Bahá'ís are denied access to their lawyers up until the last moment, and these lawyers are given inadequate time to prepare their arguments. Evidence that demonstrates the innocence of the Bahá'ís as well as the peaceful nature of their work is often disregarded or dismissed. And judges are heavily biased and often make crude and defamatory remarks against the defendant Bahá'ís.

Nowhere is the official policy of discrimination against Bahá'ís revealed more clearly than in court orders and judgments. In both criminal and civil cases, judges or prosecutors often merely cite the fact that a defendant or plaintiff is a Bahá'í as evidence against them.

New laws in Iran's Penal Code, Article 499 bis and Article 500 bis, enacted in 2021, have created legal measures for Iranian authorities to further criminalize religious practice for Bahá'ís. The new measures also affect Sufis, atheists, and any communities that hold beliefs not recognized by Iran's constitution.

Article 500 bis in particular enables Iranian judges to impose sentences of up to five years in prison on any Bahá'í for any action deemed to be sharing their beliefs with others—an inalienable right under the principles of freedom of religion and belief. The Bahá'í International Community has seen that that

this new law has been deployed with increasing frequency in the Iranian judiciary's systematic campaign to persecute Bahá'ís through arbitrary detention, denial of due process, excessively long waits to receive court or prison summonses, and incarceration.



Property violations: Raids, seizures, and destruction

Home and Business Raids

Since 2021, unannounced and destructive raids have intensified, signaling the implementation of a larger plan by the Iranian government to increase the persecution of the community. During that year, numerous homes were raided by authorities in Baharestan, Isfahan, and Shiraz, resulting in the detention and trial of Bahá'ís who could later be called to serve prison sentences at any time.

Home and business raids have been a dominant terror tactic carried out by the Iranian government over the decades—with the added side effect that such confiscations have also enriched the authorities. In nearly all cases, the homes and/or workplaces of Bahá'ís are searched and items such as personal belongings are confiscated, particularly books, photographs, personal and office electronics, and other supplies, as well as items related to the Bahá'í Faith. There have also been cases where cash and jewelry have been confiscated.

In August 2022, 13 children and youth—two only 10 years old and the others in their early twenties—were arrested in the northern Iranian city of Qaemshahr, Mazandaran province, and detained at the Sari intelligence office. The arrests occurred at a private home where, with cruel irony, the youth, all of whom had been denied university entrance, were studying and discussing the role of education in social progress.

Left: Destroyed Bahá'í properties across Iran (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

Property Seizures

Soon after the formation of the Islamic Republic, the government seized numerous properties owned by the Iranian Bahá'í community, and in some cases demolished those properties. These included buildings used for meetings and worship, cemeteries, holy places associated with the Founders of the Faith, schools, and a large hospital in Tehran.

In addition to holy places, hundreds of other Bahá'í-owned properties have been confiscated and destroyed throughout Iran since the Revolution, along with hundreds of Bahá'í homes and private buildings. In 1995, for example, more than 150 confiscations were reported in Yazd. Among the stories of those ejected from their homes was that of a blind Bahá'í



In 2024 Iranian authorities destroyed rice fields and farmlands belonging to Bahá'ís in the village of Ahmadabad, Mazandaran province (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

woman; authorities confiscated her belongings, and took possession of her house, despite protests from her neighbors.

Property seizures have continued unabated over the years. In May 2024, Iranian government agents bulldozed rice paddies owned by Bahá'ís in the village of Ahmadabad, Mazandaran province, destroying crops and

irrigation berms in the attack. Local Bahá'í residents in the rural area had owned and worked the lands for generations. During the attack, videos and photos of which were published online, a large excavator flattened and destroyed crops and irrigation channels, while several Bahá'ís, including an old woman whose son was a casualty of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, pleaded with the agents to stop.

The same community had already been targeted in January 2024 when these farmlands, rice paddies, and walnut orchards in Ahmadabad were forcibly seized by Iranian officials who claimed the lands for the government. No compensation or official documents justifying the seizures were provided by the agents who conducted the raid. The raid was similar to a

2021 raid in Iran's southwest where government agents seized irrigated farmlands during a water crisis.

Earlier, in 2020, two Iranian courts issued orders that declared the ownership of land

owned by 27 Bahá'ís in the village of Ivel, Mazandaran, to be illegal. The court documents indicated that the confiscation of the land was because of the religious beliefs of the Bahá'í owners. And in November of the same year, over a hundred government agents raided the

Baha'is in the village of Kata in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province were appropriated in the midst of a water crisis; and farms owned and cultivated by Baha'i families for over a century in the village of Roshankouh, also in Mazandaran, were also seized.



Destroyed Bahá'í homes (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

shops and homes of dozens of Bahá'ís and demanded that they hand over their property deeds.

A parastatal body called the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order, or EIKO, also known as Setad and which controls extensive assets across Iran, has orchestrated many of the rising number of Bahá'í-owned property confiscations. Officials have also used Iranian law to justify the confiscations and to hide the religiously-motivated purpose behind the seizures.

In 2022 several properties in Mazandaran and Semnan provinces were seized through EIKO orders. An apartment in Mazandaran belonging to a Baha'i, Sheida Taeed, was ordered to be confiscated. In December 2021, 13 irrigated farmland plots belonging to

The properties in Semnan were ordered to be transferred to EIKO by a judge of the Special Court for Article 49 of the Iranian Constitution, Muhammad-Qasim 'Aynu'l-Kamali. Article 49 requires Iran's government to prove the legitimacy of such seizures under Islamic law. Using this law to justify confiscations of Bahá'í-owned properties demonstrates the religiously-motivated purpose behind the seizures.

A new spike in the number of seizures of Bahá'í properties occurred in 2021. In February of that year, dozens of Bahá'í properties were confiscated, again in Ivel; in August, after raids on Bahá'í homes, during which security agents sought and confiscated property

deeds, six plots of land in Semnan province were taken; and in November, farmlands were again seized surrounding the village of Roshankouh.

In late 2021, 13 irrigated farmland plots belonging for over a century to Bahá'ís in the village of Kata, in Iran's southwest, were targeted by authorities seeking to further expropriate the assets of Bahá'ís. Setad, which is controlled by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and which has held and controlled assets seized from proscribed groups and individuals since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, advertised the 13 plots as for sale on an auction website in October of that year, even though Bahá'ís have held the deeds to these properties for generations. The plots were listed at only 15 percent of their market value.

This action came during serious water shortages in Iran, which appeared to be a motivating factor in the seizure and sale of the valuable irrigated lands. Complaints by the local Bahá'ís—and even attempts to repurchase their own lands—were rebuffed by the authorities. The Bahá'ís were told that the auction was closed to them, as well as to any Muslims who had dealings with Bahá'ís, confirming that the seizure and auction was a targeted act of religious persecution.

In June 2010, about 50 Bahá'í-owned homes were demolished by unknown individuals in the farming village of Ivel in Mazandaran province as part of a decades-long campaign to drive Bahá'ís from the area. Access to the village was blocked and at least four front-end loaders began demolishing the homes. The rubble was then set

Property violations: Raids, seizures, and destruction

on fire. The homes had initially been confiscated in 1983, a few years after the Revolution, when at least 20 families were forced on to buses and expelled from the village. The Bahá'ís of Ivel have continued to seek legal redress, without success, and they have returned each summer to farm their land and harvest their crops.

More than 400 Bahá'í families had been displaced from Kata after the Revolution. Several hundred homes were torched by revolutionary mobs. The situation was so dire that the Kata Bahá'ís were forced to live in a refugee camp after the loss of their homes. Court and official directives in 2002, 2008, and 2016 have confirmed attempts by the authorities to confiscate farmlands in and around Kata.

None of the Bahá'í properties confiscated throughout Iran have been returned to their rightful owners.

Property Destruction

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, there have been countless attacks on Bahá'í holy places and Bahá'í-owned properties, including businesses and private homes in Iran. Early on, these assaults were carried out by agents of the Revolutionary Guard or other militant groups associated with the government. They often ended with seizure of the targeted property. Many attacks on Bahá'í properties have also been carried out by unknown assailants, and at night.

In August 2022, in an incident captured on video by residents, up to 200 government and local agents sealed off the village of Roshankouh, Mazandaran province, where

many Bahá'ís lived, and used heavy earthmoving equipment to demolish their homes. The incident sparked global outrage.

Six homes were destroyed and over 20 hectares of land were confiscated. Pepper spray was used to disperse people and gunshots were heard during the



Destroyed Bahá'í homes (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

operation. Roads into and out of the village were blocked. Anyone who tried to challenge the agents was arrested and handcuffed. Agents confiscated the mobile devices of those present and attempted to prohibit filming or photographing. The authorities installed robust metal fences to restrict access of the Bahá'ís to their own homes and farmlands.

The Bahá'ís in Roshankouh and elsewhere in Iran have been tar-

geted many times in the past, most recently in January 2024, February 2022, and August 2021, with land confiscations and home demolitions. The Roshankouh attack in August 2022 also followed weeks of intensifying persecution of the Baha'is. In the weeks leading up to the destructions, over 100 Bahá'ís had experienced home

Property violations: Raids, seizures, and destruction



Demolition of Bahá'í holy places and cemeteries

In addition to assaults on the living, the government has long waged—or at least condoned—a campaign of vandalism, through fire, graffiti, and ransacking, aimed at Bahá'í cemeteries as well as Bahá'í holy places.

The latest example of this outrage occurred in March 2024 when more than 30 new graves of deceased Bahá'ís at a Tehran mass grave were razed by the Iranian authorities, with grave markers removed, and bulldozers used to flatten the resting places. Bahá'ís who had been involved in maintaining the cemetery, and even one young woman whose grandmother had been kept in the cemetery morgue for weeks without her family being allowed to bury her, have been detained and jailed by the authorities.

During the upheaval of the Islamic Revolution, Bahá'í holy places in Iran were also targeted. On 9 September 1979, about six months after the Islamic Revolution, a crowd of more than 150 men entered the grounds of the house of the Báb in Shiraz, which represented one of the most holy sites in the world for Bahá'ís, it being the scene of the birth of the Bahá'í Faith in 1844. Backed by a dozen armed men, the mob demolished the house. The demolition came after months of negotiations between the newly-established government and the Bahá'í community over the ownership of the property. The desecration and destruction of the house of the Báb, which was a place of pilgrimage for Bahá'ís from around the world, was among the first of such Bahá'í holy places and other properties to be confiscated

or destroyed after the clerical regime came to power.

In April 2004, another historic Bahá'í property, the grave site of Quddús, an early disciple of the Faith, was dismantled surreptitiously over several days until the structure was demolished. In June that year, authorities demolished a historic house in Tehran that had been designed and owned by Mirza Abbas Nuri,

country. This dehumanizing treatment of Bahá'ís, then, is present at every stage of an individual's life—from cradle to grave. What threat do the dead pose that justifies these acts by the Iranian government? Iranian culture respects and even venerates the dead—but this cultural norm has been cast aside by the authorities in their persecution of the Bahá'í community.



A wheelchair-bound elderly Bahá'í woman faces the sealed gates of the Tehran Bahá'í Cemetery, which Bahá'ís are blocked from using, where her husband is buried (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

the father of Bahá'u'lláh, who history recorded as one of Iran's greatest calligraphers and statesmen. The house was not only important to Bahá'ís, representing a holy site, but was also considered an outstanding example of Iranian architecture of the period.

The Iranian government also began seizing and destroying, or otherwise desecrating, Bahá'í cemeteries around the

Decades of injustice at Tehran's Bahá'í cemetery

Before the Revolution, Tehran's Bahá'í cemeteries occupied an 80,000 square meter site at a location known as Khavaran and a 1.5 million square meter

cemetery at Kabirabad. Both properties were confiscated in the 1980s by the Islamic Republic and at least 15,000 graves were demolished at Khavaran.

In 1981, for example, the beautifully landscaped central Bahá'í cemetery in Tehran was confiscated. The government leveled its grounds—the site of more than 15,000 burials—removing the gravestones



Desecrated Bahá'í cemeteries (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

and selling off those of value. In the 1990s, those grounds were further desecrated when bodies were exhumed and ignominiously loaded onto trucks and disposed of in an unknown location. Bulldozers were then used to clear the grounds for the construction of the “Khavaran Cultural Center,” whose construction was an absolute affront to the dignity owed to the deceased.

The executive director of the Behesht-e Zahra Organization (the agency that manages Tehran’s large Khavaran cemetery, separate to the Cultural Center) later announced that a small parcel of barren land of 27,000 square meters with no facilities—adjacent to a mass grave of thousands of political prisoners, executed by the

government in the 1980s—was transferred to the Bahá'í community in replacement. The community proceeded to sacrificially develop open green space, a mortuary, a surrounding wall, and entrance and exit gates.

But in 2021, in a brazen and barbaric act, Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence wrested control of the relocated Bahá'í-owned cemetery in Tehran and their

appointed agents began to forcibly bury deceased Bahá'ís at a mass gravesite



Interior of the historic 19th century home of the Báb after its 1979 destruction (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

in Khavaran itself, adjacent to the Bahá'í cemetery. The mass grave was also the burial site for thousands of political

prisoners as well as prisoners of conscience executed in the 1980s. The agents had carried out these egregious acts without notifying families of the deceased while also violating Bahá'í burial practices. Bahá'ís were appalled at this effort to use the remains of their loved ones to erase the history of a burial site which contained the loved ones of many other Iranians.

The incidents in Tehran that began with the 2021 seizure have also led to arrests and imprisonments. In one instance of particularly shocking cruelty, three Bahá'ís, Mansour Amini, Valiollah Ghedamian and Ataollah Zafar, who for many years assisted their fellow Bahá'ís at the cemetery, were arrested in May 2023 by the Ministry of Intelligence. Each was later sentenced to five-year jail terms. A granddaughter of one of the deceased, who had been trying to resolve burial issues through legal means, was also detained and later sentenced to five years in prison. The woman, Shadi Shahidzadeh, who is

the mother of a five-year-old child, has been imprisoned for

Demolition of Bahá'í holy places and cemeteries



Interior of the historic 19th century home of the Báb after its 1979 destruction (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

five years just for approaching Iranian officials in an effort to secure approval to bury her grandmother according to Bahá'í rites.

In Iranian culture, cemeteries and places of burial are sacred; they represent respect to the dead and their families, and they serve as places that connote identity and culture. Through this unprecedented act of utter cruelty, Iran’s government once again showed its mercilessness to the grieving, and even to the dead themselves.

Razing graves and dishonoring the deceased across the country

In other cities, such as Yazd and Shiraz, Bahá'í remains were exhumed by vandals, and families were prevented by the authorities from re-burying their dead. Most of these attacks were undertaken by anonymous perpetrators and often at night. Yet the use of bulldozers and other heavy equipment in several incidents, which require official approval at the municipal level, confirm the organized nature of the attacks and, at least, the tacit involvement by the government.

Also in June 2023, the Bahá'í community of Arak in Markazi province were advised of the intention of Setad to auction off the land used by the Bahá'ís as a cemetery for over 120 years, containing approximately 250 graves. The cemetery was first confiscated in 1980 along with many other properties owned by the Bahá'í community throughout the country, but had remained in use under the care of the community.

In many instances, Bahá'ís have repeatedly approached local authorities asking that their cemeteries be protected and that vandals be prosecuted. Such entreaties have usually been met with inaction. On 21 August 2015, for instance, the Bahá'í cemetery in Oroumiyeh was vandalized, with approximately 120 flourishing trees that had been growing there for 15 years cut down. For nearly two weeks during the incidents, the Bahá'ís there pleaded with the relevant authorities to seek justice and demanded that the action of the trespassers be stopped, but to no avail.

In 2014, in an episode reminiscent of the desecration of the central Tehran Bahá'í cemetery in 1981, the Revolutionary Guard began an assault on the historic Bahá'í cemetery in Shiraz, the resting place of some 950 Bahá'ís, many of whom were historic or prominent figures in the Bahá'í community of Iran. Interred at the site, for example, were the 10 Bahá'í women hanged in 1983 by the government and whose deaths came to symbolize official persecution of the Bahá'í community.

Trucks were used to carry away soil and human remains, this time to make way for the construction of a new “cultural and sports” center for the Revolutionary Guard. Although the burial site was confiscated by the government in 1983, it was unused until April 2014, when excavations began for the new building’s foundation. Despite international protests about the desecration, such as a call from three high-level United Nations human rights experts in September 2014 for an end to the demolition, the Revolutionary Guard continued to build on the site.

In one case, in 2007, heavy equipment was used to plow over graves and memorial markers at the Bahá'í cemetery in Yazd.

Demolition of Bahá'í holy places and cemeteries



Economic strangulation

“... to earn a livelihood is a spiritual obligation...”

— Bahá'u'lláh

Engaging in a trade, craft, or profession is a fundamental human right, and for Bahá'ís it is also a spiritual obligation and a way to contribute to the advancement of society. Yet the Bahá'ís, who historically have contributed to the social, economic, and scientific development of Iranian society, have continuously been deprived of this right and expression of faith.

Soon after the formation of the Islamic Republic, the government began confiscating or freezing the assets of several community funds and savings institutions. An estimated 15,000 individuals lost their savings in these seizures, and many Bahá'ís also had their pension benefits terminated. In 1980, the Iranian government began to dismiss Bahá'ís from public sector employment. Thousands were fired from their jobs in public education, universities, government offices, hospitals, and other government institutions. Prior to being dismissed, many were asked to convert to Islam and were subsequently fired for “having beliefs contrary to Islam” after they refused to recant their faith. The ban on Bahá'ís in the public sector became official in 1981 and remains in force

Closing Bahá'í-owned businesses on religious grounds

Once Bahá'ís were barred from government jobs, attention was turned to the private sector. In the 1980s, large numbers of companies and factories owned by Bahá'ís were confiscated and closed. Other companies were pressured to dismiss

their Bahá'í employees, and banks were told to block the accounts of Bahá'ís. The 1991 memorandum, which stated, “Deny them employment if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís,” formalized this discriminatory policy.

A letter dated 9 April 2007, from the security unit of the Public Places Supervision Office to police commanders nationwide, further reinforced the oppression of Bahá'ís in their employment by specifically excluding Bahá'ís from a wide range of businesses, including hotels and tourism, the food industry, jewelry, publishing, and those related to information technology and the Internet.

Repeated incidents related to the economic oppression of Bahá'ís have occurred in virtually every province throughout the country. Examples of government officials committing abuses against the Bahá'í community are listed below.

1. **Refusing to issue or renew business licenses, work permits, or trade membership cards to Bahá'ís;**
2. **Ordering the closure of Bahá'í-owned businesses and sealing the premises;**
3. **Issuing instructions to stores, government offices, and other organizations to avoid purchasing from, or to terminate business dealings with, companies and independent traders if the owners or managers are Bahá'ís;**

4. **Urging the population to shun Bahá'í-owned businesses;**
5. **Instructing landlords to refuse lease renewals to Bahá'í tenant shopkeepers;**
6. **Warning private-sector employers against hiring Bahá'ís, or harassing them to dismiss Bahá'í employees and threatening them with closure of their business if they do not comply;**
7. **Conducting unexpected inspections of workplaces, summoning and interrogating Bahá'ís, and raiding Bahá'í-owned stores.**

Economic displacement and strangulation cut across diverse sectors and have formed a central feature of the policy of discrimination against the community.

In 2022, in the southern Iranian city of Bandar-e-Lengeh, officials forced the closure of a Bahá'í-owned workshop and denied business licenses to two optical businesses, depriving families of their livelihoods and further strangling the economic opportunity of members of the community.

In May 2016, 15 shops in Qaemshahr were sealed and shuttered by the government after the owners closed for one day to observe a Bahá'í holy day. During that same period, 28 shops in Oroumiyeh were similarly sealed, as were two shops in Kashan. In Isfahan, warnings were delivered to eight shops, suggesting they would be closed if Bahá'ís persisted in suspending work on their holy

“They are are very much affluent people...they have plenty of factories, firms and economically, they are very active”

— **Mohammad-Javad Ardeshir Larijani, Secretary of the High Council for Human Rights of the Islamic Republic**

days.

In April 2016, 17 Bahá'í-owned shops in Mazandaran Province were sealed by authorities after they had closed to observe a Bahá'í holy day. They were among 86 Bahá'í-owned shops and small businesses closed by authorities in 2016 as part of a general campaign of economic persecution.

In January 2015, intelligence agents carried out several raids on homes of some of the Bahá'ís in Shiraz. In addition to collecting the usual documents relating to the Bahá'í Faith, agents took all the inhabitants' financial and work-related documents. The materials included archived work records, a company seal, checkbooks, and property deeds.

In October 2014, Iranian authorities descended on some 80 Bahá'í-owned shops in the cities of Kerman, Rafsanjan, and Jiroft, placing official seals of closure on the doors of the shops and posting banners saying they had been closed due to “violations of trading rules.” The shop owners were told they had violated the law

by closing their businesses for a Bahá'í religious holy day, and were asked to sign a statement with the words: “I hereby promise to close my business place according to the law and calendar of the country, and will observe my religious holy days in coordination with the Public Places Supervision Office and the Trades Union Council.” They were expected to observe national Muslim religious holy days but not their own. Although trade union laws in Iran allow shop owners to close their stores for 15 days per year without the need to provide reasons for doing so, Bahá'í observances are not allowed to fall within this exemption.

A common theme in the professional lives of Bahá'ís is, therefore, the risk of losing their businesses for choosing to observe Bahá'í holy days. The response is consistent with the 1991 memorandum's directive to deny Bahá'ís employment or livelihoods if they “identify” themselves as such.

Physically disabled after a fall from a building in the late 1990s, a Bahá'í man in the city

of Sari was given permission from the director of a local hospital to set up a small sales kiosk adjacent to the facility. On 30 January 2015, city officials arrived without warning and demolished the man's sales booth. The man met with the mayor and city council and received written permission to re-open his small business. Ten days after

Economic strangulation

could not help him as they had received instructions regarding the closure of his business. The Bahá'í man was later summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence and offered the chance to re-open his small operation if he were to become an informer on his fellow Bahá'ís—an offer which he refused. At the same meeting, his wife was told

shop owned by a Bahá'í in Tabriz was closed by the authorities on the grounds of “market saturation”—although Muslim owners of optical shops in the same location experienced no such difficulties.

In 2014, agents of the Revolutionary Guard prevented Bahá'í farmers from harvesting their crops in

In late 2012, a large Bahá'í-owned business distributing hygiene products in Tehran was shut down by the authorities, resulting in the dismissal of 70 employees. The owners were told they would never be allowed to reopen and were advised to leave Iran. Their stock was put on sale by government agents.

Economic strangulation



A sealed Bahá'í-owned business (Credit: Bahá'í International Community)

this meeting, on 14 April 2015, enforcement officers came again and confiscated his goods, saying that because of his faith, he did not have the right to work in that location.

The man again approached the city, but this time was told by officials that they

that if she recanted her faith, they would be provided with an income; she too refused. In late May, the man re-opened his kiosk. After just three days, on 28 May 2015, authorities returned with heavy equipment and demolished it. In February 2014, an optical

rural area near Semnan. One of the owners who wanted to enter his fields was told by an agent blocking the property: “The apples of this orchard are sent to Israel. We will leave here after the crop is finished [when the harvest time is over].”

Bureaucratic delays and invasive treatment in business affairs

Bahá'ís also face daily discrimination in the processing of small but vital economic affairs such as the



renewal of business licenses. Such incidents seldom make the news or feature in reports on human rights violations. Yet the psychological turmoil that accrues from these microaggressions weighs on Bahá'ís, who must struggle to keep their business licenses current, to prevent their shops from being closed, or to carry out basic economic transactions.

Several incidents in Yazd in 2014 illustrate how the government uses a variety of tactics, including excessive paperwork, bureaucratic delays, and even insults to wear down Bahá'í applicants. A taxi driver, for instance, found that authorities had

put down a note stating "perverse sect of Bahá'ism" to indicate his religion on a form for a routine permit to carry passengers outside the city limits. The need to identify one's religion on the form was established by Amaken, the national organization that oversees religious "morality" in public places in Iran. After crossing out the hurtful words "perverse sect," the man was told that no such permit would be issued to him because he was a Bahá'í. In another incident, a 29-year-old business owner seeking a business license noticed that, after having specified his religion as "Bahá'í" on the form, the authorities

had changed his religion to "Jewish." When he pointed this out, they changed the wording to "perverse sect of Bahá'ism." He was eventually told to fill out further security forms and to bring his national identification number, his mobile telephone number, and the phone numbers of all the members of his family to the security office. Security officials also interrogated the man's Bahá'í employees, recording their national identification numbers and mobile telephone numbers, as well as those of all their family members.

And again, a Bahá'í trader sought a business permit

Iranian courts have issued orders for the confiscation of numerous Bahá'í-owned properties, including in remote farming village (Credit: Unknown)

from the union in charge of household repair shops. Despite the documents being correctly completed and submitted in a timely manner, officials rejected his application. In its prejudicial reasoning, the government was concerned that, because he would have to go to people's homes to carry out his work, he risked exposing Muslim Iranians to an "unclean" Bahá'í.

Calling Bahá'ís "unclean" is itself based on interpretations of Sharia law that expose a religious prejudice.

And each of these forms of mistreatment have been reinforced by the intensification of anti-Bahá'í propaganda, which has also been aimed at suppressing the economic activity of Bahá'ís. Many articles repeat fatwas issued by senior clerics that insist Bahá'ís are "unclean"—referring again to the Islamic concept of ritual impurity—and suggest that faithful Muslims should refuse to associate with Bahá'ís or patronize their businesses.

Yet, at the UN and in other international fora, Iranian officials deny that such economic discrimination exists, let alone the religious character of this oppression. "They are very much affluent people," said Mohammad Javad Larijani, Secretary of the High Council for Human Rights of the Islamic Republic, at the UN Human Rights Council in 2014. "They have plenty of factories, firms and economically they are very active."

The reality is that Bahá'ís have been officially discriminated against in business and employment since the inception of the Islamic Republic—and this effort at economic strangulation continues. Tactics that sideline their economic activity stretch to the level of independent shops and businesses, with Bahá'ís being banned by government policy from many sectors of the economy.

Bahá'ís are called by their teachings to make a livelihood and to contribute to the prosperity of their society. The irony of the government's acts of persecution is that

it is denying Iran itself of the contributions of a hardworking population who seek to play a positive role in its social, scientific, and material life.



Denial of education

“Knowledge is as wings to man’s life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone.”

— Bahá’u’lláh

The 1991 memorandum states: “[the Bahá’ís] must be expelled from universities” and “they should be enrolled in schools which have a strong and imposing religious ideology.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both signed by Iran, entitle everyone, including Bahá’ís, to manifest and practice their beliefs and to pursue education and the essentials of life. Yet the reality for most Bahá’ís is that they have been restricted from doing so, and in some cases entirely deprived of being able to pursue educational opportunities available within the country.

The history of exclusion

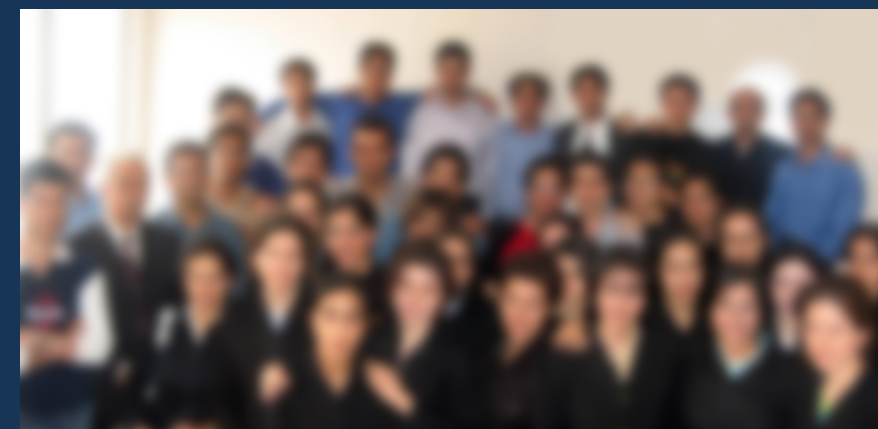
Shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, large numbers of Bahá’í youth and children were expelled from their schools. The expulsions spanned the entire education system: at the primary and secondary levels, the expulsions were not systematic and focused mainly on children who were most easily identified as Bahá’ís; at universities, the ban was almost total.

In the 1980s, partly in response to international pressure, primary and secondary schoolchildren were allowed to re-enroll.

The government has, however, maintained the ban on the entry of Bahá’í youth into institutions of higher learning.

Left: Graduates of the Bahá’í Institute for Higher Education with their instructors (Credit: Bahá’í International Community)

Until 2004, the government used a simple mechanism to exclude Bahá’ís from higher education, requiring everyone who took the national university entrance examination to declare their religion. Applicants who indicated other than one of the four officially recognized religions in Iran—Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism—were



Students of the Bahá’í Institute for Higher Education (Credit: Bahá’í International Community)

excluded. For Bahá’ís, because it is a matter of religious principle to refuse to lie or dissimulate about their belief, pretending to be a Muslim for the sake of going to university was unconscionable.

Beyond 2004, the ban remained effectively in place, though its application has mutated and changed over time.

Harassment and exclusion in primary and secondary schools

Efforts to block the education and development of Bahá’í children have continued at the primary and secondary levels, even though students were gradually allowed to re-enroll after the 1979 expulsions. In recent years there have been several incidents involving the harassment or even expulsion of Bahá’í primary and secondary school students.

In October 2015, for example, a third-grade student in a private primary school in Karaj was expelled by the principal. When confronted, the principal said the young boy was expelled because of his religion. Several human rights activists protested, even taking the case to the Ministry of Education. Officials from the Ministry of Intelligence became involved

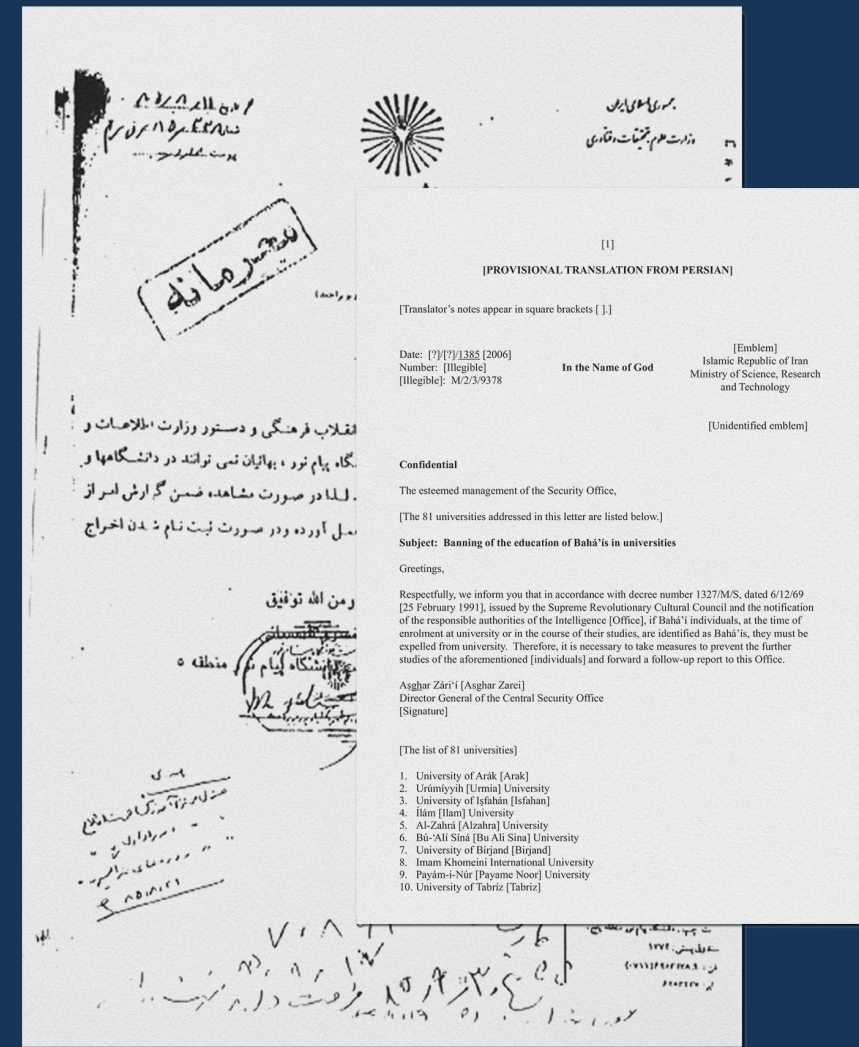
and threatened to hand the boy over to child welfare workers by having the father declared incompetent and arresting him. The boy was later transferred to another school.

In February 2013, a Bahá’í high school student in Isfahan was severely beaten at school, verbally assaulted, and his religious beliefs were insulted by his teacher. When his family lodged a complaint, the teacher stated that he personally knew members of the Revolutionary Guard and security officials, so their claims would have no effect.

And in 2007, at least 150 incidents of insults, mistreatment, and even physical violence by school authorities against Bahá’í

children had occurred in at least 10 Iranian cities during a 30-day period from mid-January to mid-February. Those reports indicated

School textbooks also grossly distort the Bahá'í Faith. For example, in history books used in the third year of junior high school and in the



A 2 November 2006 letter from Payame Noor University's "Central Protection Office," issued on the letterhead of Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, states that it is official policy that "Baha'is cannot enroll in universities and higher education centers" and "if they are already enrolled they should be expelled." The letter was recently obtained by the Baha'i International Community.

that students were being pressured to convert to Islam, were required to endure slander of their faith by religious instructors, and were being taught and tested on "Iranian history" from authorized texts that denigrated, distorted, and falsified Bahá'í religious heritage. They were also told that they should not attempt to "teach" or discuss their religion with other students. Frequently, being identified as a Bahá'í led them to be transferred to another school farther from their homes.

third year of high school, information is given about the Bahá'í Faith and its origins that is grossly prejudicial and aims to stoke hatred. Some of the books include the false claim that the Bahá'í Faith was created and supported by "foreign powers" such as the United Kingdom and Russia,

supposedly with the purpose of generating disunity among Muslims in Iran and aiming to destroy their faith in Islam. In other instances, history books, written by authors outside the country and detailing Iranian history, have been modified to omit entire chapters that reference the Bahá'í Faith.

Banned from higher education

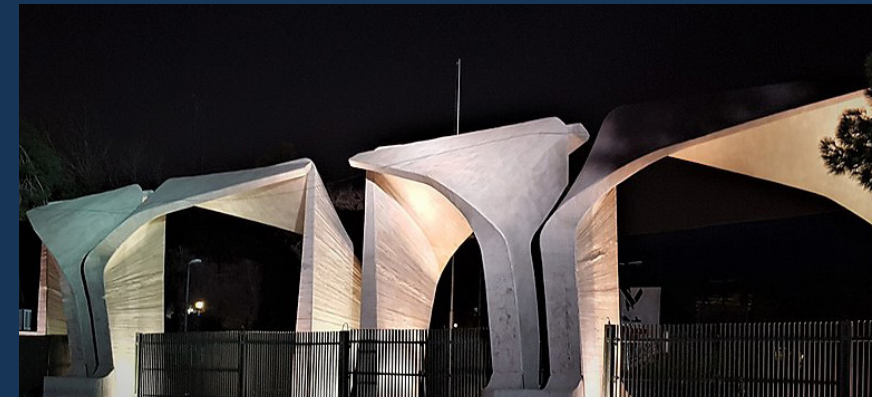
One of the main features of the Iranian government's program to block the progress and development of the Bahá'í community has been a national effort to prevent young Bahá'ís from obtaining higher education. This policy has undergone several phases, but the result is the same: thousands of young Bahá'ís have been denied university-level study.

The denial of higher education to Bahá'ís in Iran began with the "Cultural Revolution" of the early 1980s. Hundreds of Bahá'ís were executed after the Revolution and thousands more—academics, and students—were purged from the country's universities. Denying Bahá'ís higher education later became the normal practice of the Iranian government and an explicit policy under the 1991 memorandum.

Since the death of Jina Mahsa Amini in September 2022 and the nationwide "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests that erupted as a result, thousands of students and educators from beyond the Bahá'í community—who had joined peaceful demonstrations calling for gender equality and justice in Iran—have also been expelled from universities.

Denial of education

The expulsions recall the purge of Bahá'í professors, schoolteachers, and university students which followed the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The injustice of being denied



The gates of Tehran University (Credit: ShareALike 4.0 International)

higher education, which has affected Iranian Bahá'ís for decades, is now also the grim fate of Iranians of all backgrounds.

In 2023, at the start of the academic year, yet another government tactic emerged. University hopefuls from the Bahá'í community—who had already passed the national entrance exam—were given declarations that asked them to renounce key aspects of their religious beliefs. The applicants were given a second document with questions on their personal information, their biographical details, their families and relatives, their activities, and their travels abroad. Entrance to university hinged on the applicants signing both forms. The measure was a clear violation of both the right to education and the right to freedom of conscience, religion, and belief.

In 2022, many young university students in Iranian society, unhappy with the state of their country, staged protests and demonstrations.

In yet another instance of scapegoating, the Iranian government responded by claiming that it was Bahá'í students who were fomenting the unrest. Yet, beyond the

teachings of the Bahá'í Faith which do not permit partisan political activity or contention by its followers, such an allegation was utterly absurd because Bahá'í students had been systematically banned or expelled from universities. The false narrative crafted by the Iranian government represents yet another instance where the Bahá'ís were blamed for the general discontent within the country and the people's protests against the government.

In 2021, young Bahá'ís were told that they had been "rejected" on account of not meeting the "general qualification" for university entry. Belonging only to a religion recognized by Iran's constitution, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, or Zoroastrianism, is a general qualification stipulated on the education authority's website. Being a Bahá'í, a member of Iran's largest non-Muslim religious minority, but one that is not recognized by the Iranian constitution, is considered a disqualification

and therefore excludes tens of thousands of motivated students from pursuing higher education. Losing the right to study at university, an unimaginably cruel fate, crushes the hopes and futures of countless young Iranian Bahá'ís.

Like many young people around the world, Shohreh Rowhani grew up with high hopes of going to college. She studied hard and in 2011 took the national university entrance examination—a rite of passage for all those who desire higher education in Iran. She proved herself to be one of Iran's brightest youth, scoring so highly in her chosen subject—languages—that she ranked within the top one percent of those who took the exam that year. Buoyed by her impressive grades, Ms. Rowhani—who comes from the northern city of Nowshahr—began the online process of selecting her courses. But she soon discovered that her application to university had been rejected. The problem, according to a message flashing on her computer, was that she had an "incomplete file." This phrase is well-known to young Iranian Bahá'ís. For several years, the term has appeared as one of the technicalities crafted to prevent Bahá'ís from enrolling, even if they pass the national university exams.

Iranian officials deny that Bahá'ís are prevented from going to university. But the facts demonstrate a systematic, national policy of educational discrimination against Bahá'ís.

Denial of education



Hate speech and propaganda

“The 1991 memorandum states: government agencies must... counter the propaganda and religious activities of Bahá’ís.”

— **Government of Iran**

Hate speech and propaganda

The 1991 memorandum states that government agencies must “counter the propaganda and religious activities of Bahá’ís.”

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory, states that “Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited

2,000 hateful mentions on websites. The total figure represents an alarming increase over 2019 and 2020, which each measured about 20,000 incidents of hate speech; 2021 saw over 65,000 anti-Bahá’í posts and 2022 a staggering 138,891 instances of hate speech against the Bahá’í community. The trend of dramatic increases in hate speech against Bahá’ís is clear. But the real levels of hate

day; meanwhile, other agents entered a kindergarten in a major city in Iran and distributed Bahá’í books and pamphlets to its teachers, none of whom were Bahá’ís. These agents then instructed and forced the kindergarten staff to say, on camera, that Bahá’ís had brought these materials and distributed them to the teachers, attempting to frame the Bahá’ís as trying to convert Muslim children. Filming the staged teacher interviews also demonstrates that the authorities wanted to potentially use video footage to substantiate their false claims and sought to incite the public against the Bahá’í community.

And in 2021 the Bahá’í International Community also warned that it had noted an increase in the scale and sophistication of anti-Bahá’í propaganda directed by government-run media platforms. Examples of official and semi-official hate speech included a coordinated network of hundreds of websites, Instagram accounts, Telegram channels, and Clubhouse rooms, with content such as “Bahá’í are unclean and enemies of your religion,” “Associating with Bahá’ís is banned,” “Purchasing any goods from a Bahá’í store is forbidden,” “The modern ‘Human Rights’ is a big lie,” and others. Millions of Iranians are exposed to such propaganda—which has also included doctored and offensive images of Bahá’ís and the Founders of the Faith.

But since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the government has waged a relentless, anti-Bahá’í propaganda campaign in the media. The connection

“Baháism is neither a group nor a sect; rather, they are spies of Zionism, and have no other purpose for their mission except to spy for the Zionists, for which they gather together. Baháism does not even believe in the principles of their religion, and, I believe, the only reason for their emergence is espionage for Zionism, the United States and Britain.”

— **Ayatollah Hassan Mamdoui, a member of the Assembly of Experts, 21 May 2016, Tasnim News**

by law.” Yet, one of the most revealing examples of Iran’s strategy of persecution of the Bahá’ís includes a dramatic increase of anti-Bahá’í propaganda in official media.

In 2023, the Bahá’í International Community tracked 117,589 specific pieces of hate speech against Bahá’ís online, with the overwhelming majority of these appearing on social media and just over

speech against the Bahá’ís, whether online, over the airwaves, or in print, is far higher. Iran’s government dedicates huge resources and its agencies to this propaganda effort.

One particularly galling example of state-sponsored propaganda against the Bahá’ís came to light on 13 July 2022. Intelligence agents were already invading Bahá’í homes and arresting preschool teachers on that

Left: Montage of anti-Bahá’í graffiti (Credit: Center for Human Rights in Iran)

Hate speech and propaganda

between the propaganda and the various forms of oppression already described are clear,

by the same forces from within the Shia clergy. In 1955, the Iranian government broadcast

“The question should be asked, what the House of Justice, or the command headquarters of Bahaism is doing in Israel, and whether collaboration with such a network is a threat to the national security of our country.”

— Ayatollah Sadeq Amuli Larijani, 16 May 2016, Fars News

with waves of violence following concerted outbursts of hate speech. Though the strategy has taken on a new dynamic, intensifying in recent years, anti-Bahá’í propaganda

on national radio a series of hateful speeches by a senior cleric, Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Falsafi. He lambasted the Bahá’ís, accusing them of being enemies of Islam and claiming

“Members of the perverse sect are [not considered] Muslims, and any form of association with them is religiously prohibited, except in cases where there is hope of guiding them [to the right path].”

— Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, in a fatwa dated 17 May 2007

tactics have been present for decades and have directly stoked aggression against the community.

Hate speech has been used as a tool to incite violence against the Baha’is by the government and clerical authorities even prior to the Islamic Revolution—albeit instigated

that the Bahá’í Faith was a “false religion.”

In May of that year, the Minister of the Interior announced that orders had been issued for the suppression of the “Bahá’í sect.” There soon followed a convulsion of murder, rape, pillage, and destruction waged against Bahá’ís around the

country. Seven Bahá’ís were murdered, Bahá’í holy places were desecrated, Bahá’í-owned shops and farms were plundered, the bodies of recently deceased Bahá’ís were disinterred from cemeteries and mutilated, private homes were broken into and looted, and young Bahá’í women were abducted and forced to marry Muslim men.

The episode demonstrates several aspects of the history of the persecution of Bahá’ís in Iran. First, it shows the deep animosity that some members of Iran’s clerical class hold against Bahá’ís. Second, it shows the extent to which various government officials have been complicit in spreading misinformation and hate speech and in supporting the persecution.

During the period since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, the Iranian government has further developed its coordinated media network—which includes state television, radio, news publications, websites, and now various social media platforms and accounts to disseminate disinformation, falsehoods, and accusations aimed at Bahá’ís with the intention of fomenting and spreading fear and hatred against them. The efforts have operated at industrial scales. The connection to the Iranian government is undeniable in a country where all significant media outlets are controlled by the state.

The accusations and the reality

The Bahá’í Faith is known the world over as an independent world religion with teachings

Hate speech and propaganda

advocating progressive ideals such as equality for women and men. The Faith emphasizes obedience to government, non-involvement in partisan politics, and a commitment to promoting the betterment of society. Its moral code asks followers to uphold the highest standards of integrity, chastity, honesty, and trustworthiness.

Yet, according to the picture painted by the Iranian media, Bahá’ís are “misguided” or “deviant” “Satanists” whose main concern is to overthrow the government through methods like the “corruption” of youth or spreading “propaganda against the regime.”

The Bahá’í Faith originated in 19th century Iran—yet Iranians are repeatedly told that it is a political invention of Great Britain or other colonial powers to subvert Iranian nationalism. Bahá’ís are also purported today to be aligned with “Zionist” Israel.

A growing number of examples of official and semi-official hate speech have been flagged within a coordinated network of hundreds of websites, Instagram accounts, Telegram channels, and Clubhouse rooms. This hate speech includes content such as “Bahá’ís are unclean and enemies of your religion,” “Associating with Bahá’ís is banned,” “Purchasing any goods from a Bahá’í store is forbidden,” and “The modern ‘Human Rights’ is a big lie.” Millions of Iranians have been targeted by such propaganda—which also include doctored images of Bahá’ís, the Founders of the Faith, and Bahá’í holy places. Such images are not only false, but are deeply

disturbing, painful, and offensive to Bahá’ís. The increasing intensity of anti-Bahá’í propaganda is one of the most evident signs of the degree to which the Iranian government includes surreptitious as well as overt strategies of persecution—all the while never relenting in its ultimate goal of eliminating the Bahá’í community as a viable force in Iranian society.

A detailed examination by the Bahá’í International Community of anti-Bahá’í propaganda issued by the government or other government-controlled outlets point to several recurring hurtful and false themes.

The Accusation

That the Bahá’í Faith is a “misguided sect” or somehow associated with other “deviant” “cult-like” practices, such as Satanism, and that Bahá’ís are morally corrupt.

The Reality

Bahá’ís have a strict moral code and attach great importance to integrity and rectitude of conduct, as well as to the institution of marriage. One challenge is that the Bahá’í marriage ceremony is not recognized in Iran, where there is also no possibility of conducting a civil marriage. Consequently, Bahá’ís have been faced with the choice of denying their faith in order to have a legally recognized marriage or of marrying in accordance with the rites of their own Faith that are not recognized in law. They have consistently chosen to be married in accordance with Bahá’í law; the government does not recognize these

unions and thus denounces Bahá’í women as immoral. The other charges of adultery and immorality against Bahá’ís are based on the fact that, in accordance with the Bahá’í principle of the equality of men and women, there is no segregation of the sexes at Bahá’í gatherings.

The Accusation

That the Bahá’ís are anti-Islamic, actively working to undermine Islam.

This narrative often propagates mistruths that the Bahá’í Faith uses brainwashing to entice Muslims away from their faith.

The Reality

The Bahá’í Faith is widely recognized as an independent world religion—even by Islamic scholars. Bahá’ís live in many other Muslim countries in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good relations. Moreover, Bahá’ís revere Muhammad and His Book, the Quran, as they do Jesus, Moses, Buddha, and the Founders of the other world religions. Indeed, alone among the followers of the world’s other major independent religions, Bahá’ís recognize the station of Muhammad as a Prophet of God.

The Accusation

That the Bahá’í Faith was created by—or has a historic connection with—imperialist powers, specifically Great Britain or Russia, or that the Bahá’ís are agents of Zionism or spies for Israel and Western countries.

This is the most recent iteration in a long history of attempts to foment hatred by casting the

Hate speech and propaganda

Bahá'ís as agents of colonial or foreign powers, whether of Russia, the United Kingdom, or the United States. Now, the claim of “Zionism” has been added to the list. Absurdly, in its official response to the March 2016 report of the Special Rapporteur on human

and Qajar Persia—80 years prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. The fact that the Iranian government continues to make such charges is nothing more than an effort by the government to stir animosity against Bahá'ís among its population.

“All members of the perverse Bahaist sect are condemned as blasphemous and ritually unclean. Any food items or other objects that have been in contact with contagious dampness [sic] and have been touched by them should be avoided. It is incumbent upon the believers to counteract the machinations and perversity of this misguided sect.”

— Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, in an undated fatwa

rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Iran also compared the Bahá'í Faith to Nazism.

The Reality

The birthplace of the Bahá'í Faith is in Iran, where it was founded in the mid-19th century. Charges linking the Bahá'ís to the political project of Zionism are inaccurate and based on a distortion of history. The Bahá'í Faith has its world headquarters in Israel because Bahá'u'lláh was sent as an exile to the Ottoman-controlled prison city of Akka, Palestine, in 1868 by two Islamic authorities—Ottoman Turkey

The Accusation

That the Bahá'ís were influential during during the period of the government of the late Shah, presently, the Bahá'ís are the instigators of rising opposition to the government.

Under this narrative, Bahá'ís are falsely accused of collaborating with SAVAK, the secret police during the time of the Shah, and the Bahá'í Faith is routinely described as a political organization opposed to the present Iranian government, thereby posing a security threat.

The Reality

Bahá'ís are required by the basic principles of their Faith to show loyalty and obedience to the government of the country in which they live. The Bahá'í community in Iran demonstrated this respect and obedience to the Shah's government, just as it does to the present government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Members of the Bahá'í community have obeyed the present government, including by following the order to disband all Bahá'í administrative institutions. Bahá'í principles also require the avoidance of any form of involvement in partisan political activity. Iranian Bahá'ís therefore did not accept cabinet posts or similar political positions during the Shah's era, nor did they collaborate with SAVAK. On the contrary, the Shah's government also periodically targeted the Bahá'í community, and SAVAK was one of the main agencies of this persecution.

Far from being a threat to state security, Iranian Bahá'ís have a great love for their country and are deeply committed to its development. This is evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of Bahá'ís have remained in Iran despite the intense persecution directed towards them, as well as the fact that students who have been denied access to education in Iran and forced to study abroad have returned to assist in the development of their country.

Hate speech and propaganda



Hate speech and propaganda

Persian original of a 29 October 2005 letter from Iranian military headquarters to police forces around the country calling for the identification and monitoring of Bahá'ís

is the hope of guiding them [back to Islam]."

— From a 2010 article on the Alef website offering the views of religious leaders generally about Bahá'ís as well as guidance about how to deal with them, including whether to patronize their shops.

"While there are a number of Jews in the city, they are different from Bahá'ís. Bahá'ís are unclean, according to official rulings (fatwas)."

— Imam Jom'eh, the Friday prayer leader of Rafsanjan, quoted in a 2014 article by Fars News.

For a more complete examination of the themes of anti-Bahá'í propaganda in Iran, see "Inciting Hatred: Iran's media campaign to demonize Bahá'ís," a special report of the Bahá'í International Community, October 2011. www.bic.org/inciting-hatred

Fatwas that propagate hate: "They are even more unclean than dogs"

The demeaning treatment of Bahá'ís by Iranian authorities has remained a consistent theme throughout Iranian policy. Iran's religious leaders, for instance, have issued several official decrees (fatwas) stating that Bahá'ís are "deviant," "misguided," or "unclean" and should be held at a distance by ordinary people in Iranian society. These decrees have come from the highest level, including from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"All members of the perverse Bahaist sect are condemned as blasphemous and ritually unclean. Any food items or

Bahá'ís was unlawful. Other recent anti-Bahá'í statements in the media, listed below, also demonstrate the hateful propaganda deployed against the Bahá'í community.

"While Baháism is currently trying to change its wicked profile ... we should enlighten youth regarding the satanic goals of the enemies of Islam."

— Attributed to Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Kamalvand, identified as a professor at a Tabriz seminary and university, in a 17 December 2009 article

A grotesque picture of Iran's largest non-Muslim religious minority

The creation and maintenance of this grotesque picture of the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran is an ongoing project of the Iranian government, which has in recent years overseen the creation and dissemination of tens of thousands of pieces of anti-Bahá'í propaganda. This effort runs against international law—as already mentioned—yet that does not stop government officials from

"The usurper Israel deepened its penetration into Iran through the deviant sect of Baháism. Baháism was the liaison between the Shah and Israel and had widespread influence in Iran before the Revolution."

— Attributed to Hojjatoleslam Jadeed Benab in a 10 March 2010 article by Rasa News

directly spouting anti-Bahá'í hatred. And it does not stop government-controlled media from disseminating hateful statements by religious leaders and others against Bahá'ís.

The tone of this propaganda is set by the very highest levels of government. In an October 2010 nationally broadcast speech, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei categorized Bahá'ís as "enemies of the Islamic Revolution." And in 2013, a series of fatwas issued by Ayatollah Khamenei declared that any interaction with

by Rasa News, a conservative news agency operated by clerics in Qom.

"The usurper Israel deepened its penetration into Iran through the deviant sect of Baháism. Baháism was the liaison between the Shah and Israel and had widespread influence in Iran before the Revolution."

— Attributed to Hojjatoleslam Jadeed Benab in a 10 March 2010 article by Rasa News.

"Any association with them is to be avoided, unless there



Persian text of the 2006 letter from Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology instructing Iranian universities to expel any student who is discovered to be a Bahá'í

other objects that have been in contact with contagious dampness [sic] and have been touched by them should be avoided. It is incumbent upon the believers to counteract the machinations and perversity of this misguided sect."

— Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, in an undated fatwa.

Acts of violence following hate speech

As concerning as hate speech itself is, what is even more alarming is the link between incidents of hate speech and waves of violent actions against the Bahá'í community in the immediate period following those incidents. These assaults range from simple vandalism to murder. And the attackers are rarely, if ever, prosecuted, reflecting a culture of impunity. In its public statements, Iran has suggested that violence against Bahá'ís is a manifestation of popular prejudice beyond government control. Yet the evidence suggests that most acts of violence against Bahá'ís and their property are likely undertaken with government complicity, following hateful remarks instigated by religious clerics or government officials.

In July 2022, Iran's Ministry of Intelligence issued an appalling

"You should avoid any association and dealings with this perverse and misguided sect."

— Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a fatwa issued on 26 March 2018

"Bahá'ís are unclean and association with them must be avoided."

— Ayatollah Behjat, in an undated fatwa.

statement of oppressive hate propaganda against the Bahá'ís to justify raids on the homes and businesses of 52 Bahá'ís across Iran, as well as the arrest or imprisonment of 13 individuals. The Ministry of Intelligence issued a formal statement claiming the arrests were against members of the "Bahá'í espionage [political] party" and that those arrested

"It is a misguided sect and absolutely perverse. They are even more unclean than dogs. It is a man-made sect."

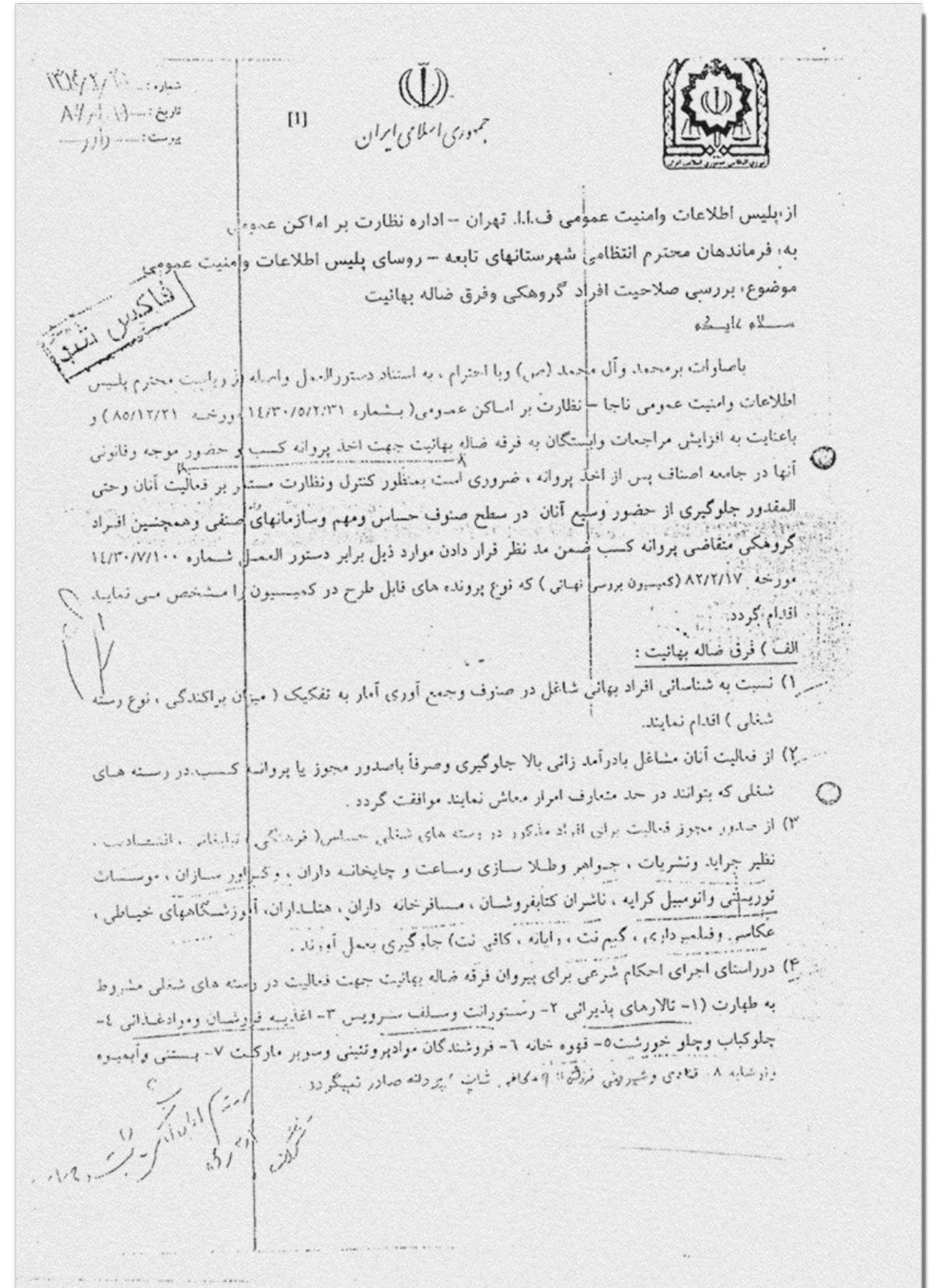
— Ayatollah Nouri Hamadani, in a fatwa circulated in 2010

were "propagating the teachings of the fabricated Bahá'í colonialism and infiltrating educational environments," including kindergartens. The mention of kindergartens was an apparent pretext for the targeting of several Bahá'í preschool

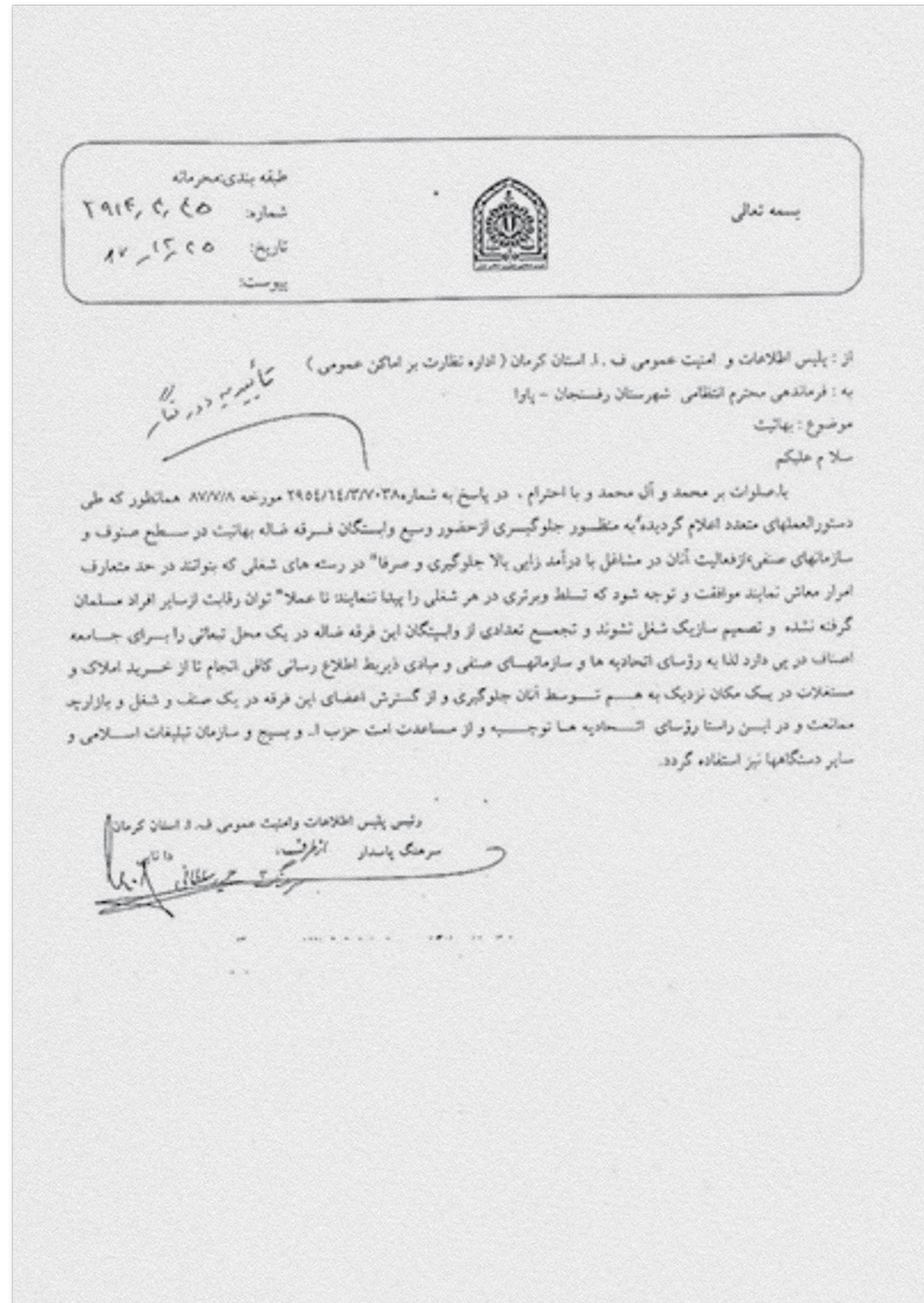
teachers. In February 2014, the Moodi family was enjoying a quiet evening in their home in Birjand, a provincial capital in eastern Iran, when they were surprised by the appearance of a masked man. Before they could react, the man attacked, stabbing Ghodratollah Moodi, his wife Touba Sabzehjou, and their daughter Azam Moodi.

He then fled the scene, leaving the family severely harmed. Mr. Moodi was injured in the abdomen. Mrs. Sabzehjou was cut in the neck. Both fainted from blood loss. Ms. Moodi, despite deep wounds of her own, was able to phone for help, and all three were soon taken to the hospital. In critical condition at first, they eventually recovered from the physical injuries, though the emotional torment they experienced, and perhaps continue to relive, can never fully be understood. The perpetrator has never been caught.

Bahá'ís regularly face death threats through aggressive



Persian original of a 9 April 2007 letter to police commanders around Tehran that calls for tight restrictions on Bahá'í businesses



Persian original of 15 March 2009 letter from the Public Places Supervision Office of Kerman Province to Rafsanjan police commanders instructing them to restrict real estate purchases by Bahá'ís

letters, anonymous phone calls, and face-to-face verbal intimidation. In 2008, for example, several Bahá'í families in Rafsanjan, Kerman province, received threatening telephone calls from a man using different pay phones over a two-week period. In many of those calls, the man indicated he had quite specific details about each family:

Other examples of violence against Bahá'ís include:

- One Bahá'í man was told he would be beaten and that his son and another Bahá'í in the city were marked for death.
- A Muslim who had been attending Bahá'í meetings was called and threatened with the burning of his shop as well as death if he did not disclose family details of certain Bahá'ís in Rafsanjan.
- Another Bahá'í man received threats that his daughter would be burned to death.
- A young unmarried woman was told that acid would be thrown on her.

The incident in Rafsanjan in 2008—plus at least two dozen other cases of harassment or threats against Bahá'ís there—occurred after the Friday prayer leader of Kerman and local representative of the Supreme Leader told his followers that the Bahá'í Faith is part of an American conspiracy and that Bahá'í “teachers” are Zionist spies.

And of the many documented incidents of unprosecuted physical violence against

Bahá'ís following instances of hate speech, there are at least nine shocking cases where Bahá'ís have been murdered or killed under suspicious circumstances with no further government inquiry into these situations.

“The long standing colonialism of England created three fraudulent sects among the Muslims: Bahatism among the Shi’ites, Wahhabism among the Sunnis, and Zionism in the land of Palestine and the Middle East region, so that, with this endeavor, they can create enmity and separation among Muslims, and insecurity in the region.”

— Secretary-General of the Expediency Council, 17 May 2016, Mashregh News

• On 26 September 2016, Farhang Amiri was murdered outside his home in Yazd by two assailants who were brothers. One of the two was caught by local shopkeepers and the second apprehended later by the police. During their police interviews, they admitted to killing Mr. Amiri, and when asked about their motive one of the brothers said: “We wanted to kill a Bahá'í. I had heard that Bahá'ís are Muslims who have turned away from Islam, and they are apostates, and that shedding their blood is a meritorious deed.” The two brothers later added that they would kill another

Bahá'í if released. Despite the admission of murder, and the stated intent to commit future murders of Bahá'ís, a court released the two men on bail.

• Ataollah Rezvani was well-known as a Bahá'í in the city of Bandar Abbas and much respected for his honesty and helpfulness. Ministry of Intelligence agents, however, arranged for his dismissal from work and pressured him to leave the city. He had begun receiving menacing telephone calls from unknown persons and soon after was murdered in an assassination-style killing in August 2013. His killing came after senior local clerics incited the population against Bahá'ís in the city. The perpetrators were never caught.

“Hate speech is a menace to democratic values, social stability and peace. And as a matter of principle, the UN must confront hate speech at every turn. Silence can signal indifference to bigotry and intolerance, even as a situation escalates and the vulnerable become victims.”

— UN Secretary-General António Guterres



United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres (Credit: NoDerivs 2.0 Generic)

- In February 2009, in the city of Yazd, an 82-year-old man disappeared after leaving home for a meal at a nearby restaurant. His daughter contacted government agencies for help to locate him and was ultimately told his disappearance was related to his efforts to talk about the Bahá'í Faith, which aroused the enmity of his neighbors. She was led to the morgue, where she identified him.
- In 2008, three Bahá'ís in Mashhad received telephone threats and were later intentionally run over by a car in a

hit-and-run incident. Two of the individuals were killed and the third was hospitalized with serious injuries. Few further details are available about this incident, but no one is known to have been prosecuted for this attack.

- On 16 February 2007, an 85-year-old Bahá'í resident of Abbas Abad, in Fars province, was found dead in her home with her hands and feet bound and her mouth gagged. The next day, in the town of Mohammadieh, in the province of Isfahan, a

77-year-old Bahá'í woman was viciously assaulted by a masked intruder in her home. She had been lured out of her house in the middle of the night and then savagely attacked with a lawn rake. Her screams caused the intruder to flee, whereupon she crawled to the home of her neighbor for help. Despite medical attention, her wounds proved fatal, and the woman died on 7 March 2007.

Many more such incidents have no doubt gone unreported. In most countries, such threats and murders would have warranted police investigation. But no such investigations have been documented in Iran. These alarming incidents all reflect the degree to which hate crimes against Iranian Bahá'ís have been allowed to flourish in recent years—and the extent to which the authorities almost always fail to investigate these crimes or otherwise bring perpetrators to justice.

The need to address hate speech is increasingly recognized on the international stage. Commenting on the rise in hate speech over the years, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in 2019: “Hate speech is a menace to democratic values, social stability and peace. And as a matter of principle, the UN must confront hate speech at every turn. Silence can signal indifference to bigotry and intolerance, even as a situation escalates and the vulnerable become victims.”

Hate speech and propaganda



Hate speech and propaganda



A before and after doctored photo of a meeting between Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community, and Pope Francis, demonstrating another effort by Iranian authorities to spread hate speech against the Bahá'í community



How do Iranians (Bahá'ís and others) respond to the persecution?

With over a century and a half of abuse, and alarming intensifications of the persecution directed by the Iranian government over the last 45 years, the Bahá'ís have seen their leadership decimated, their friends and relatives harassed and imprisoned, their holy sites and cemeteries confiscated and desecrated, their economic fortunes dashed, and their young people blocked from educational advancement.

The Bahá'ís have responded, not with violence and outrage, but with quiet and constructive resilience, with efforts to contribute to Iranian society as well as social and economic development projects aimed at helping their fellow Iranian citizens.

In recent years it has been encouraging to see the growing support shown to the Iranian Bahá'í community by Iranians from all walks of life. Champions for the rights of the Bahá'ís have included two Iranian women Nobel Peace Prize laureates, highly-visible human rights activists, popular artists and media personalities, hundreds of academics, journalists, artists and intellectuals, even certain Shia and Sunni clerics, as well as unnumbered ordinary Iranians around the country and the whole world.

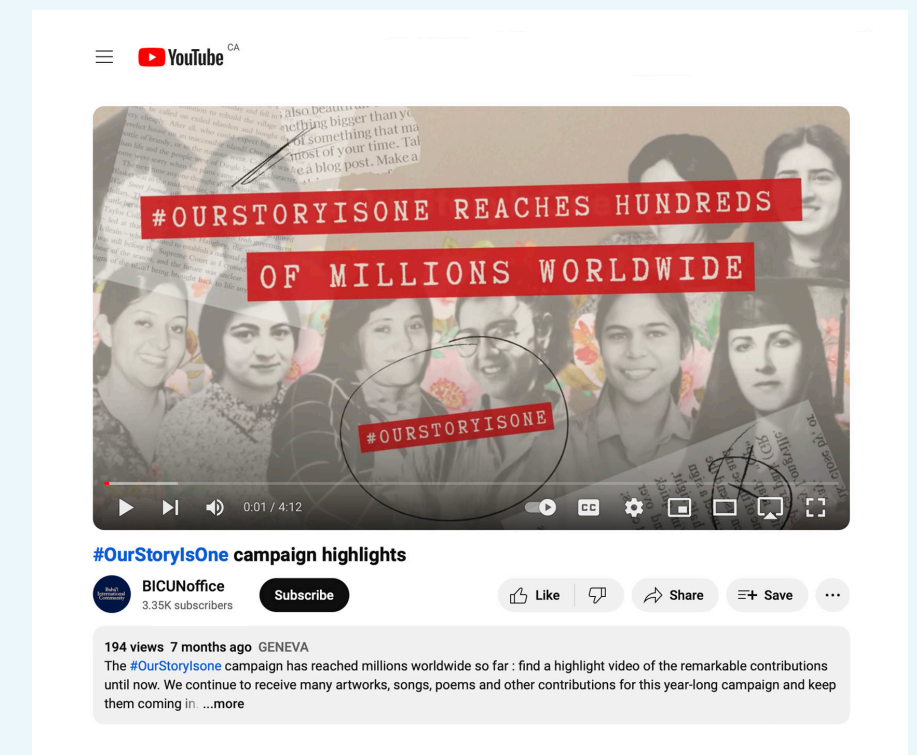
There has also been a rising appreciation by the Iranian people that the Bahá'ís in Iran, while persecuted through systematic, brutal and unjust means, do not regard themselves as victims. Bahá'ís

work to be active members of their society—to contribute to its progress and development regardless of circumstances and difficulties. Iranians inside and outside Iran have come to see the Bahá'ís in this light, and campaigns such as **#OurStoryIsOne** have assisted in this regard.

Visit the **#OurStoryIsOne** website below at ourstoryisone.bic.org

Alternatively, visit the **#OurStoryIsOne** channel on YouTube by visiting the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKd6GyNj4m8>



Left: Narges Mohammadi, 2023 Nobel Peace Prize laureate (Credit: New York Times)

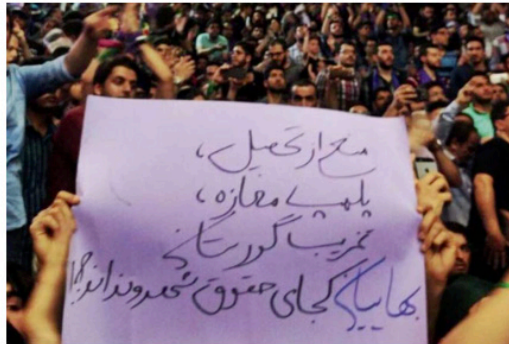


به این شرمساری تاریخی پایان دهید؛ بیانیه ۱۴۷ نفر از فعالان سیاسی و مدنی علیه موج جدید سرکوب بهائیان در ایران

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زیتون- بیش از یکصد تن از فعالان سیاسی و مدنی با صدور بیانیه‌ای «موج بازداشت‌های جدید علیه بهائیان و محرومیت آنها از حقوق اولیه انسانی و مدنی» را محکوم کرده و «از همه فعالان اجتماعی و سیاسی» خواستند که «صدای خود را علیه این رفتارهای وحشیانه و ضد انسانی بیش از پیش بلند کنند».

متن کامل این بیانیه که برای انتشار در اختیار زیتون قرار گرفته در ادامه می‌آید.



بیانیه ۱۴۷ نفر از فعالان سیاسی و مدنی علیه موج جدید سرکوب بهائیان در ایران به این شرمساری تاریخی پایان دهید!

A wave of support from fellow Iranians

A growing number of Iranians, both inside and beyond Iran and themselves not Bahá'ís, are questioning the hateful messaging propagated against the Bahá'ís and have defended the character and contributions of the community.

Iranians of all religious backgrounds are standing up for the rights of Bahá'ís or taking smaller, day-to-day actions—such as shopping at Bahá'í-owned stores or providing employment to Bahá'ís—to demonstrate their solidarity and their expectation that the government should show religious tolerance. These individuals have come to see that the Bahá'ís, who continued to live their lives in adversity through peaceful and constructive resilience, were not the demons described in anti-Bahá'í propaganda, but rather compassionate human beings who desire not only the freedom to worship as they choose, but also to participate in the work of creating a better future for Iran. This is all the more true as many from among the wider population are also suffering some form of oppression within the country—as students and academics, as journalists and social activists, as artists and sports people, as progressive thinkers and proponents of women's rights, and as ordinary citizens.

In June 2024, in a significant statement, 10 Iranian women imprisoned in Tehran's Evin Prison, including the Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi, honored the 10 Iranian Bahá'í women imprisoned in the 1980s in Shiraz's Adel Abad Prison. The statement echoed

the **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign launched in honor of the 10 Baha'i women, who were eventually all executed on the night of 18 June 1983.

Writing from the women's ward of Evin Prison, the statement said: "After years of imprisonment alongside Baha'i wom-

“Consort with all religions with amity and concord, that they may inhale from you the sweet fragrance of God.”

— **Bahá'u'lláh**

en, witnessing the relentless pressures and injustices they endure for their beliefs, and hearing their stories across generations, we unequivocally recognize that 'our story is one.'"

And during the 2023 **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign, Arash Sadeghi, a leading Iranian activist who during this campaign, and still as of mid-2024, was in prison, posted multiple posts to Twitter/X. In his posts Mr. Sadeghi referred to 17-year-old Mona Mahmudnizhad, the youngest of the 10 Bahá'í women in Shiraz executed in June 1983, and said: "Every corner of Mona's story that I see is a painful tragedy that the pen is unable to describe... I heard the name of 17-year-old Mona when I was a teenager and got to know her story. For me, she was a model of honor, courage and strength." Hossein Ronaghi, another prominent Iranian activist who spent years in prison despite critical health conditions, also supported the campaign from within Iran by re-posting Mr. Sadeghi's statement.

Left: Screenshot of an open letter by dozens of Iranian intellectuals and activists in support of the Bahá'ís (Credit: Zeitoons.com)

A growing number of activists inside Iran have begun, at great personal risk, to speak out in support of Bahá'í rights. Iranians who have stood up for the Bahá'ís have also included Nasrin Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer; Mohammad Nourizad, a journalist and filmmaker; Muhammad Maleki, the first

head of Tehran University following the Islamic Revolution; Masumeh Dehghan, an activist; the wife of Abdolfatah Soltani, a well-known lawyer who represented the seven former leaders of the Bahá'í community; and Jila Baniyaghoob and Issa Saharkhiz, two prominent journalists who were previously in prison.

Many of these activists became friends with Bahá'ís while in prison, as was the case of Faezeh Hashemi, whose bold meeting with Fariba Kamalabadi, as mentioned, stirred a storm of anti-Bahá'í propaganda.

In earlier years, in May 2016, for instance, five prominent Iranian religious scholars—Abdolali Bazargan, Hasan Fereshtian, Mohsen Kadivar, Sedigheh Vasmaghi, and Hasan Yousefi-Eshkevari—published a statement saying that the "followers of the Bahá'í religion have been oppressed because of their religion and beliefs for decades."

And in April 2016, family visitors of Bahá'ís unjustly held

in Gowhardasht prison were met with kindness by a man, Mohammad Seifzadeh, and his wife. Holding a box of sweets, the couple greeted each Bahá'í as they came out of the prison after they had visited their

a week before, having served two years for “acting against national security”—a charge related to his work as a human rights defense lawyer. During his time in prison, Dr. Seifzadeh had met many Bahá'ís and had

“As Iranian human beings, we are ashamed for what has been perpetrated upon the Bahá'ís in the last century and a half in Iran,” said the letter, which was ultimately signed by 267 individuals.”

“We firmly believe that every Iranian, ‘without distinction of any kind, such as, race, color, sex, language, religion, politics or other opinions,’ and also without regard to ethnic background, ‘social origin, property, birth or other status,’ is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, from the very inception of the Bahá'í Faith, the followers of this religion in Iran have been deprived of many provisions of human rights solely on account of their religious convictions.”

— Joint statement, prominent Iranian academics, writers, journalists, artists and activists

family members. The couple's actions came at great risk to themselves. The man had been a prisoner at Gowhardasht just

been touched by their kindness and conduct. And so, it was with tears of joy, according to eyewitnesses, that Dr. Seifza-

deh and his wife greeted the released Bahá'ís.

Thought leaders call for an end to the “historical shame”

In January 2024, a group of more than 150 Iranian human rights advocates, social and political activists inside Iran, signed a powerful public statement condemning the “new wave of arrests against Bahá'ís and their deprivation of basic human and civil rights.”

Joining countless others in echoing the spirit of the **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign, which began in June 2023, the group urged their Iranian compatriots to “raise their voices” in solidarity with the Bahá'í community.

“The Baha'ís in Iran have faced systematic ideological, political, educational, and economic pressure” for more than 150 years, the statement said, adding that the repression gained “wider dimensions and a more inhumane intensity” after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Prominent human rights activists, academics, lawyers, artists, and former officials are among the signatories.

The extraordinary intervention was but the latest in a series of statements issued by prominent Iranians in support of the rights of the Bahá'í community. A remarkable aspect of the new statement was that it was signed by leaders of thought from a broad spectrum of perspectives and political opinions in Iranian society—all denouncing the persecution of Bahá'ís in unequivocal terms.

“No citizen should be punished just because of their beliefs,” the statement said. “No citizen

A wave of support from fellow Iranians

or minority in society should be judged, discriminated against, socially deprived, and systematically suppressed due to religious prejudices, dogmas, or political delusions.”

Two Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureates add their voices

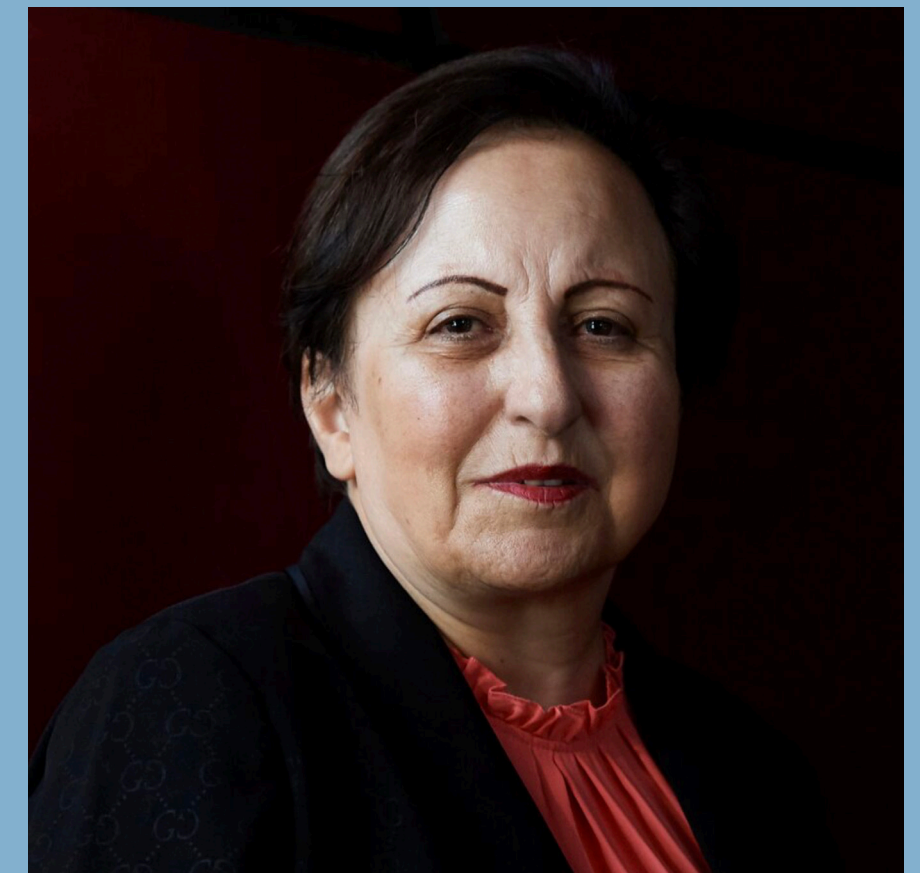
When Narges Mohammadi—a human rights activist in Iran who, as of mid-2024, remained behind bars in Evin Prison—won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2023, the Bahá'í International Community issued a message of congratulations that same day. Ms. Mohammadi had, for many years, called for the rights of all Iranians to be respected.

One of her most recent interventions on behalf of Iranian Bahá'ís came in June 2023, the same day she was awarded the Nobel Prize, and made reference to the **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign. Ms. Mohammadi said that the execution of the 10 Bahá'í women in Shiraz in 1983 was part of the same pattern of persecution which caused the civil rights of the Bahá'ís to be “violated and suppressed.” And she asked whether awareness-raising campaigns served only to expose the violence of the Islamic Republic or whether they also implied a responsibility on the part of all Iranians to change their society.

Shirin Ebadi, a renowned Iranian lawyer and human rights activist who today is based outside Iran, first engaged with the persecution of Bahá'ís when in 2008 she acted for the detained seven former leaders of the community. Dr. Ebadi was given little to no access to her clients or their case files—and she said at the time that the Iranian government had

no evidence to support their accusations against the former Bahá'í leaders.

convey. Indeed, whoever we are, from whichever group we come from, our story is one.”



Shirin Ebadi, a prominent Iranian human rights lawyer and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, defended the seven former leaders of the Bahá'í community at their trial (Credit: Getty Images / Carlos Alvarez)

Since that time she has, again and again, called for the Islamic Republic to end its persecution of the Bahá'ís and to recognize their rights. Dr. Ebadi's most recent statement was also in June 2023, in support of the **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign, when she stated: “Just like a virus that spreads through the body if it is not prevented, if we do not stop crimes against a particular group, it will spread to other groups. This is what we see with the Bahá'ís in Iran and the 10 Bahá'í women who were executed 40 years ago for their beliefs. The injustices we see today in Iran against all groups is the result of us not standing up to injustice against the Bahá'ís. We must stand against discrimination and injustice against anyone, anywhere, and this is the message that Our Story Is One campaign tries to

A courageous show of solidarity—not an “ugly and obscene act”

One event clearly depicts the disconnect between Iran's external posture and its internal policy toward Bahá'ís: a meeting between two friends in 2016, one a Bahá'í prisoner on furlough and the other a well-known Muslim.

The two women at the center of the storm had come to know each other in prison. One of them was Fariba Kamalabadi, one of seven imprisoned national-level Bahá'í leaders who was out of prison for the first time in eight years on a five-day

A wave of support from fellow Iranians

furlough. The other was Faezeh Hashemi—the daughter of former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani—who had been imprisoned herself for protesting the 2009 presidential election results.

The meeting caused a storm of denunciation of the Bahá'í Faith

photographs were taken—and some of these were posted to social media. Within days, government officials and religious leaders vehemently denounced the meeting, and their remarks were carried in thousands of articles and broadcasts, both in state-run and state-endorsed media.

quarters of Baháism is doing in Israel, and whether collaboration with such a network is a threat to the national security of our country."

— Ayatollah Sadeq Amuli Larijani, 16 May 2016, Fars News

A wave of support from fellow Iranians

“Just like a virus that spreads through the body if it is not prevented, if we do not stop crimes against a particular group, it will spread to other groups. This is what we see with the Bahá'ís in Iran and the 10 Bahá'í women who were executed 40 years ago for their beliefs. The injustices we see today in Iran against all groups is the result of us not standing up to injustice against the Bahá'ís. We must stand against discrimination and injustice against anyone, anywhere, and this is the message that Our Story Is One campaign tries to convey. Indeed, whoever we are, from whichever group we come from, our story is one.”

— Shirin Ebadi, Lawyer and Nobel Prize Laureate

in the Iranian media—and the outpouring of invective was so furious that it was reported by the New York Times, the BBC, and other major international media outlets. A top Iranian government official—judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje—called the meeting “a very ugly and obscene act.” Scores of religious leaders joined in, saying: “Consorting with Bahá'ís and friendship with them is against the teachings of Islam” and that Bahá'ís are “deviants” who must be “isolated.”

Mrs. Hashemi visited Mrs. Kamalabadi's home on 13 May 2016 to show her support. During the meeting, a number of

Statements issued shortly after the Kamalabadi-Hashemi meeting:

“When false actions are not prevented, some people allow themselves to encourage Baháism. These actions have to be dealt with, as this is treason against the public and the martyrs, and anyone who befriends Baháism is a Bahá'í, himself.”

— General Muhammad-Reza Naqdi, the head of the Basij Foundation for the needy, 16 May 2016, Basij Press

“The question should be asked, what the House of Justice, or the command head-

“The long standing colonialism of England created three fraudulent sects among the Muslims: Baháism among the Shi'ites, Wahhabism among the Sunnis, and Zionism in the land of Palestine and the Middle East region, so that, with this endeavor, they can create enmity and separation among Muslims, and insecurity in the region.”

— Secretary-General of the Expediency Council, 17 May 2016, Mashregh News

“Baháism is neither a group nor a sect; rather, they are spies of Zionism, and have no other purpose for their mission except to spy for the

Zionists, for which they gather together. Baháism does not even believe in the principles of their religion, and, I believe, the only reason for their emergence is espionage for Zionism, the United States and Britain.”

— Ayatollah Hassan Mamdui, a member of the Assembly of Experts, 21 May 2016, Tasnim News

A senior cleric calls for “religious coexistence” with Bahá'ís

In 2023, one of Iran's most senior Sunni clerics, Molavi Abdulhamid, the Sunni Friday prayer leader in the city of Zahedan, spoke out several times in favor of the rights of the Bahá'ís. His interventions came as Iran continued to reel under the protests of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement and were powerful statements of support from a senior Islamic figure in the country.

Molavi Abdulhamid's statements also followed a few other instances of Iranian clerical support for the Bahá'ís—albeit from beyond the clerical government. Among the most notable expressions of this type of support for Bahá'ís from inside Iran came in the form of an illuminated calligraphic manuscript featuring a quote from the Bahá'í writings, produced by a prominent Muslim cleric, and sent as a gift to the Bahá'í world in 2014. The quote depicts a paragraph from Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i-Aqdas—“Most Holy Book”—which reads:

“Consort with all religions with amity and concord, that they may inhale from you the sweet fragrance of God.



Ayatollah Abdol-Hamid Masoumi-Tehrani (Credit: Unknown)

Beware lest amidst men the flame of foolish ignorance overpower you. All things proceed from God and unto Him they return. He is the source of all things and in Him all things are ended.”

Ayatollah Abdol-Hamid Masoumi-Tehrani explained on his website that the calligraphic work was meant to serve as a “reminder of the importance of valuing human beings, of peaceful coexistence, of cooperation and mutual support, and avoidance of hatred, enmity and blind religious prejudice.”

In 2015, Ayatollah Masoumi-Tehrani produced another work of calligraphy featuring a different passage from the Bahá'í writings, and stated his hope that his act will “raise the conscience of my fellow countrymen by considering increasing their respect for human dignity and not focusing their attention on different ethnicities, languages and religions.”

This experience demonstrates the unique and powerful role religious leaders can play in building cohesive and resilient societies and in countering calls to division and violence.

A wave of support from fellow Iranians

Support from Iranians outside the country

In recent years, during awareness-raising campaigns organized by the Bahá'í International Community to challenge human rights crises in Iran around hate propaganda, property confiscations, historical executions, and the denial of the equality of women and men, a host of Iranian activists inside and outside the country have amplified the messages of the Bahá'í community.

The prominent US-based Iranian women's rights and human rights activist, Masih Alinejad, issued a powerful video statement in January 2024 in response to an open letter written by the jailed Iranian Bahá'í woman Mahvash Sabet. In her statement, Ms. Alinejad acknowledged that decades of persecution of the Bahá'ís by the Iranian government was due in part to the refusal of the Bahá'ís to hide or resile from their principles and beliefs. “To have a prosperous and free Iran, to enjoy the nobility of human beings,” Ms. Alinejad said, “the first step is to defend our own Bahá'í neighbor who has been canceled from everything. The

Bahá'í who cannot get educated, who cannot work to make a living, who cannot speak about their beliefs. Instead of telling them, 'Shhh, hide your identity and beliefs,' let us instead learn from them to stand firm, and let us also speak out about our own true identity and beliefs. Saying 'No' to a government that wants to take away our rights is our greatest tool. I therefore stand by our fellow Bahá'í citizens: the ones who have been disqualified for entire lifetimes by the Islamic

Republic. Together, and by each other's side, we are stronger. Our story is one."

And in 2023, at the height of the **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign, the France-based Iranian human rights activist Ladan Boroumand, co-founder of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in Iran, said: "Our story is one: we have learned that from our fellow Bahai citizens. Their unspeakable ordeal in

"The first step is to defend our own Bahá'í neighbor who has been canceled from everything. The Bahá'í who cannot get educated, who cannot work to make a living, who cannot speak about their beliefs. Instead of telling them, 'Shhh, hide your identity and beliefs,' let us instead learn from them to stand firm, and let us also speak out about our own true identity and beliefs. Saying 'No' to a government that wants to take away our rights is our greatest tool. I therefore stand by our fellow Bahá'í citizens: the ones who have been disqualified for entire lifetimes by the Islamic Republic. Together, and by each other's side, we are stronger. Our story is one."

— Masih Alinejad, US-based Iranian women's rights and human rights activist



US-based Iranian women's rights and human rights activist, Masih Alinejad (Credit: AFP / Jemal Countess)

A wave of support from fellow Iranians

the Islamic Republic of Iran has become the mirror in which we, ordinary Iranian citizens, look at ourselves and see our shortcomings. With magnanimity they tell us **#OurStoryIsOne**, we know why their story has become our story: for we stood as indifferent bystanders when it all started."

In 2009, in a seminal move, a group of prominent Iranian academics, writers, journalists, artists and activists outside the country drafted and signed an open letter proclaiming their disgust at the mistreatment of Bahá'ís over the years in their homeland:

"As Iranian human beings, we are ashamed for what has been perpetrated upon the Bahá'ís in the last century and a half in Iran," said the letter, which was ultimately signed by 267 individuals. "We firmly believe that every Iranian, 'without distinction of any kind, such as, race, color, sex, language, religion, politics or other opinions,' and also without regard to ethnic background, 'social origin, property, birth or other status,' is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth

in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, from the very inception of the Bahá'í Faith, the followers of this religion in Iran have been deprived of many provisions of human rights solely on account of their religious convictions."

The letter ended by asking Bahá'ís to forgive them, collectively, for the wrongs committed against the Bahá'í community. "We will no longer be silent when injustice is visited upon you," they said.

And in the recent past, Iranian human rights activists and leaders outside the country, including international lawyer Mehrangiz Kar, journalists such as Maziar Bahari, Arash Azizi, and Akbar Ganji, and student leader Ahmad Batebi,

"Our story is one: we have learned that from our fellow Bahai citizens. Their unspeakable ordeal in the Islamic Republic of Iran has become the mirror in which we, ordinary Iranian citizens, look at ourselves and see our shortcomings. With magnanimity they tell us #OurStoryIsOne, we know why their story has become our story: for we stood as indifferent bystanders when it all started."

— France-based Iranian human rights activist Ladan Boroumand

as well as public figures such as Nazanin Boniadi, have all expressed concern about the treatment of Bahá'ís. The British-Iranian woman and former inmate of Evin Prison, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, has also spoken out about the situation of the Bahá'ís and in particular the jailing of Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi.

Together, these expressions of support have been critical, not only in raising awareness about the situation of the Bahá'ís, but in providing a source of solace to Bahá'ís on the ground.



France-based Iranian human rights activist Ladan Boroumand, co-founder of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in Iran (Credit: Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy)

A wave of support from fellow Iranians



Constructive resilience

Despite the abhorrent treatment they face every day, the Bahá'ís in Iran still hold conviction in their purpose. Like other Bahá'ís in virtually every country around the world, they too are working to apply, within their own context, the framework guiding the affairs and initiatives of the worldwide Bahá'í community, which involves service to society as well as personal and collective development.

Central to their approach is a non-adversarial posture characterized by the principle of the oneness of humankind. This orientation finds its origins in Bahá'u'lláh's own example. He exhorted the Bahá'ís to exemplify kindness and concern for their community, even after being exiled to Baghdad by Qajar-era Persian government authorities. It was this posture that contributed directly to the building of trust among sympathetic government officials at that time.

The Bahá'í community's concern for advancing the well-being of their societies continued to take shape in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These efforts included contributions to modern medicine and agriculture in Iran, the development of modern schooling, and an increase in literacy levels, especially among young women and girls.

The global governing body of the worldwide Bahá'í community, the Universal House of Justice, has described the response of this community as one of "constructive resilience"—a response to oppression that seeks "neither to succumb in resignation nor to take on the characteristics of the oppressor." Not to be mistaken for blind acceptance or passivity, such a posture sees in adversity an opportunity to inspire greater forms of transformation and to contribute to the betterment of society.

The concept "constructive resilience" was brought into the public discourse by scholar Michael Karlberg, who observed that the Bahá'í

community of Iran "has pursued a distinctively non-adversarial approach to social change under conditions of violent oppression." This approach, he writes, is based on the idea that:

"... strategies for achieving lasting social change—including strategies for overcoming violent oppression—must pay attention to both the material and spiritual dimensions of change, including the transformation of hearts among both the oppressors and the oppressed. Oppositional strategies that pit one group against another, whether violently or non-violently, are not considered conducive to spiritual transformation and lasting change. Bahá'ís thus refrain from all divisive forms of social action, including involvement in partisan political organizing and opposition."

Courage, conviction, and action

In response to direct acts of persecution, Bahá'ís have demonstrated constructive resilience by courageously approaching officials with carefully worded complaints about specific acts of oppression, even if they have little hope of gaining a sympathetic ear. Likewise, Bahá'ís have repeatedly sought to work through Iran's court system to resolve problems such as the confiscation of property, the closing of businesses, or the denial of education. Their response to the destruction of their properties also demonstrates this spirit of resilience. In the village of Ivel, for example, Bahá'í farmers,

whose homes were burned or demolished, continue to plant crops on their land—even though it is economically disadvantageous—to demonstrate that their purpose would not be thwarted by the actions of government officials.

The Bahá'ís of Yazd have exhibited great resilience on the numerous occasions that land allotted for their cemetery was demolished or confiscated, and they have repeatedly taken steps to restore the beauty of the land. The first piece of land, with a tree-lined garden in the city's central area, was confiscated and then destroyed in 1979. Another piece of land was then given to the Bahá'ís in a desert area outside of the city. Despite its remote and infertile location, the Bahá'ís worked hard to lend it a befitting spirit by planting trees that could thrive in the harsh terrain. In 2007, many of those trees and numerous gravestones were bulldozed, and later, an earth embankment was constructed to prevent Bahá'ís from using it. In 2013, a third piece of land was allocated to the Bahá'ís, which was also located in the middle of the desert, situated between two sandy hills and with no access road save through a garbage dump. The Bahá'ís have nevertheless begun to beautify this third plot.

Many Bahá'ís have also been told by government officials that if they simply said they were not Bahá'ís, they would suffer no mistreatment. By refusing to deny one's faith and seeking integration in Iranian society through active participation in civic life, the Bahá'ís have worked to claim equal citizenship and the

requisite rights to which every Iranian citizen is entitled. They also do not seek to appeal for minority status, which reinforces norms and notions of separateness. The Bahá'ís in Iran instead call for the full recognition of their rights within a society to which they belong, and to which they are deeply committed.

“... strategies for achieving lasting social change—including strategies for overcoming violent oppression—must pay attention to both the material and spiritual dimensions of change, including the transformation of hearts among both the oppressors and the oppressed. Oppositional strategies that pit one group against another, whether violently or non-violently, are not considered conducive to spiritual transformation and lasting change. Bahá'ís thus refrain from all divisive forms of social action, including involvement in partisan political organizing and opposition.”

— Michael Karlberg

The Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education

Entire generations of Bahá'ís have been denied access to higher education in Iran to impoverish the community intellectually, economically, and psychologically. The policy is clearly designed to have a demoralizing effect on Bahá'í

youth. Yet the community, inspired by the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, which places a paramount value on education, devised a creative and peaceful solution.

A notable example of constructive resilience can be seen in the creation of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE), an ad hoc,

a scattering of specialized classrooms, laboratories, and libraries. By the late 1990s, the BIHE enrolled more than 900 students annually. The government, however, responded by temporarily shutting down the Institute in 1998; agents of the government staged a series of raids, arresting at least 36 members of the BIHE's faculty and staff and confiscating much of its equipment and records.

Over time, the Institute gradually rebuilt itself by shifting online and making use of volunteer educators living outside the country as professors and consultants. At one point during the first decade of the new millennium, it served an estimated 1,000 students, offering university-level programs in 17 academic subjects.

In 2011, the government again moved to shut it down, this time arresting a dozen educators and administrators who supported the Institute's operation on the ground in Iran. In the following weeks, several more were arrested, bringing the number of BIHE-affiliated educators arrested that year to 19. Of those, 17 were ultimately tried and sentenced to terms of four or five years in prison. Their alleged crimes involved “conspiracy against national security by establishing the illegal Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education” or “membership in the deviant Bahaist sect, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country.” The fact that authorities would go so far as to imprison 17 Bahá'í educators simply for trying to provide the educational opportunities that had been

Constructive resilience



Michael Karlberg, professor of Communication Studies at Western Washington University (Credit: photoTobin Photography / Arezu Moshrefzadeh)

denied to Bahá'í students by the government itself shows just how far officials will go to prevent Bahá'ís from obtaining higher education.

Yet, BIHE's commitment to high academic standards, international collaboration, the pursuit of excellence, knowledge, and truth, together with an innovative teaching and learning environment, grew to be internationally recognized. Many of its students have been accepted into graduate-level programs in other countries. The initiative demonstrates a response characterized not by defiance, but rather by thoughtful collective self-empowerment and peaceful determination. And it still operates today.

Working for the betterment of Iran

The Bahá'ís in Iran have always striven to contribute to the betterment of Iranian society. Within their limited means, they have exerted efforts for the social and economic development of their wider communities, along with their

fellow citizens. They have sought to contribute to the advancement of thought, including in the public discourse on human rights, exploring themes such as civil rights, the equality of women and men, as well as the removal of barriers facing minorities and other marginalized groups—all in a posture that avoids polarization.

Several constructive initiatives include:

- In May 2023, a woman commenced a five-year prison sentence after being convicted of charges including “propaganda against the regime,” “activities against the national security,” and “membership in the perverse Bahá'í sect.” Her crime was that she had provided educational assistance to Afghan children who were denied the right to study in Iran. This issue was cited among the accusations brought against her in the court and formed the basis of the verdict.
- Humanitarian assistance provided in August 2012 to those who felt the shocks after an earthquake in East Azerbaijan province. At least three Bahá'ís were arrested for their efforts to help their fellow Iranians. Other Bahá'ís were warned against providing such humanitarian assistance.

- Efforts by a group of Bahá'ís to provide kindergarten-level education for young children in the aftermath of an earthquake in 2003 that destroyed much of the education system in

the city of Bam. For this work, at least four Bahá'ís were arrested in 2011. The government claimed that Bahá'ís “took advantage” of the need for cultural, social, and educational measures following the earthquake to promote their own programs.

- Efforts by a group of young Bahá'ís in the early 2000s to provide literacy tutoring for disadvantaged youth in poor neighborhoods in Shiraz. For their work, however, 54 individuals were arrested and detained. Three leaders of the group were sentenced to four years of imprisonment.
- Efforts to greet the families of prisoners with tea and sweets as they emerge from Evin Prison, including families of prisoners who are not Bahá'í.

Many of these initiatives to contribute to Iranian society have met official resistance. Individuals have been arrested and their efforts portrayed as revolutionary acts of dissent. Yet the Bahá'ís continue to labor, confident that their actions will ultimately uplift the condition of their compatriots. The Bahá'ís of Iran, like their co-religionists around the world, respond in this manner because they are seeking to build a new and peaceful world, where both the means and ends are always aligned.

Constructive resilience



How can the international community support the Bahá'ís?

How can the international community support the Bahá'ís?

Where groups of individuals, indeed entire communities, are persecuted by their government on the basis of faith and have no national mechanisms for redress, it falls to the international

during his mandate on the persecution of the Bahá'í community.

In one of his last findings before the end of his mandate, in July 2024, Dr. Rehman said

“The whole world marveled at the manner of their sacrifice.... The mind is bewildered at their deeds, and the soul marveleth at their fortitude and bodily endurance....”

— Bahá'u'lláh

community, including the United Nations and its agencies, to develop more effective systems to ensure their protection. It will be the responsibility of civil society organizations to spotlight and hold the Iranian government accountable for these gross violations of human nobility, the work of media platforms to take on these stories that often remain invisible, and the role of national governments to exert international pressure on those failing to uphold their internationally-agreed obligations.

United Nations human rights mechanisms

Javid Rehman, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran between July 2018 and July 2024, issued numerous statements of concern

Left: Mr Ahmed Shaheed, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and on freedom of religion or belief (Credit: UN Photo)

that the Baha'ís had since the 1980s been “targeted with genocidal intent and persecution.”

And in his March 2024 interactive dialogue with the



Dr. Javid Rehman, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Credit: UN Photo)

UN Human Rights Council, Dr. Rehman included some of the strongest language used by UN mandate-holders or other international figures on the persecution in their official submissions.

“I am extremely distressed and shocked at the continuing, persistent persecution, arbitrary arrests, and harassment of members of

the Bahá'í community,” Dr. Rehman reported, adding that “tragically, the Bahá'í minority is facing extreme persecution, targeting, and repression.... I've warned the authorities to immediately stop these crimes ... for which they will be held accountable.”

Dr. Rehman also said Bahá'ís “continue to be the targets of discriminatory legislation and persistent persecution” because they are unrecognized by the Islamic Republic constitution. His written report documented in detail the widespread persecution against the Bahá'ís in Iran: “For over four decades, members of the Baha'í faith, as the largest non-Muslim and constitutionally non-recognized religious minority, have suffered from the most egregious forms of human rights violations, including executions, persecution,

deprivation of property rights, desecration and destruction of cemeteries, violence and arbitrary arrests, denial of educational rights, closures of businesses, hate propaganda and social injustices, and

How can the international community support the Bahá'ís?

inequalities in all fields of public and private life.”

A year earlier, in February 2023, Dr. Rehman reported that Bahá’ís “remained most severely persecuted” and were experiencing “a marked increase in arrests, targeting and victimization,” and that hundreds of Bahá’ís at that moment were awaiting court rulings or enforcement of sentences on cases covering “arbitrary arrests; imprisonment and ill-treatment; raids on homes and confiscation of personal belongings; temporary release in lieu of unjustly heavy bail guarantees pending the conclusion of their trials; expulsion from or denial of entry to universities; raids on, and sealing of, business premises or refusal to issue work permits; confiscation of properties owned by Bahá’ís; confiscation and destruction of Bahá’í cemeteries or continuous questioning of their ownership despite the presentation of legal deeds; prevention of the burial of deceased Bahá’ís; and many other instances that continue to entangle the Bahá’ís in the country’s unjust judicial system.”

In 2022, Ahmed Shaheed—in his final year as UN Special Rapporteur with this mandate—highlighted in his report, titled “Rights of persons belonging to religious or belief minorities in situations of conflict or insecurity,” the increasing insecurity faced by the Bahá’ís and stressed that: “State and non-State actors have exploited the identity of religious or belief minorities to further their political, economic, and military objectives.” The report

stated that Bahá’ís in Iran have been targeted “through hateful rhetoric that seeks to mobilize the public against them and ‘legitimize’ policies and practices that harm them.” The report said that targeting Bahá’ís in this way entrenched widespread “fear, suspicion, and discrimination



... leaving many members of the Bahá’í community feeling more fearful and exposed to violence.”

Dr. Shaheed’s report was also important in offering a number of concrete recommendations which included an appeal to UN member states to “recall their international human rights obligations towards religious minorities” including the Bahá’ís; the encouragement of relevant agencies within the UN system to “adopt a more cohesive and coordinated approach” in responding to the situation facing religious minorities; and a call for states and civil society to consider establishing new “platforms” to advocate for the

rights of the Bahá’ís. Heiner Bielefeldt, Dr. Shaheed’s predecessor, also spoke out in defense of the Bahá’ís during his mandate. Asma Jahangir, the late UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, was another leading UN champion of the rights of Iran’s Bahá’í community.

Simin Fahandej, Representative of the Bahá’í International Community to the United Nations in Geneva, and BIC Persian-language spokesperson

Iran’s treatment of Bahá’ís first gained prominence on the international stage in the early 1980s, as the killings, imprisonment, and torture of Bahá’ís became more widely publicized. The case of the Bahá’ís in Iran was first brought to the international community by the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities following the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. The first register of concern at the UN came in 1980, when the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities

How can the international community support the Bahá’ís?

expressed “profound concern” for the safety of Iranian Bahá’ís. In 1982, the first resolution on the situation of the Bahá’ís was adopted by the Human Rights Commission. Such expressions quickly moved up the UN system to the General Assembly, which has passed over 35 resolutions since 1985 expressing concern about human rights violations in Iran while specifically referencing the situation facing Iranian Bahá’ís—making it one of the UN’s most enduring human rights concerns. Beyond the significance of this resolution for Bahá’ís, it represented the first occasion where a minority group suffering human rights violations had been specifically delineated in a General Assembly resolution. Before it was replaced by the Human Rights Council, the

“State and non-State actors have exploited the identity of religious or belief minorities to further their political, economic, and military objectives.” and “through hateful rhetoric that seeks to mobilize the public against them and ‘legitimize’ policies and practices that harm them.”

— Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur, UN

Human Rights Commission likewise passed more than 20 resolutions that also explicitly mentioned the persecution of Bahá’ís.

Such references to a specific religious community were at first unusual, since the UN had traditionally confined itself to expressions of diplomatic concern and general references to charges of human rights violations and discrimination. It is significant that virtually all these resolutions have

called on Iran to abide by the various international covenants on human rights that the government itself had signed. UN resolutions have



also called explicitly for the “emancipation” of the Bahá’ís of Iran.

UN bodies have also, over the years, appointed several special investigators—known as “special rapporteurs”—to monitor and report on human rights concerns in Iran and

of Minorities, opened the door for the engagement of NGOs accredited at the UN on issues related to freedom of religious belief,

Delegates of the Bahá’í International Community to United Nations events (Credit: Bahá’í International Community)

and provided a foundation for the adoption of resolutions and mandates condemning various forms of discrimination. The appointment of the Human Rights Commission’s first Special Rapporteur on

elsewhere. The reports of these special rapporteurs have consistently refuted Iran’s denials and confirmed that the oppression of Bahá’ís is extensive, systematic, and based on religious persecution.

A 1960 report titled “Study of Discrimination in the Matter of Religious Rights and Practices” initiated by Arcot Krishnaswami, Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection

the Implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief in 1986 also contributed to raising awareness around specific country violations. The reports of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief have continued to be important instruments documenting the experiences of the Bahá’ís.

How can the international community support the Bahá’ís?

Selected statements by UN officials about Iran's treatment of Bahá'ís

How can the international community support the Bahá'ís?



“The Iranian Constitution recognizes Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians as protected religious minorities, who are free to perform their religious rites, ceremonies and provide religious education, in accordance with the tenets of their faith. The Constitution does not extend such recognition to other religious groups, such as Bahá'ís, leaving them vulnerable to discrimination and judicial harassment and persecution.”

— UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 3 March 2016, report to Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in Iran



“It's really one of the most obvious cases of state persecution,” spanning “all areas of state activity, from family law provisions to schooling, education, and security.”

— Heiner Bielefeldt, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, 6 March 2013

“The Iranian government has a policy of systematic persecution ... with the view of even destroying that religion worldwide.... It's a very clear, clearly articulated policy of extreme hostility [and] among the most extreme manifestations of religious intolerance and persecution in the world today.”

— Heiner Bielefeldt, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, 21 October 2011



“The Bahá'ís have been subjected to persecution and acts of violence. The authorities must protect them from further discrimination and stigmatization. Measures should be put in place to protect and maintain the cultural heritage of religious minorities, including burial grounds and other sites of religious significance.”

— Dr. Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, press release, 4 September 2014



“... members of the Bahá'í community have continued to suffer multiple violations of their human rights ... Despite the fact that they have been documented for years, these violations continue unabated and with full impunity, as shown by the release of the murderer of a Bahá'í.... thousands of Bahá'ís have been expelled from their jobs, with their pensions having been terminated, and have been banned from employment in the public sector.... Companies are pressured to dismiss Bahá'í employees, banks are forced to block the accounts of Bahá'í clients, and Bahá'í business licenses are either not issued, not extended, or deliberately delayed.”

— Asma Jahangir, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14 August 2017



“Verbal attacks by state officials against an already vulnerable community like the Bahá'ís are extremely troubling not only because they directly violate Iran's international legal obligation not to discriminate against its citizens, but because they could encourage discrimination and possibly acts of violence against this group by others.”

— Ahmed Shaheed, press release, 8 June 2016



“The Special Rapporteur expresses serious concern at the continuing systematic discrimination, harassment, and targeting that adherents of the Bahá'í faith continue to face in the country.... In addition to arbitrary arrests, detentions and prosecutions of Bahá'ís, the Special Rapporteur continues to receive troubling reports that Iranian authorities continue to pursue activities that economically deprive Bahá'ís of their right to work, reportedly in line with a 1991 directive issued by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution. These policies include restrictions on types of businesses and jobs Bahá'í citizens can have, closing down Bahá'í-owned businesses, pressure on business owners to dismiss Bahá'í employees, and seizures of businesses and property.”

— Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, report to the Human Rights Council, 10 March 2016

“The Bahá'í minority remained most severely persecuted, with a marked increase in arrests, targeting and victimization. The situation of more than a thousand Bahá'ís remained unresolved at various stages of the legal process. They were either waiting for a ruling on their cases or the enforcement thereof, including cases related to forms of harassment, such as arbitrary arrests; imprisonment and ill-treatment; raids on homes and confiscation of personal belongings; temporary release in lieu of unjustly heavy bail guarantees pending the conclusion of their trials; expulsion from or denial of entry to universities; raids on, and sealing of, business premises or refusal to issue work permits; confiscation of properties owned by Bahá'ís; confiscation and destruction of Bahá'í cemeteries or continuous questioning of their ownership despite the presentation of legal deeds; prevention of the burial of deceased Bahá'ís; and many other instances that continue to entangle the Bahá'ís in the country's unjust judicial system.”

— Javaid Rehman, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, February 2023

“Over the past 40 years, the Bahá'ís, considered to be the largest non-Muslim and unrecognized religious minority in the Islamic Republic of Iran ... have suffered from the most egregious forms of repression, persecution and victimization.”

— Javaid Rehman, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, July 2019

“The Special Rapporteur is concerned by the substantial violations of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities ... in particular the serious violations of rights consistently documented of members of the Bahá'í community within Iran.... Allegations of discriminatory policies and practices have been received with respect to the denial of the right to work and to earn a decent living; restriction of access to higher education; the closure of shops; and discrimination in policy owing to the fact that Bahá'ís do not constitute one of the three constitutionally recognized religious minorities in the country.”

— Javaid Rehman, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, October 2018

How can the international community support the Bahá'ís?

Expressions of concern for the Bahá'ís of Iran have come not only from the United Nations and its various human rights bodies but also from assorted governments, parliaments, and intergovernmental bodies—as well as from the international news media and non-governmental human rights organizations.

Other international entities and mechanisms

International and national agencies, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, have also risen to the defense of Iran's Bahá'ís. Amnesty International, the International Federation for Human Rights, and Human Rights Watch, among other international human rights organizations, have compiled extensive reports on, and called for action to stop, the persecution of Iranian Bahá'ís.

Human Rights Watch, in a groundbreaking report published in April 2024, is the latest international organization to give special attention to the persecution of Iranian Bahá'ís. The report, titled “The Boot on My Neck: Iranian Authorities’ Crime of Persecution Against Bahá'ís in Iran,” surveyed more than 45 years of rights violations against the Bahá'ís. The report said that the Iranian government’s systematic repression of the Bahá'í religious minority amounted to the “crime against humanity of persecution” under international criminal law.

Human Rights Watch also documented in meticulous detail the discriminatory laws, policies and practices used by the Iranian government to violate the fundamental human rights of Bahá'ís in the country.

The report also made several recommendations:

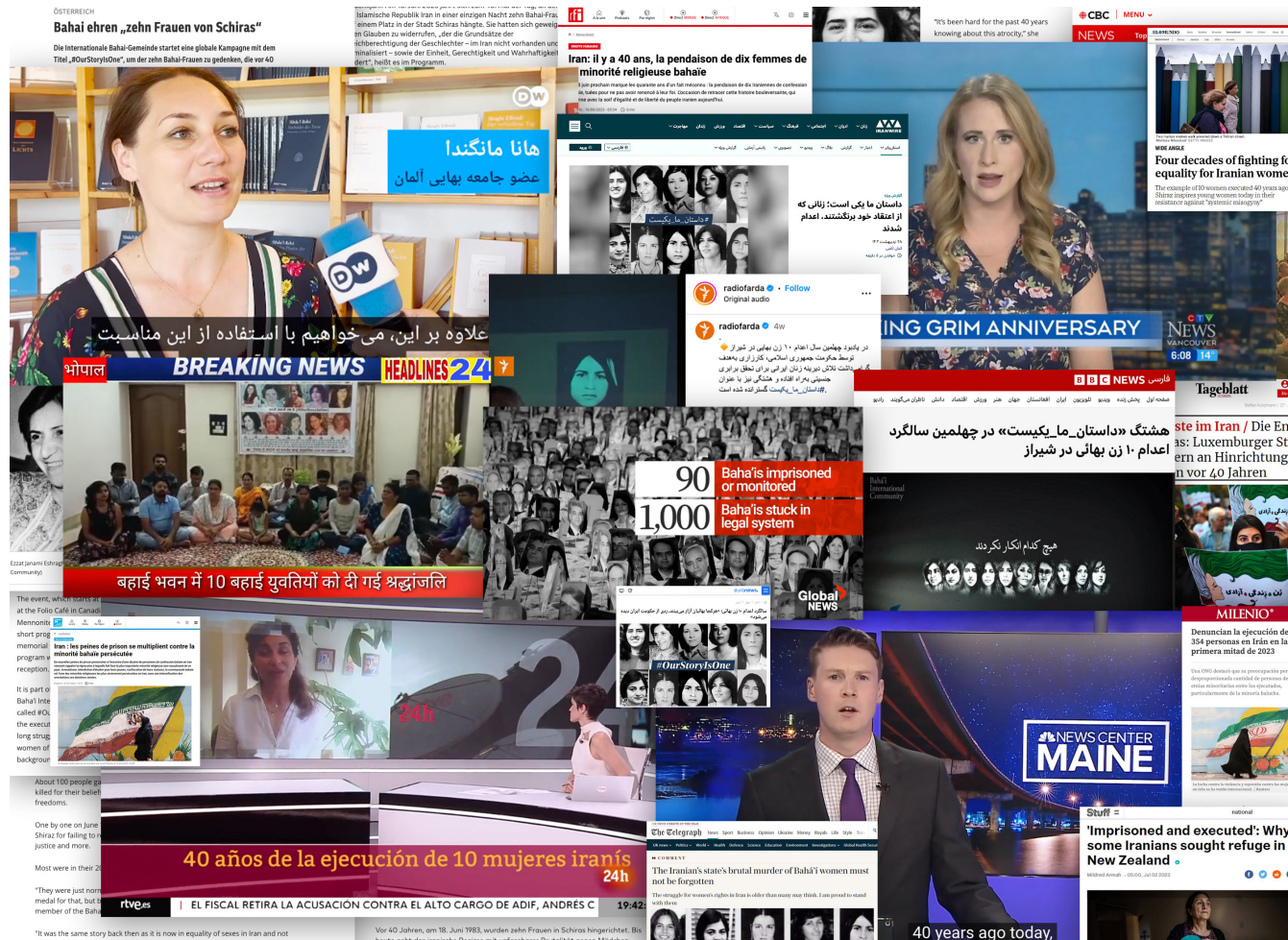
1. Immediately revoke all policies and repeal laws that legalize violations of the rights of Baha'is, including but not limited to:
 - a. Article 12 of the Iranian Constitution;
 - b. The 1991 confidential memorandum issued by the Iranian Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council;
 - c. Section 34 of Article 8 of the 1993 law on administrative offenses;
 - d. Repeal of articles 499 bis and 500 bis of the Penal Code that have criminalized freedom of thought and belief and are now used to convict Bahá'ís.
2. Immediately cease persecution of Bahá'ís on the basis of their faith and release all those who are detained or who have been convicted on charges of membership in the Bahá'í Faith.
3. Reform laws as well as the judicial and administrative processes to guarantee non-repetition of similar abuses and crimes.
4. Publish all material, including government orders and confidential agreements related to government policies toward Bahá'ís, and disclose the fate of hundreds of those members of the Bahá'í community who have been disappeared.
5. Immediately grant access to Bahá'ís to employment and education at all levels on an equal basis to other Iranian nationals.
6. Immediately restore old age and veterans’ pensions to eligible Bahá'ís.
7. Cease confiscation of properties owned by Bahá'ís on the basis of their faith and ensure fair and transparent judicial process for property disputes.
8. Cooperate with and heed the recommendations of UN bodies and human rights mechanisms.
9. Ratify the Rome Statute and incorporate crimes against humanity, including the crime of persecution, into national criminal law with a view to investigating and prosecuting individuals credibly implicated in these crimes.

How can the international community support the Bahá'ís?



Nasrin Sotoudeh, prominent Iran-based human rights lawyer (Credit: Getty Images / Kaveh Kazemi)

How can the international community support the Bahá'ís?



National statements and action

National statements and actions

In addition to efforts by the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies and agencies, numerous national legislatures and regional bodies have spoken out against Iran's treatment of the Bahá'í community. Expressions of concern for Iran's Bahá'ís have recently come from the European Council, the European Parliament, and from the legislatures of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, among others. Many heads of state and government have also voiced their dismay over Iran's treatment of the Bahá'ís.

Erika Kokay @erikakokay
 ...ssa semana, denunciemos as violações dos direitos humanos contra...
 ue professam a fé baha'í no Irã. Não toleramos a intolerância. A...
 perdade é um bem universal. #OurStoryIsOne

Ladan Boroumand @LadiKhanom
 #OurStoryIsOne we have learned that from our fellow Bahai...
 Their unspeakable ordeal in the Islamic republic of Iran has b...
 mirror in which we, ordinary Iranian citizens, look at ourselves...
 shortcomings. With magnanimity they tell us #OurStoryIsOn...
 why their story has become our story: for we stood as indiffe...
 bystanders when it all started.

Sirpa Pietikäinen @spietikainen
 #OurStoryIsOne

Sirpa PIETIKÄINEN
 Member of the European Parliament

Shabnam Hashmi @ShabnamHashmi
 #OurStoryIsOne
 @equalitynow @evemxhj @UN_Women @genderlogindia @GenderTorg
 @Genderintell @VDay @IranIntl_En @PressTV @Bhavnadsharma
 @leenadabiru @IndiaNfiw @annieNFIW
 40 Years ago 10 young women were hanged 2 death in Shiraz, Iran 4 not...
 renouncing their faith. See thread

sebastian usher @sebusher
 #Iran Twitter storm being launched today by Baha'is to mark 40th...
 anniversary of execution of 10 Baha'i women in Shiraz -hanged in or...
 night for their beliefs. The #OurStoryIsOne campaign dedicated in th...
 memory to all Iranian women, says @BahaibIC

Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (GfV) @GfbV
 Heute vor 40 Jahren wurden 10 Frauen nach...
 Iran, geführt. Nach monatelanger Folter +...
 das Wissen ihrer Familien hingerichtet. Die...
 Sie wurden ermordet, weil sie #Bahai waren

National statements and action



Media campaigns

Media campaigns

Media outlets worldwide have long reported on the persecution of Iran's Bahá'í community. Major articles and editorials that detail, confirm, and condemn the persecutions have appeared in *Le Monde*, the *Times of India*, the *Times of London*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. Other regional newspapers such as *Daily Vox* and the *Daily Maverick* in South Africa, *Folha de São Paulo* in Brazil, *Today's Zaman* in Ankara, Turkey, and the *Tribune* in Chandigarh, India, have also showcased the situation of the Bahá'ís. Major wire services, such as the Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, and Reuters have also carried numerous dispatches on the persecution, as have international radio and television networks such as Al Jazeera, the BBC, CNN, and the Voice of America.

Moreover, prominent Iranian satellite broadcasters and websites, as well as journalists and commentators, both inside and outside Iran, have recently written articles in defense of their Bahá'í countrymen. They include Faraj Sarkouhi, Ahmad Zeidabadi, Olof Palme prize winner Parvin Ardalan, and famous blogger Arash Sigarchi. "We are all Iranian Bahá'ís," wrote Ali Keshtgar, a prominent Iranian thinker, in August 2008. In 2013, Mohammad Nourizad, a former hardline conservative columnist turned dissident, publicly displayed his regret for past actions by kissing the feet of a young child whose parents were imprisoned because of their Bahá'í beliefs, and telling him, "My little boy, I apologize to you on behalf of all of those who, in these Islamic years, have made you

and your [Bahá'í] fellows face injustice."

In many respects, the Bahá'í case has been a model for how the international human rights machinery, combined with support from civil society advocates and accurate coverage from the news media, can be used to protect an oppressed minority. Thanks to international support for the Bahá'ís, along with growing support inside Iran and among Iranian expatriates, the wholesale annihilation of the Bahá'í community in Iran has so far been prevented. Significant as all these initiatives have been, there still is much work to be done by the international community if this religious minority and all who are oppressed within Iran are to be given their rights and the freedom to contribute to Iranian society.

Recent media campaigns organized by the Bahá'í International Community have included the ongoing **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign, a groundbreaking initiative that began in 2023, to commemorate the 1983 execution of the 10 Bahá'í women in Shiraz by linking their story to the wider struggle by all Iranian women for gender equality; the 2021–22 campaign **#ItsTheirLand**, which was launched to shine a light on the brutal confiscations and destruction of Bahá'í-owned properties in Iran; the 2021 **#StopHatePropaganda** campaign and the related **#IranWithoutHate** campaign, which drew a link between official hate speech directed against the Bahá'ís and both official and unofficial violence against the community; and

HUNDREDS OF DISTINGUISHED INDIVIDUALS HAVE ECHOED THE CALL OF "OUR STORY IS ONE", INVITING WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGN.

Nuzarath Jahan
Vice President of the Republican Party of India
"I support the Baha'is in its #OurStoryIsOne campaign honoring 10 executed women in Shiraz and Iranians of all faiths and backgrounds who all continue to struggle in their difficult path to gender equality and freedom"

Nanaia Mahuta
Foreign Minister of New Zealand
"Aotearoa New Zealand stands with the people of Iran, in particular those who are oppressed by the Islamic Republic. 18 June marks an important anniversary for the Bahá'ís, who remember the execution of ten of their women in Iran 40 years ago today."

Javaid Rehman
UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran
"Tonight I join all human rights defenders honouring the memory of 10 brave & honourable #Bahai women from Shiraz who paid with their life 40 years ago today for there sincerely held beliefs!"

Isabel Wiseler-Lima
Member of European Parliament
"We remember the execution 40 years ago of the 10 Baha'i woman in Shiraz. Today the fight for gender equality in Iran continues. We support the women's and men's strive for freedom and justice in Iran!"

Ghaleb Bencheikh
President of the Fondation de l'Islam de France
"Let us honor the courage and the invincible hope that after the night comes the dawn. This is what we are here for, what we work for and we will work tirelessly."

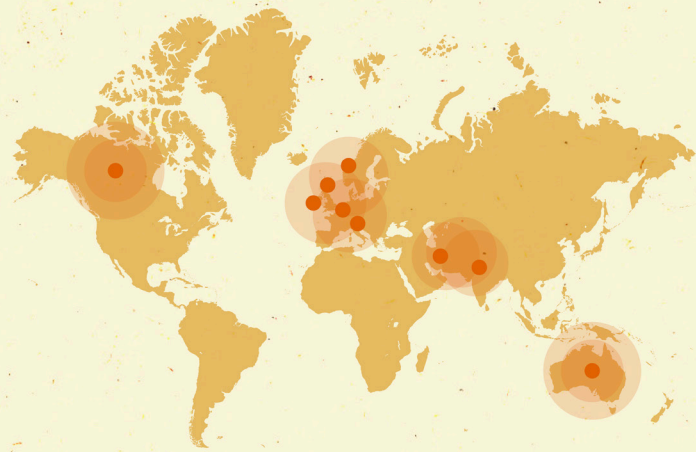
#OURSTORYISONE CAMPAIGN

HAS REACHED

250

 MILLION VIEWS

TRENDED IN 9 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES



campaigns started by allies of the Bahá'ís such as the 2014–2017 **#EducationIsNotACrime** campaign which drew attention to the denial of higher education afflicting Bahá'ís and their peaceful efforts to create their own institution of higher learning. Some years earlier, the **#FiveYearsTooMany** campaign was among the first such initiatives organized by Bahá'ís and others in an effort to free the seven jailed Bahá'í leaders.

The **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign continued from 2023 into 2024 and, as of mid-2024, had gone beyond a commemorative campaign for the 10 executed Bahá'í women and their commitment and sacrifice for gender equality and justice. In their contributions to the **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign,

The **#OurStoryIsOne** campaign reached 250 million views in more than 33 languages. A two-hour social media event on 18 June 2023 trended in Iran as well as eight other countries across four continents, in Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

a diverse array of Iranians discussed social change, the need to respect diversity



and pluralism, the lessons to be drawn from 45 years of persecution against the Bahá'ís

and other religious and ethnic minorities, and how Iran can move toward a better future.

In the course of the campaign, thousands of creative contributions were offered by the public to commemorate the 10 executed women and to call for gender equality and justice.

Public statements from major human rights figures such as Narges Mohammadi, Shirin Ebadi, Ladan Boroumand, and activists including Masih Alinejad and Arash Sedighi, as well as the outpouring of support from thousands of ordinary Iranians online, all confirm an ongoing shift in public understanding of the situation of the Bahá'í community.

A new solidarity is emerging among Iranians of all backgrounds. Fewer and fewer people accept that Bahá'ís, or members of any minority, are “others;” instead, more and more, the Iranian people see themselves as one.

Media campaigns

“

[the sacrifices of the 10] have inspired a new generation of women who refuse to be silenced and are willing to endure great hardships to live in a more prosperous and just Iran. The story of the resilience of Iranian women in the face of persecution is a shared one, transcending boundaries of faith and background.

Five women Nobel Prize Laureates



“

The ‘Our Story Is One’ campaign is resonating with the deepest aspirations of populations around the world to turn to unity rather than division and to see the interconnectedness of our stories.

Simin Fahandej

Bahá'í International Community Representative



A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF RENOWNED IRANIAN FIGURES AND DISTINGUISHED PERSONALITIES ADDED THEIR SUPPORT TO THE CAMPAIGN



#OurStoryIsOne: A campaign honoring the 10 Bahá'í women executed in Iran 40 years ago draws unprecedented global support from many segments of society reaching hundreds of millions worldwide.

Media campaigns



#EducationIsNotACrime: a worldwide campaign drawing attention to the constructive response of the Bahá'í community to the Iranian government's systematic denial of university education to young Bahá'ís.

The Education Is Not A Crime campaign used street art to call attention to the exclusion of Bahá'ís from higher education in Iran. Shown are murals in, New York City, São Paulo, and Salvador.



#STOPHATEPROPAGANDA

OVER
88 MILLION
REACHED

42,000+ POSTS



SPEAKING OUT AGAINST
40 YEARS
OF HATE SPEECH
AGAINST THE BAHÁ'IS IN IRAN

UNPRECEDENTED SUPPORT
FOR IRAN'S BAHÁ'ÍS



MILLION
REACHED
#STOPHATEPROPAGANDA

ABBAS MILANI WELCOMED THE FACT THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAS CONTRIBUTED TO
THE FALL OF THE "TERRIBLE WALL OF SILENCE"
REGARDING THE ONGOING INJUSTICE AND VIOLENCE SUFFERED BY THE BAHÁ'IS IN IRAN

**OMID DJALILI MAX AMIRI
IAZ JOBRANI GARY LINEKAR
YA JUPITER RAINN WILSON
PI KHORSANDI JUSTIN BALDWIN
LAWRENCE KERRY DIOTTE
STOP HATE PROPAGANDA
DAGLEY IRWIN COTLER CATHA
UMAR BEN CARDIN ERIKA KOKAY
A ERNST SINA VALLIOLLAH O
INEJAD KEVIN ANDREWS M
MILANI GATHAY WAGAY**



Colonel Dr. Divakaran Padma Kumar Pillay
Former Indian Army officer

"I urge the Iranian authorities and the people of Iran—who, like Indians, belong to an ancient civilization which understood the power of multiculturalism and acceptance—to stop hate speech and false propaganda against the Bahá'í community."

"The Bahá'ís are the largest religious minority in Iran and are not even recognized as such. Like no other religion, they are oppressed and harassed from cradle to grave by the Iranian regime in all areas of life."

Cornelia Ernst
Member of European Parliament



Erika Kokay
Brazilian Member of Parliament

"Crimes against humanity started with words, and we cannot let history repeat itself with the Bahá'ís, who in Iran are the targets of serious hate speech. Human rights are universal, and Iran must guarantee them!"

"I am very concerned about a recent rise of hate propaganda directed by government-run media platforms against the Bahá'í community of Iran. It's why I joined my colleagues in supporting [a resolution] that condemns the Iranian government's state-sponsored persecution of its Bahá'í minority."

Ben Cardin
United States Senator



Dr Sharon Nazarian
Anti-Defamation League's Senior Vice-President for International Affairs

"We are deeply disturbed by this massive reported spike in anti-Bahá'í propaganda by regime-backed media in Iran. Such horrendous hate speech is dangerous and must be called out and countered by the international community."

"I am alarmed by the rise of state-sponsored anti-Bahá'í propaganda in Iran. Hate propaganda demonizes and dehumanizes its targets. When tolerated or even authorized by government, it turns its victims into targets for discrimination, abuse and ultimately violence."

Mark Freiman
Former Deputy Attorney General of Ontario

“

We were moved to see this campaign reach breakthrough levels of support. The international community has long recognized that the Bahá'ís in Iran are an innocent community that is scapegoated and persecuted by the Iranian government for its own purposes. Today the world has stood up against this injustice.

Bani Dugal

Principal Representative
of the BIC to the United Nations



The #StopHatePropaganda campaign reaches 88 million in support of Iran's Bahá'ís. It calls on Iran's government to end more than 40 years of government-sponsored hate speech against the country's Bahá'ís and has drawn unprecedented support from a global coalition of government officials, leaders of thought, civil society organizations, activists, religious leaders, artists, prominent Iranians, and many others, reaching over 88 million people as it trended around the world.



What should happen next? A call to action

The international community should demand concrete actions from the Iranian government instead of empty promises. Examples of such actions can include rescinding the 1991 “The Bahá’í Question” memorandum and ending all efforts to incite Iranians against the Bahá’í community. Iran’s persistent persecution of the Bahá’ís necessitates sustained international scrutiny to restrain its discriminatory practices. Bahá’ís still face denial of educational and economic opportunities, property confiscations and destruction, imprisonment, false charges, and hate

speech. International pressure in the past has had some impact, prompting the regime to modify its tactics, but more is needed.

The international community should insist on deeds instead of mere words from the Iranian government.

History has shown that continued international attention is the best—and perhaps the only—method of restraining Iran’s clerical rulers from acting on their deeply held prejudices against Bahá’ís. Despite denials by government officials, all the evidence—from statistics about human

rights violations, to Iran’s own internal policy documents—shows that Iran has not given up its broad, centrally-led effort to “block the development” of the Iranian Bahá’í community and to eradicate it as a viable entity.

the world’s media helped to curb the wholesale killing of Bahá’ís, leading the regime to shift its tactics to social, economic, and educational repression. And today it is clear that the ongoing expression of concern may

that the 1991 “Bahá’í Question” memorandum has been rescinded and the country’s laws are being reformed. The government should also end all efforts to incite hatred against Bahá’ís. Another indicator

Iran’s persistent persecution of the Bahá’ís necessitates sustained international scrutiny to restrain its discriminatory practices. Bahá’ís still face denial of educational and economic opportunities, property confiscations and destruction, imprisonment, false charges, and hate speech. International pressure in the past has had some impact, prompting the regime to modify its tactics, but more is needed.

Hundreds of Bahá’ís are either in prison, released on bail, or awaiting trial on fabricated charges such as “propaganda against the regime.”

Incitements to hatred have also accelerated with tens of thousands of pieces of anti-Bahá’í propaganda saturating Iranian media for the past 10 years. All this has taken shape, even as the Iranian government knows that Bahá’ís refrain from partisan political activity, eschew all violence, and behave with obedience and respect toward the government.

But the record of the last 44 years has also shown that Iranian authorities care about international opinion, albeit less now than in the past, and that a requirement that they meet their obligations under international human rights law can have an effect. In the 1980s, for example, there is little doubt that international pressure by the United Nations, governments, and

help to stay their hand from even worse forms of persecution.

The case for continued international pressure is clear. The Islamic Republic’s systematic persecution of Bahá’ís spans three generations, now affecting the grandchildren of those who were imprisoned or killed in the 1980s.

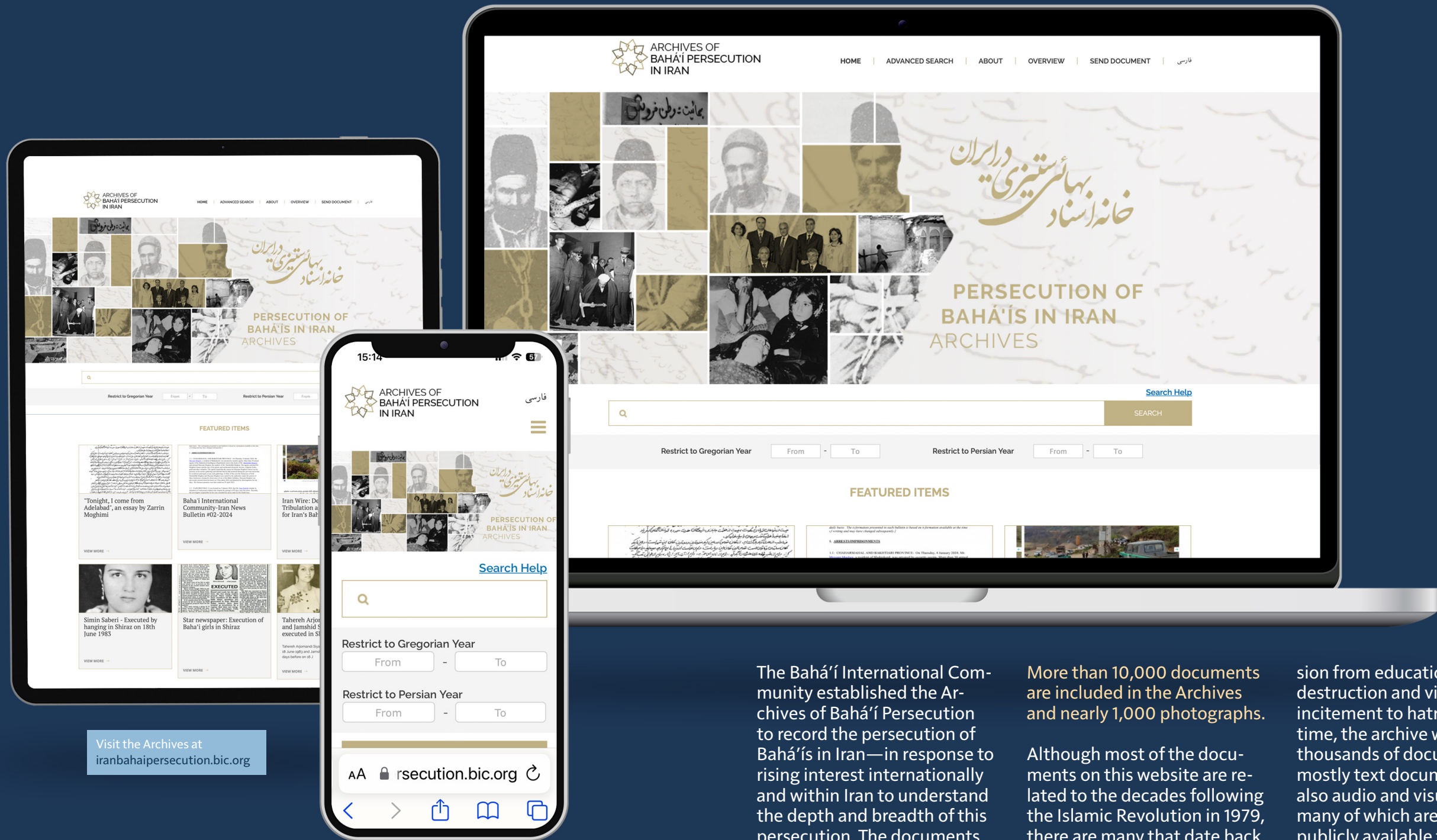
But can the international community prevent its impact on another generation? And as for the Islamic Republic, if its leaders want a new chapter in its international relations, there is no better indicator of their sincerity than to bring a swift end to the decades-long persecution of its Bahá’í minority, a community that poses no threat to that government.

Concrete signs of such a move could involve the Iranian authorities’ confirming to the international community

that could be observable to the international community would be for Iranian diplomats to realistically address the discrimination against Bahá’í Iranians, rather than denying that it occurs, or refusing to discuss the topic.

The most visible indicator of a genuine change would be the immediate release of all those Bahá’ís incarcerated in their prison system because of their beliefs, the acquittal of all those with pending prison sentences, and the cancellation of pending charges against hundreds of other innocent victims of oppression.

The Bahá’ís in Iran desire no special privileges and have no political aspirations: they only wish to be free to worship as they choose and to contribute to the betterment of society in their native land.



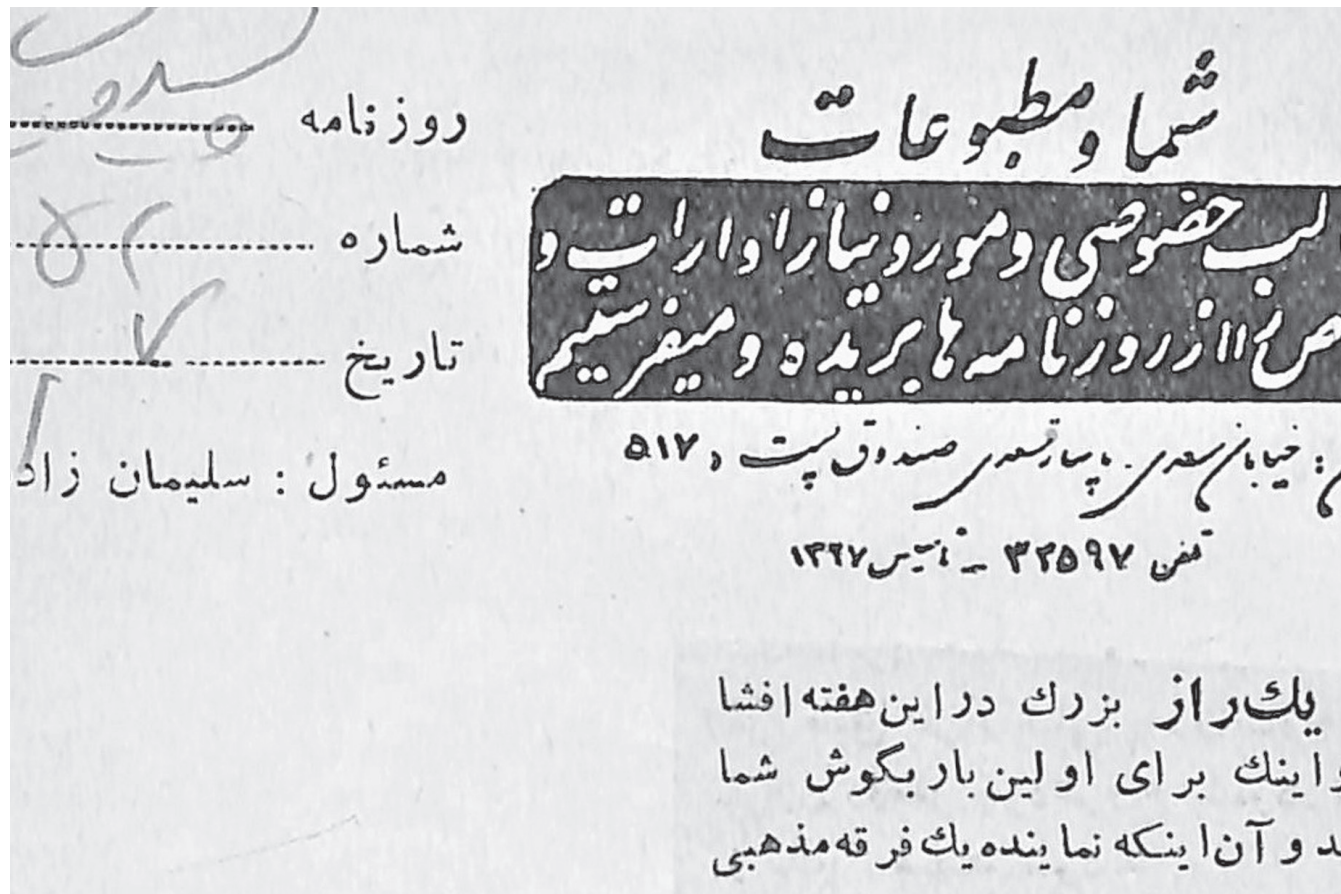
Visit the Archives at iranbahai persecution.bic.org

The Bahá'í International Community established the Archives of Bahá'í Persecution in Iran—in response to rising interest internationally and within Iran to understand the depth and breadth of this persecution. The documents shed light on the decades-long, systematic, and ongoing persecution of the Bahá'ís, instigated by the clergy and by the government.

More than 10,000 documents are included in the Archives and nearly 1,000 photographs.

Although most of the documents on this website are related to the decades following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there are many that date back a long time prior to the Revolution. They cover a wide range of persecutions, including systematic discrimination, arrest and imprisonment, execution, economic oppression, exclu-

sion from education, acts of destruction and violence, and incitement to hatred. Over time, the archive will contain thousands of documents, mostly text documents, but also audio and visual records, many of which are being made publicly available for the first time. Each document is available as a digital scan of the original and in a text-searchable format. All materials will, in time, be available in both Persian and English.



Annexes

Documents from Iran

The following documents, in the original Persian with a subsequent English translation, show conclusively that the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran is official government policy. Many of these documents were once secret but were later obtained and released by the United Nations or human rights organizations. Included are:

- The 1991 "Bahá'í Question" memorandum. Obtained and released in 1993 by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Islamic Republic of Iran, this confidential memorandum is endorsed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It outlines the Islamic Republic's plan to block the progress and development of Iranian Bahá'ís.
- A 29 October 2005 letter from Iranian military headquarters to police forces around the country calling for the identification and monitoring of Bahá'ís.
- A 2006 letter from Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology instructing 81 Iranian universities to expel any student who is discovered to be a Bahá'í.
- A 9 April 2007 letter to police commanders around Tehran that calls for tight restrictions on Bahá'í businesses.
- A 15 March 2009 letter from the Public Places Supervision Office of Kerman Province to Rafsanjan police commanders instructing them to restrict real estate purchases by Bahá'ís.
- A 30 August 2009 notice to a Bahá'í business in Semnan, cancelling the owner's business permit.
- A 23 June 2011 court ruling in Laljin acquitting a Muslim of the crime of usury because the plaintiff was a Bahá'í.
- A 7 August 2011 letter to the Iran Insurance Company from the Prosecutor's Office of Arak, saying that signing contracts with a Bahá'í is legally prohibited.
- A 23 May 2011 letter from the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security stating the transfer of pension contributions is not permitted because the former employee is a Bahá'í.
- A 5 August 2007 letter from the national oil company to a Bahá'í saying that, "owing to your membership in the Bahaist sect," his pension cannot be renewed.
- An 18 February 2010 letter from the Public Places Supervision Office to the head of the Association for Union Affairs, requesting information about Bahá'ís in Karaj.
- A 15 June 2009 letter from the Federation of Suppliers or Automobile Spare Parts to the director of Union Affairs in Karaj, asking that the activities of Bahá'ís be prevented.
- A list of fatwas and decrees issued by religious authorities concerning Bahá'ís and commerce.
- A 21 September 2020 directive instructing local authorities in the city of Sari, in the northern province of Mazandaran, to "conduct strict controls" on the Bahá'ís in the city by "monitoring their operations", and introduce measures to "identify Bahá'í students" to "bring them into Islam."
- A 2023 form prepared by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, asking Iranian Bahá'í university applicants to sign forms denying key aspects of Bahá'í beliefs, and declaring personal information, as a requirement to be admitted to university.

شماره
تاریخ
جمهوری اسلامی ایران
توزیر امور خارجه

شماره
تاریخ
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۱- در دانشکدهها چه در دوره و چه در تدریس ...
۲- فعالیت سیاسی (جاسوسی) آنها با وضع قوانین و مقررات ...
۳- فعالیتها و اعتقادها و تبلیغات آنها با فعالیتها و تبلیغات فرهنگی پاسخ داد
۴- مؤسسات تبلیغاتی (مانند سازمان تبلیغات اسلامی) ...
۵- فعالیتهای اعتقادی و تبلیغاتی آنها که تاسیس نمایند
۶- جهت مقابله و از بین بردن ریشه های فرهنگی آنان در خارج از کشور پیشنهاد و پیشنهاد
تجربه شوند

ج: جایگاه حقوقی و اجتماعی

۱- در اختیار گذاردن وسایل مناسب در خدمت معارف که در اختیار همه آزاد ملت قرار داده
می شود
۲- ایجاد نهادهای فرهنگی و معنوی و حقوق معنوی مانند سازمان شهروندان ایران از قبیل
دفترچه صبح، گذرنامه، جواز تردد، اجازه کار و امانت اینها تا جایی که تشویق کننده
بهاجیت نشوند
۳- در صورت بروز بهائیت بودن اجازه استخدام ندارند
۴- پیشنهادی مقرر (مانند مصلی و...) به آنان داده نشود

بالا روی دولتمقامات التماس
د. کرمی
د. کرمی
د. کرمی

برکتی
معاونت امور خارجه
د. کرمی
د. کرمی

شماره
تاریخ
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بالا روی دولتمقامات التماس
د. کرمی
د. کرمی
د. کرمی

برکتی
معاونت امور خارجه
د. کرمی
د. کرمی

Persian original of the 1991 "Bahá'í Question" memorandum outlining the Islamic Republic's plan to block the progress and development of Iranian Bahá'ís.

Cont'd — Persian original of the 1991 "Bahá'í Question" memorandum outlining the Islamic Republic's plan to block the progress and development of Iranian Bahá'ís.

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets]

[Personal information has been redacted.]

[Emblem]

In the Name of God

Islamic Republic of Iran

The Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council

Number: [illegible]/1327

Date: 6 Esfand 1369 [25 February 1991]

Enclosure: ----

[Stamp] CONFIDENTIAL

Hojjatol-Islam Mr. Mohammad Golpayegani

Head of the Office of the Esteemed Leader [Khamenei]

Greetings!

After greetings, with reference to the letter number 1-783S dated 10 Dey 1369 [31 December 1990], concerning the instructions of the Esteemed Leader which had been conveyed to the Respected President regarding the Baha'i question, we inform you that, since the respected President and the Head of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council had referred this question to this Council for consideration and study, it was placed on the Council's agenda of session number 128 on 16 Bahman 1369 [5 February 1991] and session number 119 of 2 Bahman 1369 [22 January 1991]. In addition to the above, and further to the [results of the] discussions held in this regard in session number 112 of 2 Mordad 1366 [24 July 1987] presided over by the Esteemed Leader (head and member of the Supreme Council), the recent views and directives given by the Esteemed Leader regarding the Baha'i question were conveyed to the Supreme Council. In consideration of the contents of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the religious and civil laws and general policies of the country, these matters were carefully studied and decisions pronounced.

In arriving at the decisions and proposing reasonable ways to counter the above question, due consideration was given to the wishes of the Esteemed Leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran [Khamenei], namely, that "in this regard a specific policy should be devised in such a way that everyone will understand what should or should not be done." Consequently, the following proposals and recommendations resulted from these discussions.

The respected President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the Head of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, while approving these recommendations, instructed us to convey

English translation of the 1991 "Bahá'í Question" memorandum outlining the Islamic Republic's plan to block the progress and development of Iranian Bahá'ís.

them to the Esteemed Leader [Khamenei] so that appropriate action may be taken according to his guidance.

Summary of the results of the discussions and recommendation

A. General status of the Baha'is within the country's system

1. They will not be expelled from the country without reason.
2. They will not be arrested, imprisoned, or penalized without reason.
3. The government's dealings with them must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked.

B. Educational and cultural status

1. They can be enrolled in schools provided they have not identified themselves as Baha'is.
2. Preferably, they should be enrolled in schools which have a strong and imposing religious ideology.
3. They must be expelled from universities, either in the admission process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Baha'is.
4. Their political (espionage) activities must be dealt with according to appropriate government laws and policies, and their religious and propaganda activities should be answered by giving them religious and cultural responses, as well as propaganda.
5. Propaganda institutions (such as the Islamic Propaganda Organization) must establish an independent section to counter the propaganda and religious activities of the Baha'is.
6. A plan must be devised to confront and destroy their cultural roots outside the country.

C. Legal and social status

1. Permit them a modest livelihood as is available to the general population.
2. To the extent that it does not encourage them to be Baha'is, it is permissible to provide them the means for ordinary living in accordance with the general rights given to every Iranian citizen, such as ration booklets, passports, burial certificates, work permits, etc.
3. Deny them employment if they identify themselves as Baha'is.
4. Deny them any position of influence, such as in the educational sector, etc.

Wishing you divine confirmations

Secretary of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council

Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Golpayegani

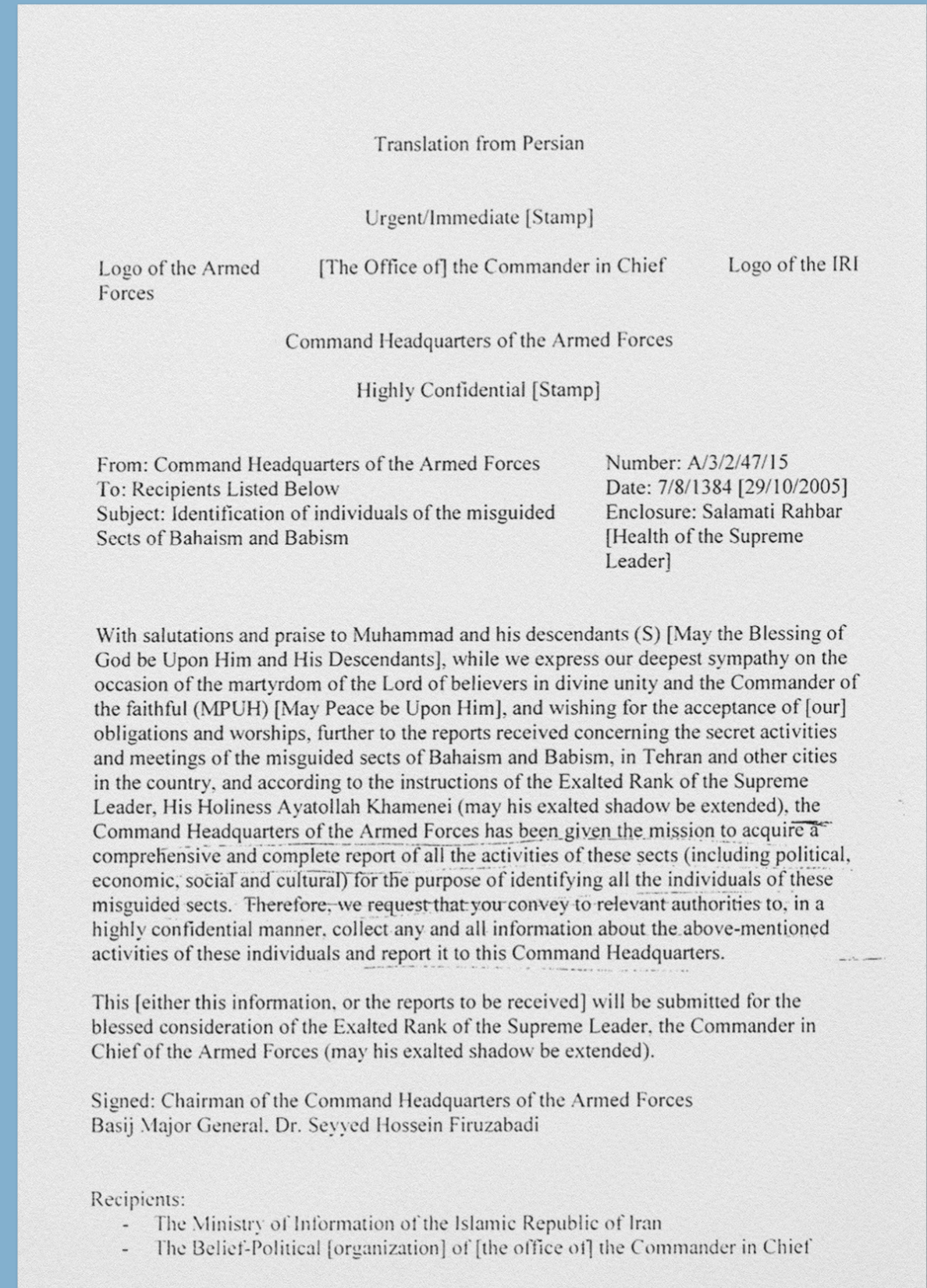
[Signature]

خانه اسناد بهائی ستیزی در ایران
ARCHIVES OF BAHÁ'Í PERSECUTION IN IRAN
[Handwritten note at the bottom of the page]
In the Name of God!
The decision of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council seems sufficient.
I thank you gentlemen for your attention and efforts.
[Signature]
Seyyed Ali Khamenei

Cont'd — English translation of the 1991 "Bahá'í Question" memorandum outlining the Islamic Republic's plan to block the progress and development of Iranian Bahá'ís.



Persian original of a 29 October 2005 letter from Iranian military headquarters to police forces around the country calling for the identification and monitoring of Bahá'ís.



English translation of a 29 October 2005 letter from Iranian military headquarters to police forces around the country calling for the identification and monitoring of Bahá'ís.

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets []
Date: [?]/[?]/1385 [2006] Number: [Illegible]
[Emblem] In the Name of God

Islamic Republic of Iran
[Illegible]: M/2/3/9378
Ministry of Science, Research and Technology

[Unidentified emblem]
Confidential
The esteemed management of the Security Office, [The 81 universities addressed in this letter are listed below.]

Subject: Banning of the education of Bahá'ís in universities

Greetings, Respectfully, we inform you that in accordance with decree number 1327/M/S, dated 6/12/69 [25 February 1991], issued by the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council and the notification of the responsible authorities of the Intelligence [Office], if Bahá'í individuals, at the time of enrolment at uni-versity or in the course of their studies, are identified as Bahá'ís, they must be expelled from university. Therefore, it is necessary to take measures to prevent the further studies of the aforementioned [individu-als] and forward a follow-up report to this Office.

Asghar Zári'i [Asghar Zarei]
Director General of the Central Security Office
[Signature]

[The list of 81 universities]

1. University of Arak [Arak]
2. Urúmíyyih [Urmia] University
3. University of Isfahán [Isfahan]
4. Ílám [Ilam] University
5. Al-Zahrá [Alzahra] University
6. Bú-'Alí Siná [Bu Ali Sina] University
7. University of Birjand [Birjand]
8. Imam Khomeini International University
9. Payám-i-Núr [Payame Noor] University
10. University of Tabriz [Tabriz]
11. Tarbiat Modares [Lecturer Training] University
12. Tarbiat Moallem [Teacher Training] University of Tíhrán [Tehran]
13. Ádharbáyján [Azerbaijan] Tarbiyat-i-Mu'allim [Teacher Training] University
14. Sabzivár [Sabzevar] Teacher Training University
15. University of Tíhrán [Tehran]
16. Persian Gulf University
17. Rázi [Razi] University
18. Zábúl [Zabol] University
19. Zanján [Zanjan] University
20. Símnán University [Semnan]
21. University of Sístán and Balúchistán [Sistan and Baluchestan]
22. Shahr-i-Kurd [Shahrekord] University
23. Sháhíid [Shahid] University
24. Sháhíid Bá-Hunar [Shahid Bahonar] University of Kirmán [Kerman]
25. Sháhíid Bihishtí [Shahid Beheshti] University
26. Sháhíid Chamrán [Shahid Chamran] University of Ahváz [Ahvaz]
27. Shíráz [Shiraz] University
28. Isfahán [Isfahan] University of Technology
29. Amír-kabír [Amirkabir] University of Technolo-gy
30. Sháhíid [Shahrud] University of Technology
31. Khájjih Nasirú-Din-i-Túsi [Khajeh Nasir ad-Din Toosi] University of Technology
32. Sahand [Sahand] University of Technology of Tabriz [Tabriz]
33. Sharif [Sharif] University of Technology
34. 'Allámíy-i-Tabátabá'í [Allameh Tabatabaei] University
35. Iran University of Science and Technology
36. Gurgán [Gorgan] University of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
37. Firdawsí [Ferdowsi] University of Mashhad [Mashhad]
38. University of Káshán [Kashan]
39. University of Kurdistán [Kurdistan]
40. University of Gílán [Guilan]
41. Luristán [Lorestan] University
42. University of Muhaqqiq Ardabíllí [Mohaghegh Ardebili]
43. University of Mázindarán [Mazandaran]
44. Sháhíid Rajá'í [Shahid Rajaei] Teacher Training University
45. Valíyy-i-Asr [Vali-e-Asr] University of Rafsan-ján [Rafsanjan]
46. Humuzgán [Hormozgan] University
47. University of Art
48. University of Applied Science and Technology
49. University of Yazd
50. Dámghán [Damghan] University of Basic Sciences
51. Yásújj [Yasuj] University
52. Isfahán [Isfahan] University of Art
53. Khurramshahr [Khorramshahr] University of Nautical Sciences and Technology
54. University of Qum [Qom]
55. University of Malá'yir [Malayer]
56. Shumál [Shomal] University
57. University of Science and Culture
58. Irshád [Irshad] University of Damávand [Dam-avand]
59. Khátám [Khatam] University
60. University of Tafísh [Tafresh]
61. University of Bujnúrd [Bojnurd]
62. Gulpaygán [Golpaygan] School of Engineering
63. School of Economic Affairs
64. Non-profit Khayyám [Khayyam] Institute
65. Non-governmental and non-profit Sajjád [Sad-jad] Institute, Mashhad [Mashhad]
66. Non-governmental and non-profit Sháhíid Ashrafí Isfahání [Shahid Ashrafi Isfahani] Institute
67. Non-governmental and non-profit 'Alla-míy-i-Muhadath-i-Núrí [Allameh Mohadas Noori] Institute
68. Non-governmental and non-profit Institute of Tabaristán [Tabarestan]
69. Non-profit Institute for Development and Rural Advancement of Hamidán [Hamedan]
70. Nautical and Marine Science Centre of Higher Education of Cháhbahár [Chahbahar]
71. Institute of Higher Education of Marághih [Maragheh]
72. University of Islamic Sects
73. Jund-i-Shapúr [Jundishapur] Institute of High-er Education of Dízfúl [Dezfúl]
74. Shíráz [Shiraz] University of Technology
75. Sajjád [Sadjad] Institute of Higher Education, Mashhad [Mashhad]
76. Mufíd [Mofid] University of Qum [Qom]
77. Varámin [Varamin] University of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
78. Institute of Higher Education for Occupation
79. Najafábád [Najafabad] Institute of Higher Education
80. Iran Institute of Higher Education for Technol-ogy Research
81. Imam Khomeini Research Center

جمهوری اسلامی ایران
وزارت علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری

مجلس عالی

شماره: ۹۳۷۵
تاریخ: ۱۳۸۵/۱۲/۲۵

محرمانه

مدیریت محترم حراست:

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۶- دانشگاه بوعلی سینا ۷- دانشگاه تبریز ۸- دانشگاه تهران ۹- دانشگاه تبریز ۱۰- دانشگاه تبریز
۱۱- دانشگاه تبریز ۱۲- دانشگاه تبریز ۱۳- دانشگاه تبریز ۱۴- دانشگاه تبریز ۱۵- دانشگاه تبریز ۱۶- دانشگاه خوارزمی ۱۷- دانشگاه
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۵۰- دانشگاه علوم پایه دماغان ۵۱- دانشگاه یاسوج ۵۲- دانشگاه هنر اصفهان ۵۳- دانشگاه علوم و فنون
مربی خرمشهر ۵۴- دانشگاه قم ۵۵- دانشگاه ملایر ۵۶- دانشگاه شاهرود ۵۷- دانشگاه علم و فرهنگ
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۷۴- دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود ۷۵- مؤسسه آموزش عالی سجاد مشهد ۷۶- دانشگاه مازندران ۷۷- دانشگاه
علوم کشاورزی و منابع طبیعی رامین ۷۸- مؤسسه آموزش عالی کار ۷۹- مؤسسه آموزش عالی
نحفا آباد ۸۰- مؤسسه آموزش عالی پژوهش صنایع ایران ۸۱- پژوهشگاه امام خمینی

موضوع: ممنوعیت تحصیل افراد بهائیان در دانشگاهها

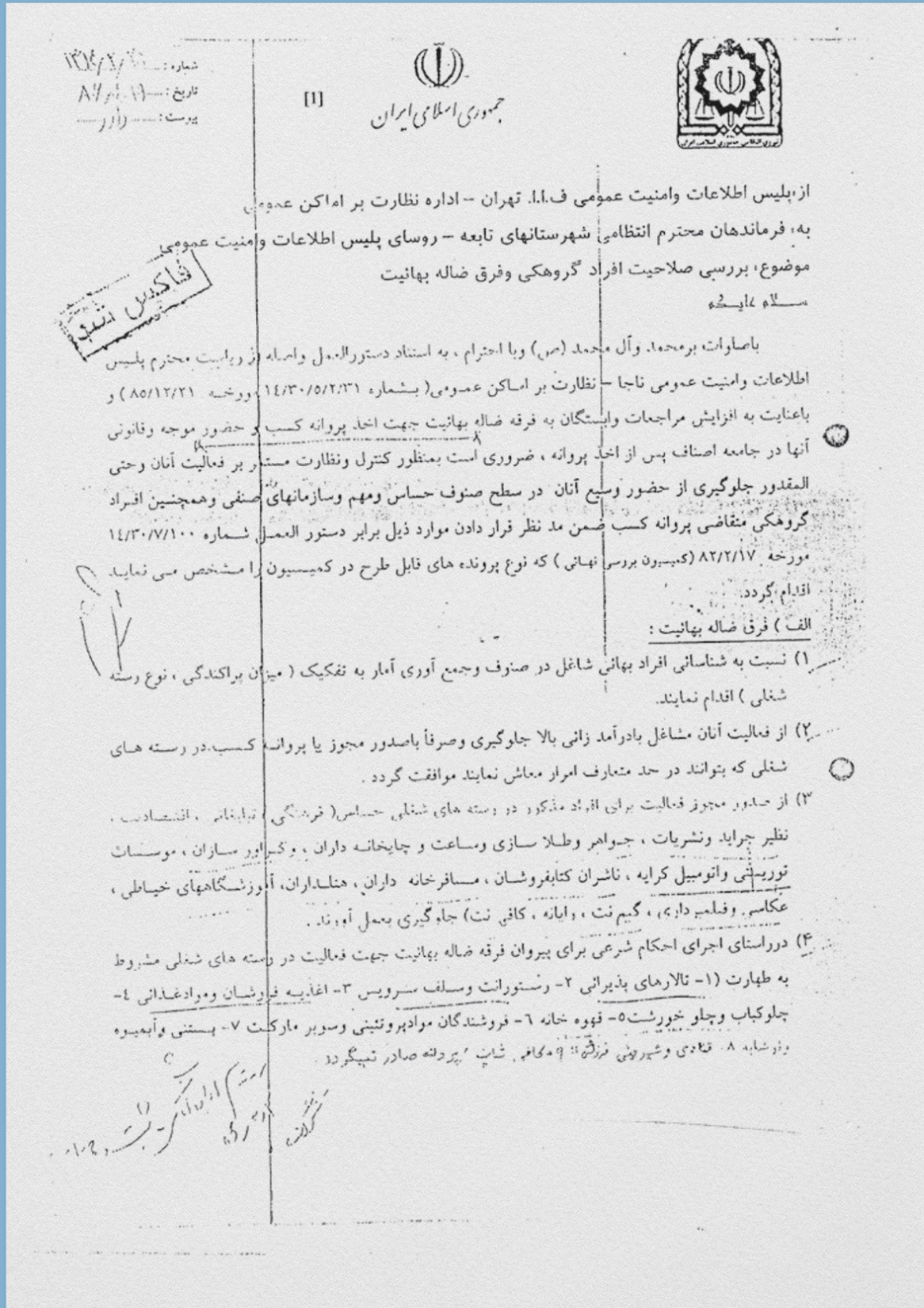
باسلام

احتراماً، به آگاهی میرساند، براساس مصوبه شماره ۱۲۲۷/اس مورخ ۶۹/۱۲/۲۵ شورای عالی
انقلاب فرهنگی و اعلام مراجع ذیصلاح امنیتی، ناخواص بهائیان چنانچه در حین ورود به دانشگاه و
پس از تحصیل مشخص گردد که بهائیان هستند، می بایست از دانشگاه اخراج گردند.
لذا ضروری است نسبت به جلوگیری از ادامه تحصیل یا ششگان سرسواد، اقدام لازم بعمل آید و
نتیجه را به این مرکز منعکس فرمائید

اسفند زارعی
مدیرکل حفاظت مرکزی
۱۳۸۵

Persian text of the 2006 letter from Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology instructing Iranian universities to expel any student who is discovered to be a Bahá'í.

English translation of the 2006 letter from Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology instructing Iranian universities to expel any student who is discovered to be a Bahá'í.



Persian original of a 9 April 2007 letter to police commanders around Tehran that calls for tight restrictions on Bahá'í businesses.

[TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN] Date: 19/1/1386 [9 April 2007]

From: The Public Intelligence and Security Force, Tehran — Public Places Supervision Office
To: Esteemed Commanders of County Police Forces — Heads of the Public Intelligence and Security Force;

Subject: Review of the eligibility of individuals belonging to small groups and the perverse Bahaist sect

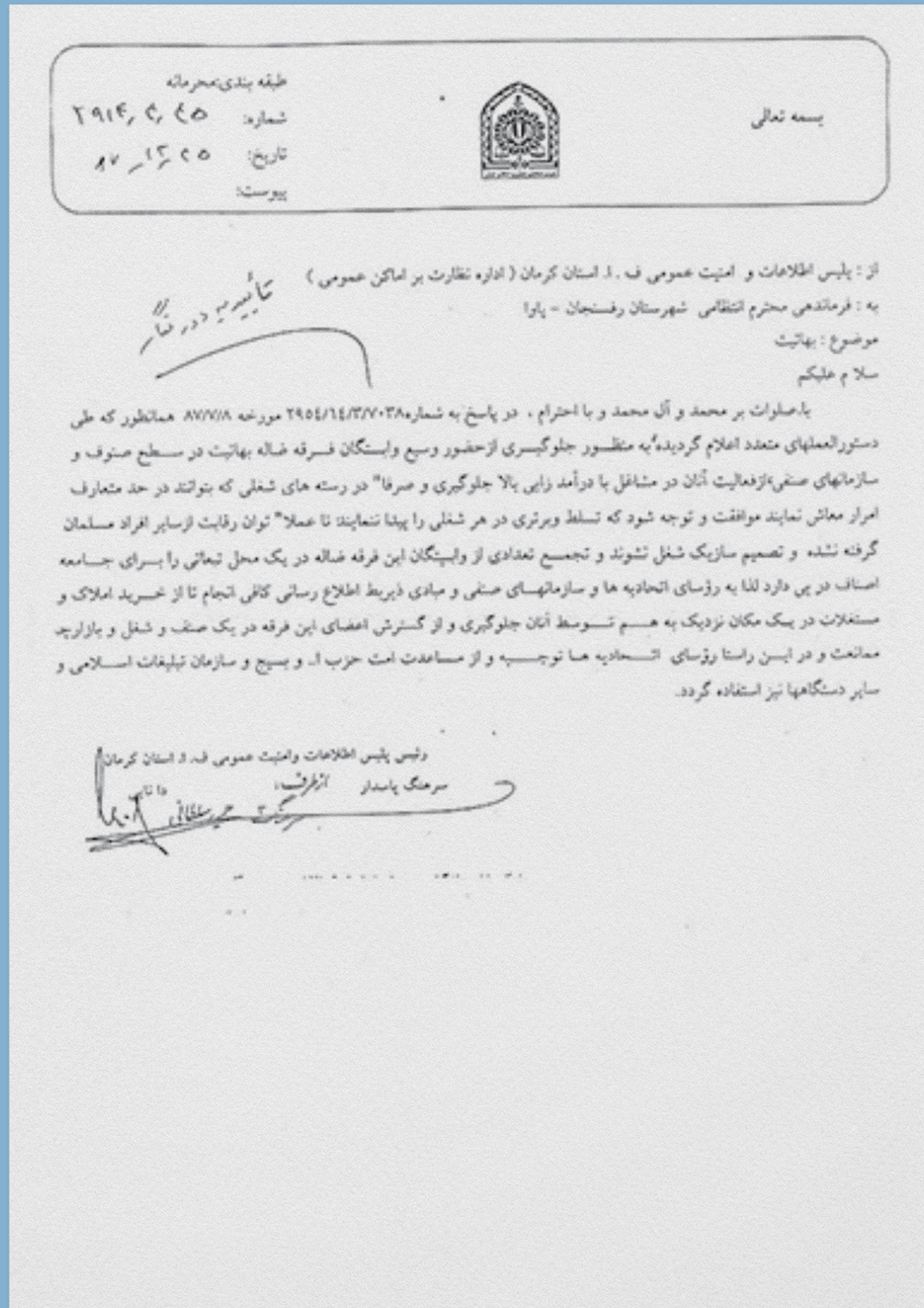
Greetings,

May peace be upon Muhammad and His family! With respect, and based on the instructions received from the Head of the Public Intelligence and Security Force (NÁJÁ) — Public Places Supervision Office (number 31/2/5/30/14, dated 21/12/85 [12 March 2007]) and with due attention to the increase in the number of requests from the perverse Bahaist sect to obtain work permits and their rightful and legal presence in the crafts industry once they have acquired their work permit; it is necessary, for the benefit of the ongoing monitoring and supervision of their activities and in order to halt — as much as possible — their extensive presence throughout sensitive and important craft organizations and also individuals from small groups requesting work permits, for measures to be taken with due consideration for the below points based on instruction number 100/7/30/14, dated 17/2/82 [8 May 2003] (Final Review Commission), which determines the cases to go before the Commission.

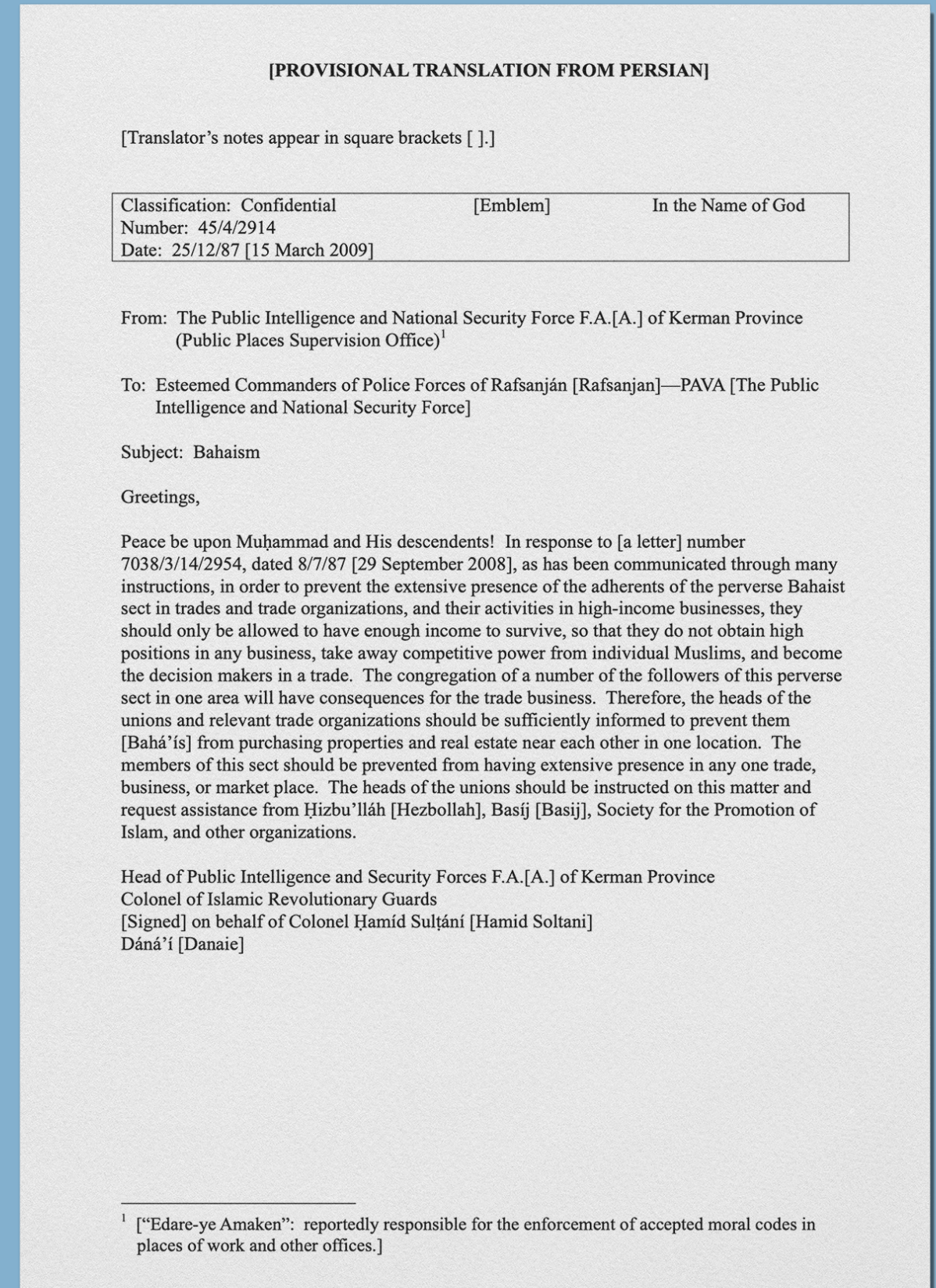
a. Perverse Bahaist Sect

1. Take measures to identify Bahá'í individuals working in craft businesses and collect statistics broken down by (their distribution and type of occupation).
2. Their activities in high-earning businesses should be halted, and only those work permits that would provide them with an ordinary livelihood should be allowed.
3. Issuing of [work] permits for the activities of the mentioned individuals in sensitive business categories (culture, propaganda, commerce, the press, jewellery and watchmaking, coffee shops, engraving, the tourist industry, car rentals, publishing, hostel and hotel management, tailoring training institutes, photography and film, [illegible] Internet, computer sales and Internet cafés), should be prevented.
4. In accordance with the religious canons, work permits will not be issued to the followers of the perverse Bahaist sect in business categories related to Tahárat [cleanliness] (1. catering at reception halls, 2. buffets and restaurants, 3. grocery shops, 4. kebab shops, 5. cafés, 6. protein [poultry] shops and supermarkets, 7. ice cream parlors, fruit juice and soft drinks shops, 8. pastry shops, 9. coffee shops)

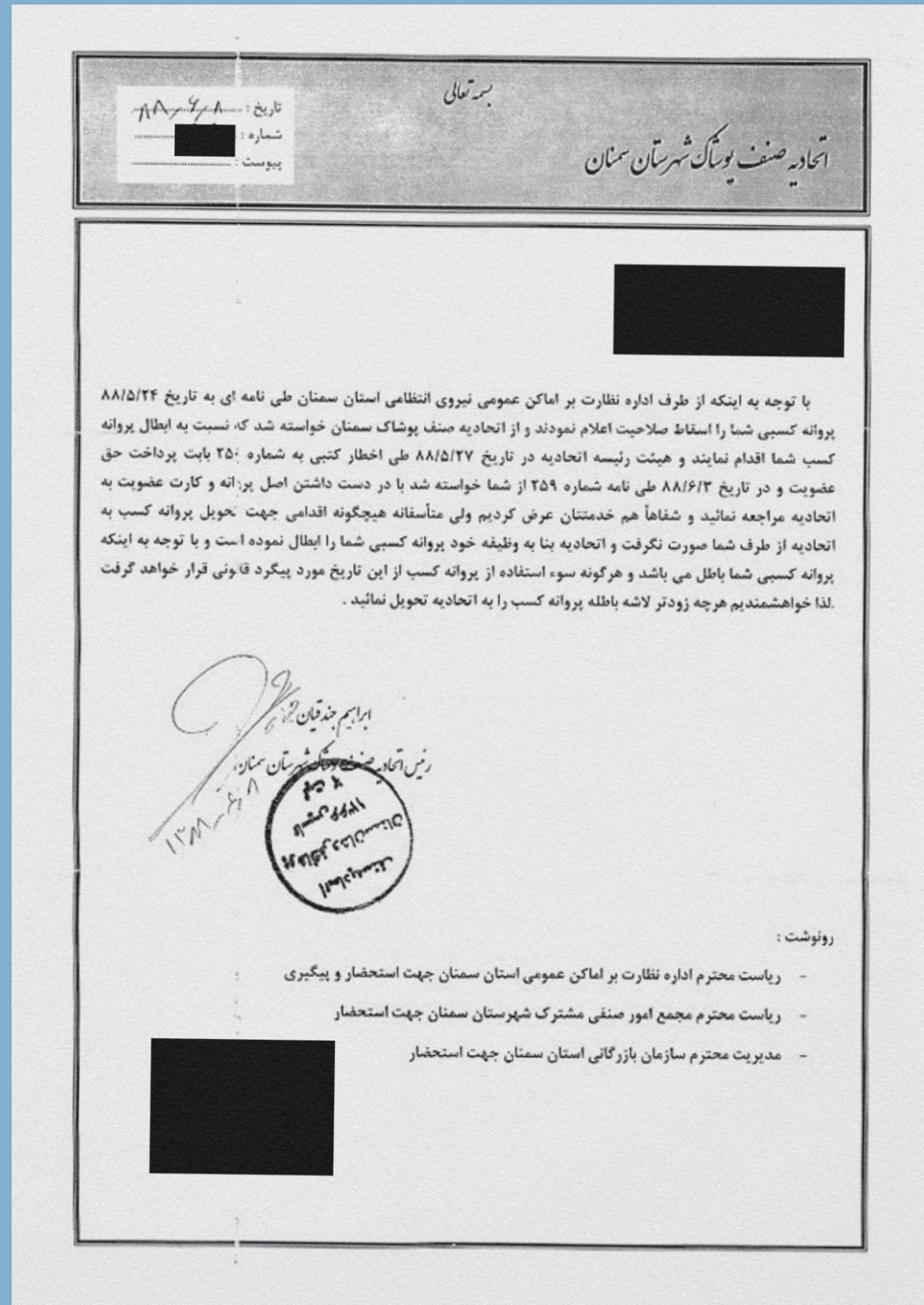
English translation of a 9 April 2007 letter to police commanders around Tehran that calls for tight restrictions on Bahá'í businesses.



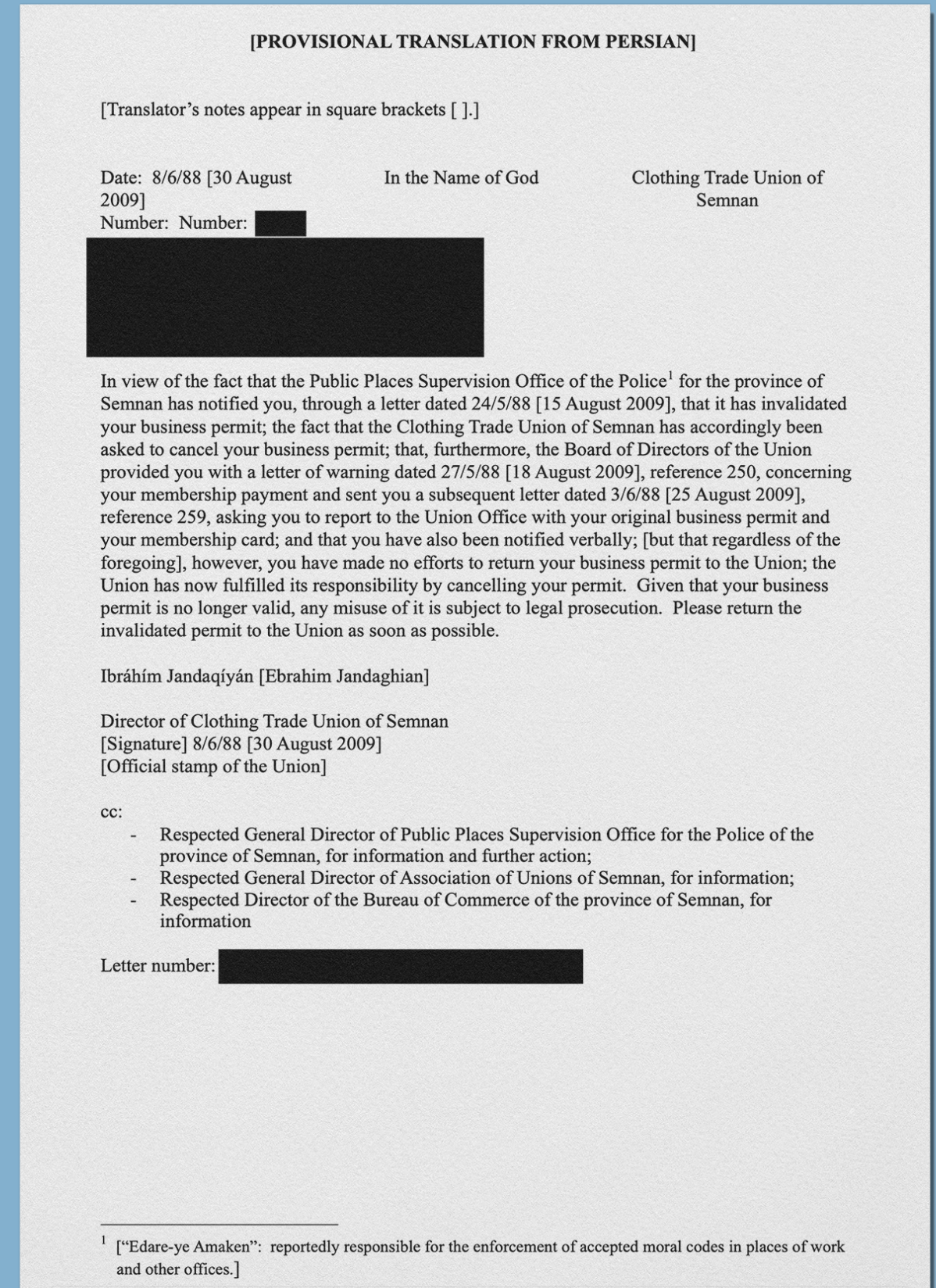
Persian original of 15 March 2009 letter from the Public Places Supervision Office of Kerman Province to Rafsanjan police commanders instructing them to restrict real estate purchases by Bahá'ís.



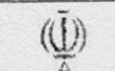
English translation of a 15 March 2009 letter from the Public Places Supervision Office of Kerman Province to Rafsanjan police commanders instructing them to restrict real estate purchases by Bahá'ís.



Persian original of a 30 August 2009 notice to a Bahá'í business in Semnan, cancelling their business permit.



English translation of a 30 August 2009 notice to a Bahá'í business in Semnan, cancelling their business permit.


 دادگستری جمهوری اسلامی ایران
 شعبه ۱۰۱ دادگاه عمومی (جزایی) بخش لالجین

شماره دادنامه: [REDACTED]
 شماره پرونده: [REDACTED]
 شماره بایگانی شعبه: [REDACTED]
 تاریخ تنظیم: [REDACTED]
 پیوست:

دادنامه
 «فَلَا تُبِعُوا آلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تُبِغُوا»

پرونده کلاسه: [REDACTED] شعبه ۱۰۱ دادگاه عمومی (جزایی) بخش لالجین دادنامه شماره [REDACTED]
 شاکی: [REDACTED] با وکالت خانم شهلا زنگبوندی و آقای رضا نادری مقدم همگی به نشانی کرمانشاه، نرسیده به ۳ راه شریعتی، نبش کوچه ۲۲۴، ساختمان ۳ طبقه نقره، طبقه ۳
 متهم: آقای [REDACTED] به نشانی حسین آباد، جنب کارخانه قند
 اتهام: کلاهبرداری

دادگاه با توجه به محتویات اوراق پرونده ختم رسیدگی را اعلام و به شرح ذیل مبادرت به صدور رای می نماید.

رای دادگاه

در خصوص اتهام [REDACTED] دادر بر رباخواری موضوع شکایت [REDACTED] با وکالت رضا نادری مقدم بدین شرح که شاکی با شکایت مطروحه مدعی شده است که در سال ۷۹ از حدود سه میلیون تومان وجه ربوی از وی دریافت کرده ماهیانه درصدی سود آن را محاسبه و در مواردی که سود آن را پرداخت نکرده است مبلغ سود به اصل پول اضافه و نهایتاً هفده میلیون تومان به وی پرداخت کرده است که پس از آخرین محاسبه به وی اعلام داشته است که هفتاد و شش میلیون تومان دیگر با بد به وی پرداخت کند که به منظور اثبات ادعای خود یک حلقه CD که حاکی از مذاکرات وی در رابطه با مطالبه پرداختی است و یک لیست دست نوشته متهم را ارائه که پس از تحقیقات و احضار متهم بمنظور رسیدگی به پرونده متهم ابتدا منکر اخذ ربا گردید که پس از صدور قرار کارشناسی و استکتاب از دست نوشته وی نهایتاً کارشناس منتخب اعلام نموده است که اسناد و مدارک ارائه شده و متن چکهای صادره دلالت بر صحت ادعای شاکی دارد که در آخرین جلسه و مواجهه حضوری فی ما بین پس از آنکه نظریه کارشناسی متهم ضمن اقرار ضمنی به اخذ ربا اظهار میدارد که چون شاکی جزء بهائیت است لذا بزه ای مرتکب نشده است که در پاسخ به ادعای مطروحه از سوی متهم و تحقیق از شاکی با ارائه تصویر دادنامه شماره [REDACTED] صادره از شعبه ۱۲ محاکم عمومی همدان اظهار میدارد که جزء فرقه ضاله بهائیت است که پس از اظهارات شاکی با عنایت به سکوت قانون در رابطه با جواز اخذ ربا از شاکی با شرایط اعلام شده مستنداً به اصل یکصد و شصت و هفتم قانون اساسی جمهوری اسلامی ایران و ماده ۲۱۲ قانون آئین دادرسی کیفری که آمده است قاضی مکلف است حکم هر قضیه را در قوانین مدون بیابد و اگر قانونی در خصوص مورد نباشد با استناد به منابع فقهی معتبر و یا فتاوی معتبر حکم تفسیر را صادر نماید. مراتب طی نامه شماره ۸۹۱۳۱۶ - ۹۰/۲۸۱ از دفتر استفتائات حضرت آیت اله خامنه ای استعلام و در پاسخ طی شماره ۱۴۸۶۵۱ مرقوم داشته اند که ربا گرفتن از اعضاء فرقه مصله فی نفسه اشکال ندارد بنابراین مستنداً به مواد فوق و استفتاء به عمل آمده و با استناد به اصل ۳۷ قانون اساسی جمهوری اسلامی ایران رای بر برائت متهم صادر و اعلام میگردد رای صادره حضوری است ظرف بیست روز پس از ابلاغ قابل اعتراض و تجدیدنظر خواهی در محاکم تجدیدنظر استان همدان است.

مرادی - رئیس شعبه اول دادگاه بخش لالجین
 - رونوشت برابر با اصل اناریست. مدیر دفتر دادگاه عمومی (جزایی) لالجین

نشانی: لالجین

Persian original of a 23 June 2011 court ruling in Laljin acquitting a Muslim of the crime of usury because the plaintiff was a Bahá'í.

[TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

Court Order No.: [REDACTED]
 File No.: [REDACTED]
 Branch Archival Ref.: [REDACTED]
 Date of Issuance: 2/4/1390 [23 June 2011]
 Enclosure:

**Do not follow (your) low desires,
lest you deviate**

**Branch 101 of the Public (Penal)
Court of Láljín Division**

[Emblem]
 Islamic Republic of Iran
 Judiciary
Court Order

Case Ref. [REDACTED], Branch 101 of the Public (Penal) Court of Láljín Division
 Court Order No. [REDACTED]
Plaintiff: Mr. [REDACTED], represented by Mrs. Shahlá Zangbúndí [Shahla Zangboundi] and Mr. Riḏá Nádírí Muqaddam [Reza Naderi Moghadam].
 [Address]
Accused: Mr. [REDACTED] [address]
Charge: Fraud [Usury]

Having reviewed and considered the evidence and the case documents, the court hereby concludes the hearing and renders a decision as follows:

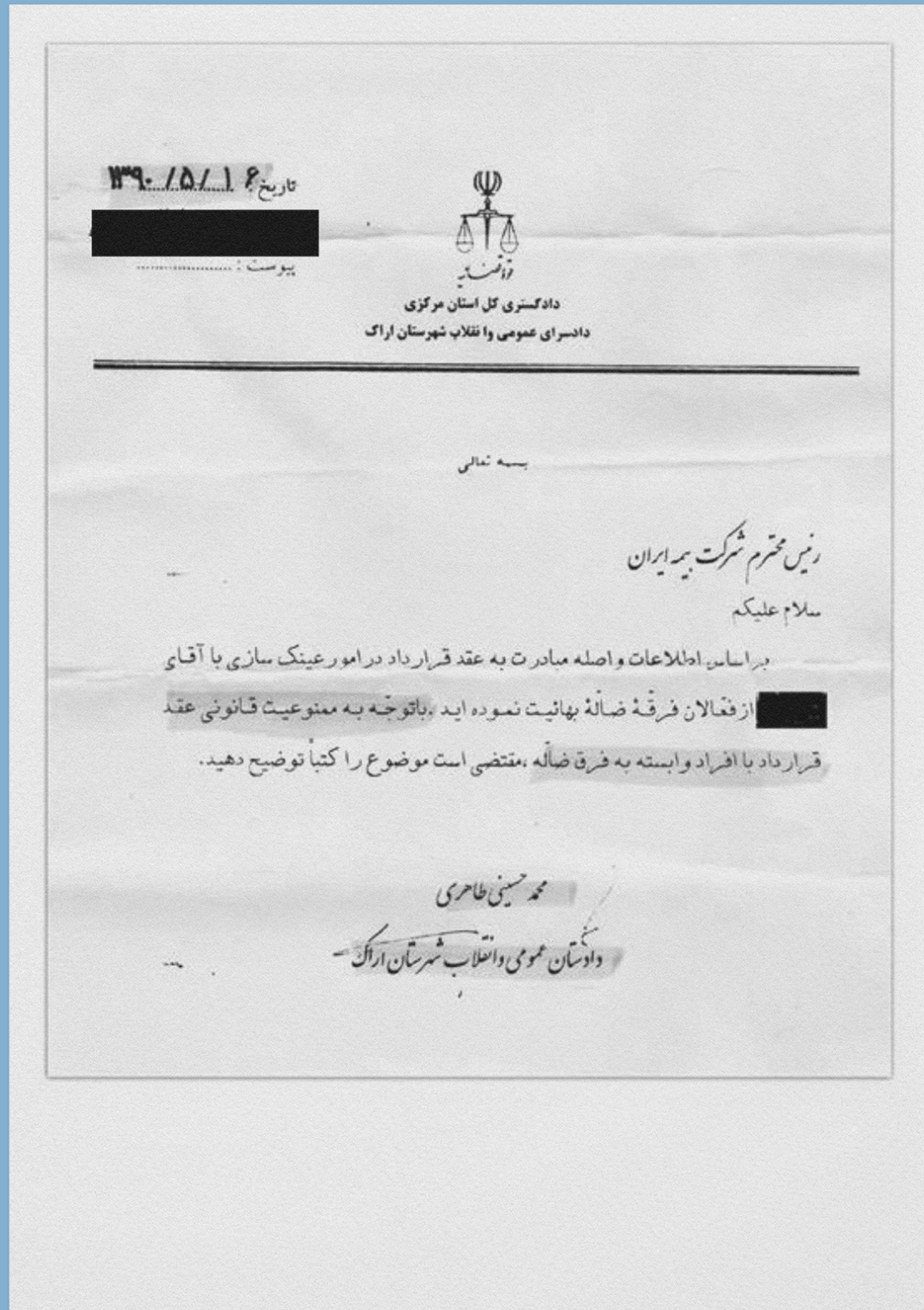
Decision of the Court

The defendant, [REDACTED], is alleged to have committed usury against the plaintiff, [REDACTED] represented by Counsel Riḏá Nádírí Muqaddam. The plaintiff claims that in [13]79 [2000/01], he borrowed a sum of 3,000,000 tuman with interest from [the defendant]. [The plaintiff] claims that he calculated the monthly interest, and on occasions when the interest was not paid, it was added to the principal. Ultimately, the sum of 17 million tuman was paid to the defendant, and subsequent to final calculation, [the defendant] informed him [the plaintiff], that a remaining 76 million [tuman] was still owed to him [the defendant]. To prove his claim, [the plaintiff] has produced a compact disc containing a conversation between him and the defendant concerning sums that have been paid. [The plaintiff] further produced a handwritten list by the defendant. Subsequent to the inquiries and summoning of the defendant for the purpose of further investigation, the defendant first denied the [act of] usury; however, after the investigation order was issued and copies were made of his [the defendant's] handwritten notes, the detective assigned to the case determined that the documents and evidence provided in this case, including cheques that were written, supported the claim of the plaintiff. Furthermore, in the last hearing, after cross-examining the facts between the parties subsequent to reviewing the findings of the detective, the defendant made an indirect admission to usury, but added that since the plaintiff is a Bahá'í, he [the defendant] has not committed any crime. In response to such claim [that the plaintiff is a Bahá'í] by the defendant, an inquiry was made of the plaintiff, and with reference to a copy of court order number [REDACTED] issued by Branch 12 of the Public Courts in Hamadán, the plaintiff admitted that he was a member of the perverse sect of Baháism. Subsequent to the admissions of the plaintiff, considering the absence of codified law with respect to license to exercise usury under the given circumstances, pursuant to Article 167 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Article 214 of the Hearing Procedures Act in criminal matters, which states that the judge is bound to endeavour to adjudicate each case on the basis of codified law, and in case of the absence of such law, he has to deliver his judgment on the basis of authoritative Islamic sources and authentic *fatwas*, reference was made to letter number 891316-1/2/90 [21 April 2011] from the office of His Holiness Ayatollah Khamenei, who had said in letter reference 148651 that usury against members of the perverse sect is inconsequential. Therefore, pursuant to the above referenced articles and the religious advice, as well as Article 37 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the court hereby issues an order of acquittal for the defendant. This court order was issued in the presence [of the parties] and can be appealed within 20 days of its issuance at the courts of appeal in the Province of Hamadán.

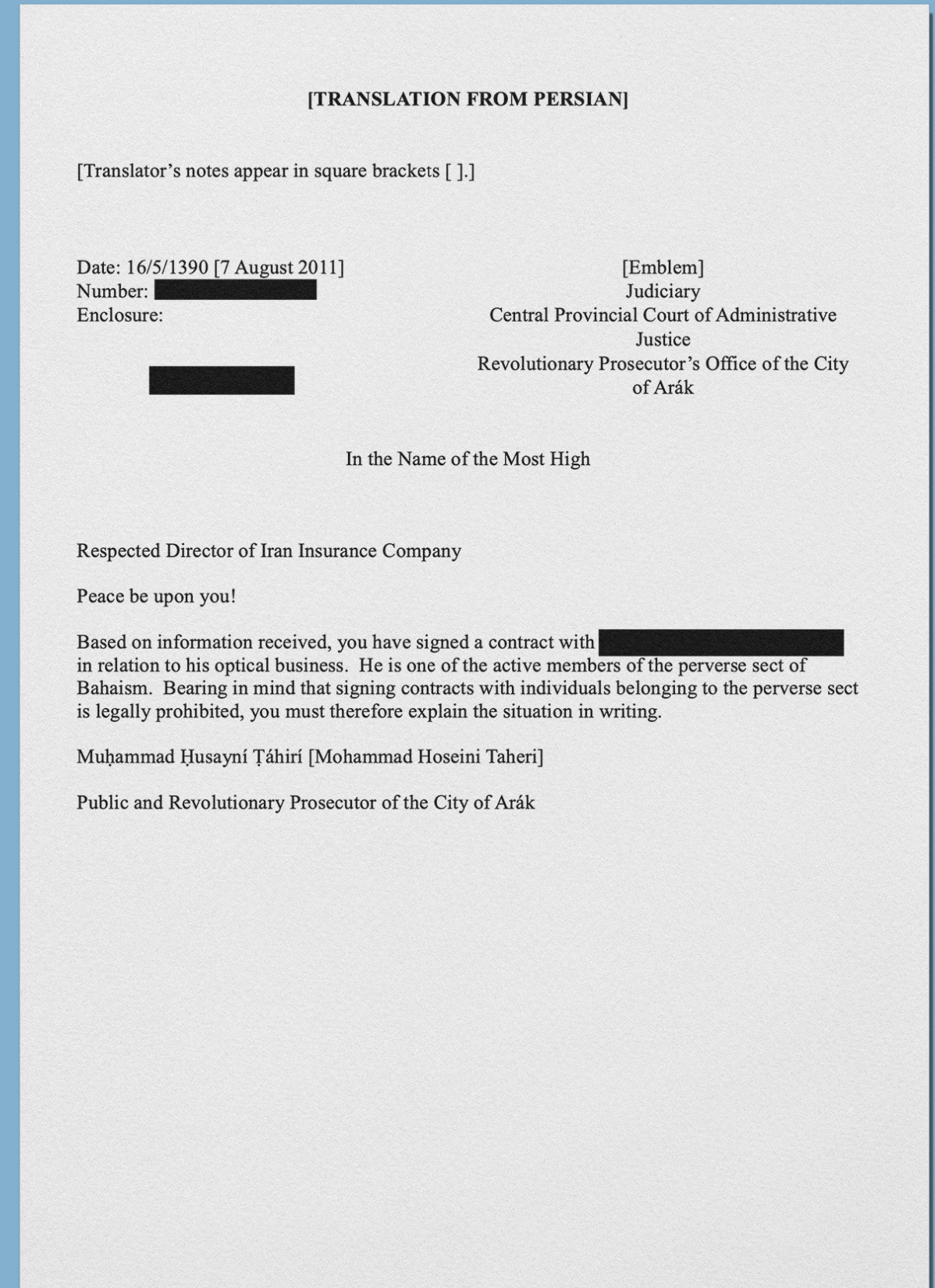
Muradí [Moradi]—Head of Branch 1 of the Court of Láljín Division [previously indicated as Branch 101]

Certified Copy—Secretariat of Public Courts of Láljín [Laljin] 28/4/90 [19 July 2011]
 [Stamp]

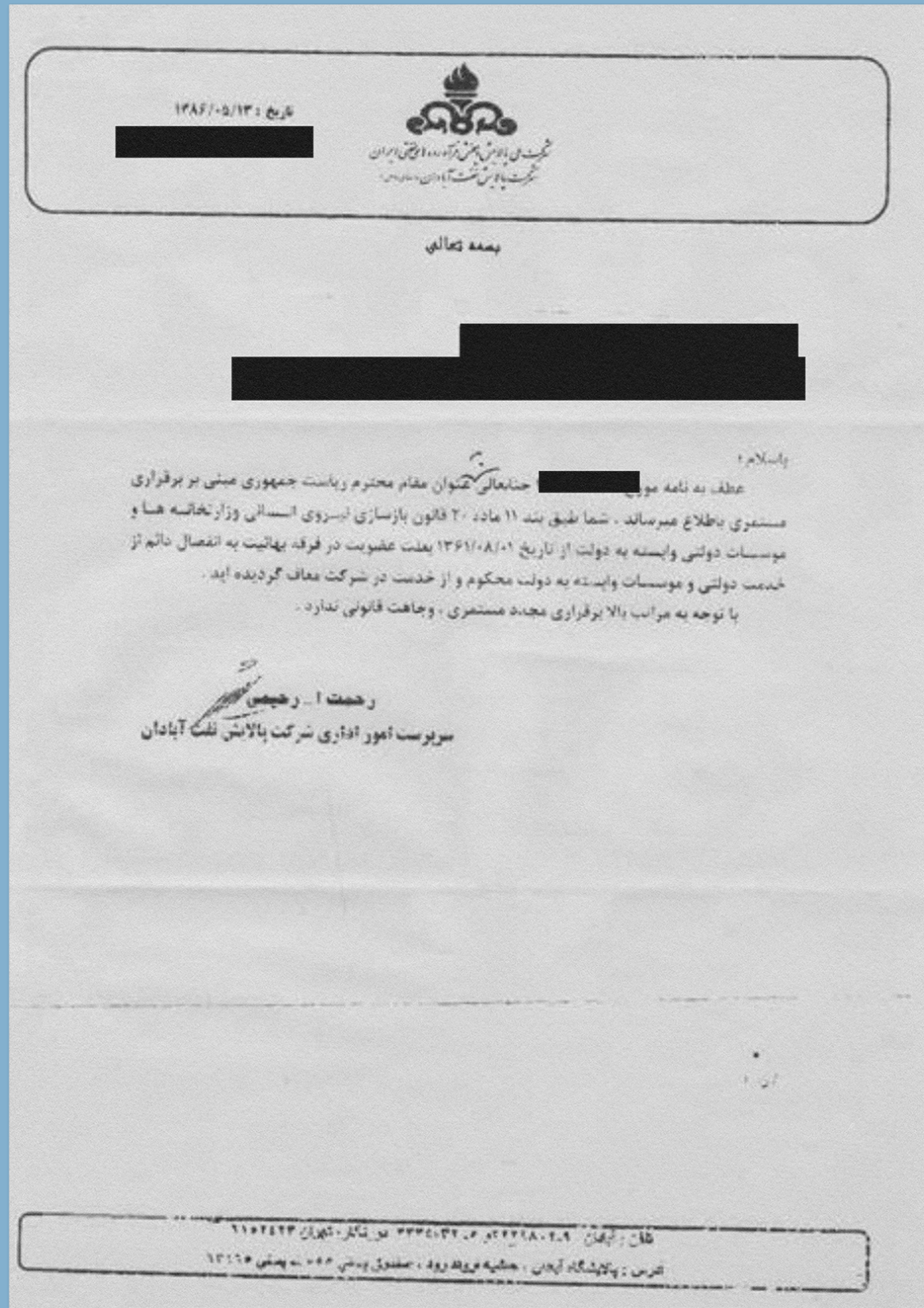
English translation of a 23 June 2011 court ruling in Laljin acquitting a Muslim of the crime of usury because the plaintiff was a Bahá'í.



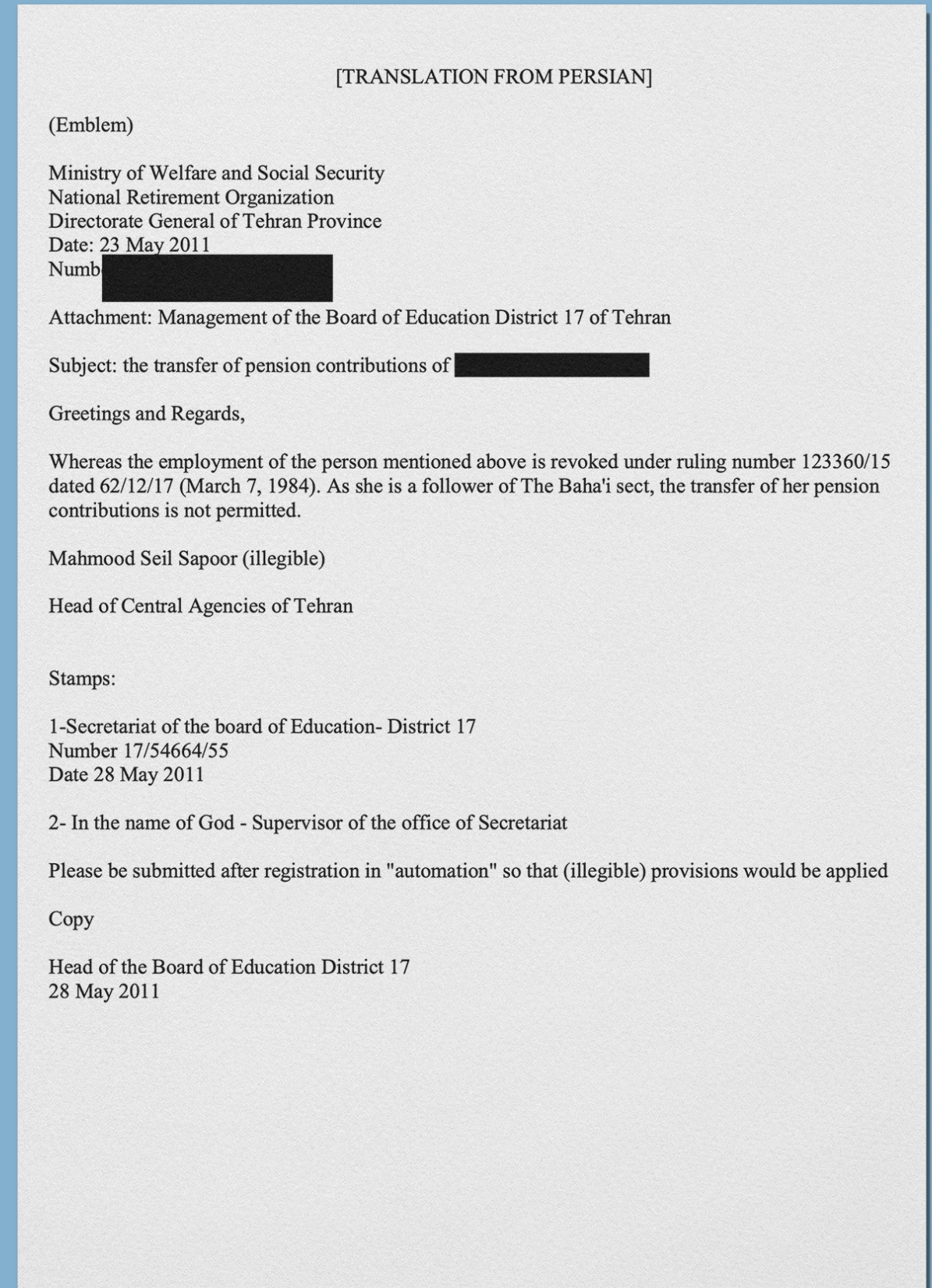
Persian original of a 7 August 2011 letter to the Iran Insurance Company from the Prosecutor's Office of Arak, saying that signing contracts with a Bahá'í is legally prohibited.



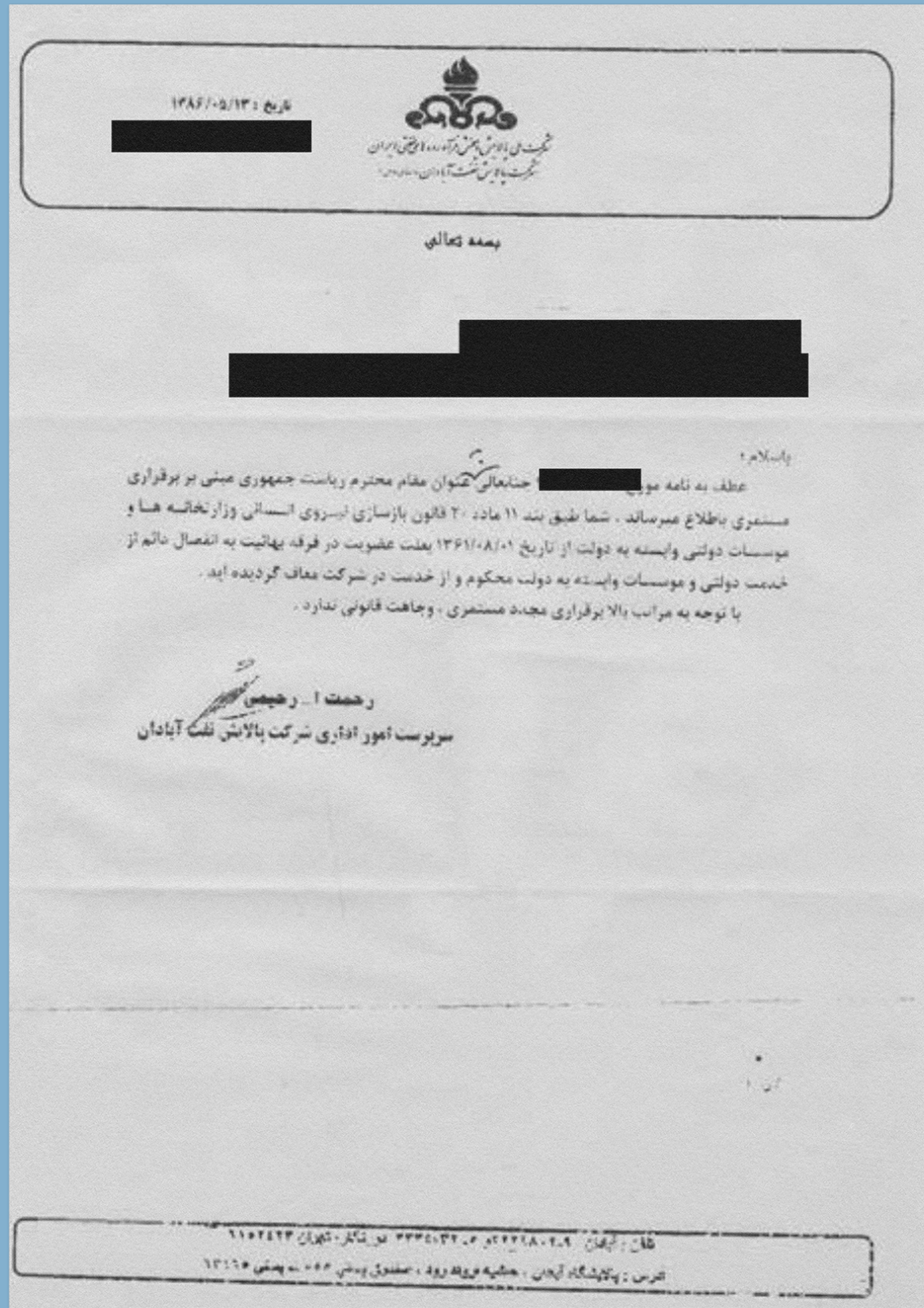
English translations of a 7 August 2011 letter to the Iran Insurance Company from the Prosecutor's Office of Arak, saying that signing contracts with a Bahá'í is legally prohibited.



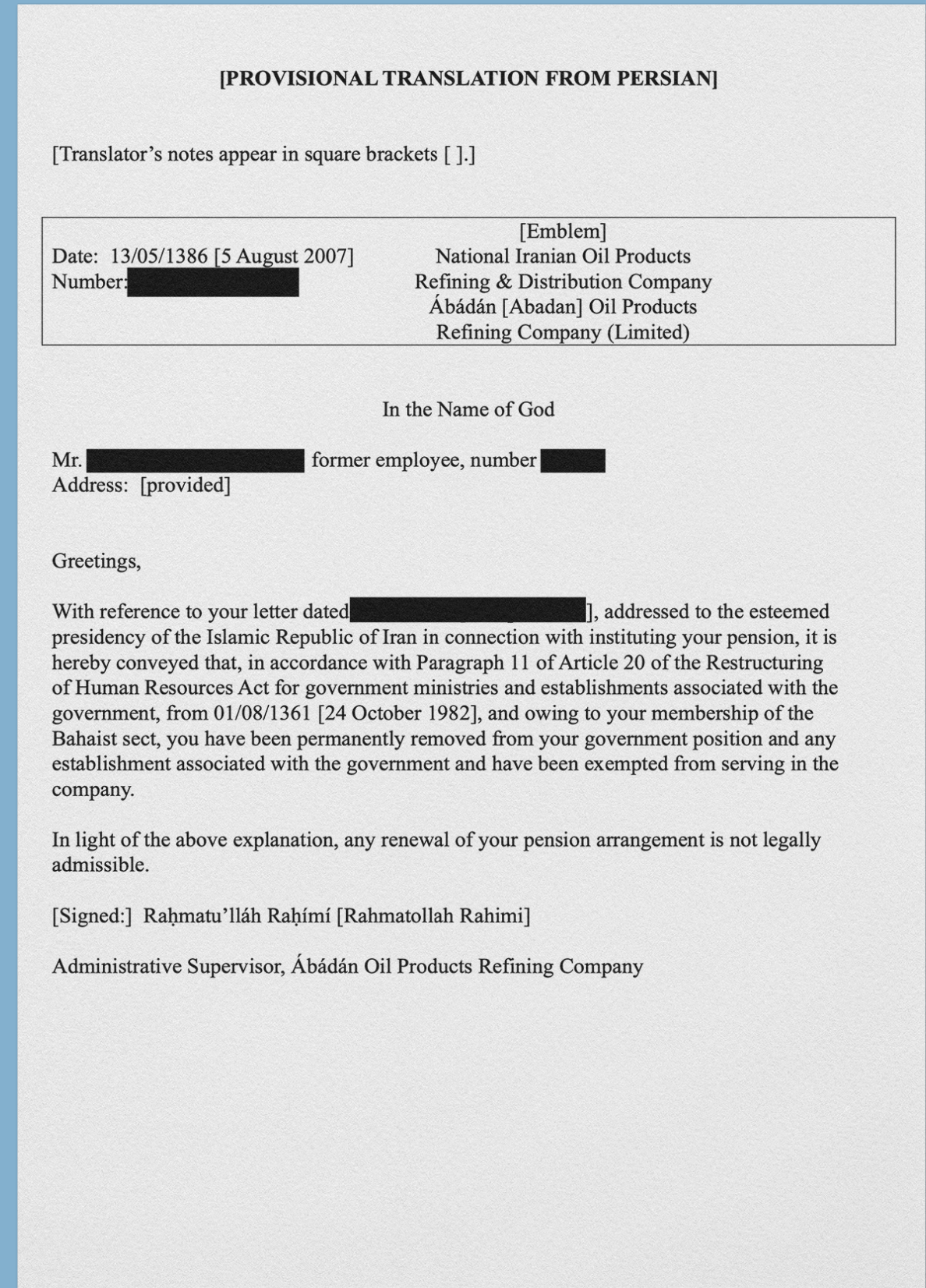
Persian original of a 23 May 2011 letter from the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security stating the transfer of pension contributions is not permitted because the former employee is a Bahá'í.



English translation of a 23 May 2011 letter from the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security stating the transfer of pension contributions is not permitted because the former employee is a Bahá'í.



Persian original of a 5 August 2007 letter from the national oil company to a Bahá'í saying that, "owing to your membership in the Bahaist sect," his pension cannot be renewed.



English translation of a 5 August 2007 letter from the national oil company to a Bahá'í saying that, "owing to your membership in the Bahaist sect," his pension cannot be renewed.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ، ميدان نورشید استقلال و آزادی است . (امام خمینی (ره) ع)

از: اداره نظارت بر اماکن عمومی فا.ا. تهران

به: ریاست محترم مجمع امور صنفی شهرستان کرج

موضوع: ارسال مشخصات بهائیان شاغل در صنوف

سلام علیکم

با صلوات بر محمد و آل محمد و با احترام ،

مقتضی است دستور فرمایید لیست مشخصات بهائیان شاغل در صنوف دارای پروانه و فاقد پروانه کسب شهرستان کرج برابر جدول ذیل به قید فوریت به این اداره ارسال گردد.

ردیف	نام و نام خانوادگی	نام پدر	شماره ملی	محل تولد	تاریخ تولد	نوع صنف	صنوف بر واحد صنفی		وضعیت پروانه	تاریخ اعتبار
							صنوف	تاریخ اعتبار		

رئیس اداره نظارت بر اماکن عمومی فا.ا. تهران
سرهنگ پاسدار حاجب الله صادقی

شماره برگ: ۳/۶۳۱
تاریخ ثبت: ۱۸/۲/۸۸

شماره برگ: شماره برگ: شماره برگ: شماره برگ:
تاریخ ثبت: تاریخ ثبت: تاریخ ثبت: تاریخ ثبت:

Persian original of an 18 February 2010 letter from the Public Places Supervision Office to the head of the Association for Union Affairs, requesting information about Bahá'ís in Karaj.

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets [].]

The dawn of the revolution is the rising of the sun of independence and freedom.
"Imám Khomeini"

From: Public Places Supervision Office, Tehran

To: The Esteemed Head of the Association for Union Affairs

Subject: Submitting information about the Bahá'ís who are operating under the Union

Greetings,

Salutation to Muḥammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Him and His family.

Respectfully, please take appropriate measures to immediately release to our office particulars of the Bahá'ís who are actively operating under the union in the city of Karaj both with and without a business license according to the following chart:

Line/Section
Name and Surname
Father's Name
National ID Number
Place of Birth
Date of Birth
Type of Work
Manager
Agent/liaison
Staff
Janitorial
Licensed
Not Licensed
Period in operation
Responsibility
Status of the business

Head of the Public Places Supervision Office, Tehran

Sergeant Pásdár, Ḥabíbu'lláh Šádiqí
[Stamp—No. 3/631]

29/11/88 [18 February 2010]

English translation of an 18 February 2010 letter from the Public Places Supervision Office to the head of the Association for Union Affairs, requesting information about Bahá'ís in Karaj.

تاریخ: ۲۵ خرداد ۸۸
 شماره: [REDACTED]
 پست: [REDACTED]

بسمه تعالی

**اتحادیه صنف فروشندگان
 لوازم یدکی اتومبیل کرج
 شماره ثبت ۲۰**

رئیس محترم اتحادیه صنف فروشندگان لوازم یدکی اتومبیل کرج
 رضایی: عدم صلاحیت فرقه بابیت
 سلام علیکم

وقه ای که میفرموده که در مورخه ۱۱۹۵۰ [۲۴ نوامبر ۲۰۰۸] در مورد استناد به پروانه کتب از فرقه بابیت که
 مورد تأیید اداره قمار است که در این فرقه کثرت دارد و فعالیت می کند و تاکنون در سیمای تلویزیون
 به نام خود که از طرف آن مجمع قمار است عمل نموده است. ضمیمه موارد نامبرده که تاکنون از طرف این
 مرکز دست راست لازم جهت جلوگیری از فعالیت نامبرده در این زمینه است.

رئیس اتحادیه صنف فروشندگان لوازم یدکی اتومبیل کرج
 علی اکبر قاسم زاده

کرج - میدان آزادگان ساختمان سپید، واحد ۱۶ | تلفن: ۲۲۴۲۳۱۹

Persian original of a 15 June 2009 letter from the head of the Federation of Suppliers or Automobile Spare Parts to the director of Union Affairs in Karaj, asking the activities of Bahá'ís be prevented.

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets [].]

Date: 25/3/88 [15 June 2009] In the Name of God Federation of Suppliers of Automobile Spare Parts of Karaj
 Number: [REDACTED] Enclosure: Registration number 30

To the Esteemed Director of the Association for Union Affairs, [REDACTED]

Subject: Lack of Credibility [Exclusion] of the Baháism sect

Greetings,

Respectfully, concerning letter 11950, dated 4/9/87 [24 November 2008], with regard to the application for a permit [by members of] the sect of Baháism—who are not approved by the office of Amákin [Public Places Supervision Office¹]¹—and those [Bahá'ís] who are operating [in this field], so far the instructions in the said letter have not been properly executed by your respected association. Should the individuals [belonging to the said group] be still operating, appropriate instructions must be given to prevent their activities.

Head of Federation of Suppliers of Automobile Spare Parts

'Alí-Akbar Qásimzádh [Ali-Akbar Ghasemzadeh]

[Address]

¹ ["Edare-ye Amaken": responsible for the enforcement of accepted moral codes in places of work and other offices.]

English translation of a 15 June 2009 letter from the head of the Federation of Suppliers or Automobile Spare Parts to the director of Union Affairs in Karaj, asking the activities of Bahá'ís be prevented.

مجموعه استفتا، فتوا و نظر شش تن از مراجع عظام تقلید در مورد فرقه ضالّه بهائیت

سؤالات مطرح شده :

- ۱) آیا بهائیت ضالّه و منحرف است؟
- ۲) آیا بهائیان نجس هستند؟
- ۳) بهائیان اجازه تبلیغ فرقه خود را در کشور از نظر شرعی دارند؟

پاسخ ها :

• مقام معظم رهبری حضرت آیت اعلیٰ عظام سید علی خامنه ای (دامت برکاته) بطور کلی از هرگونه معاشرت با این فرقه ضالّه و مشفّه اجتناب کنید.

۱) بله کاملاً منحرف هستند.

۲) بله نجس هستند.

۳) چور، موجب انحراف و گمراهی مردم می شود اجازت تبلیغ ندارند.

• حضرت آیت اعلیٰ نوری همایانی

۱) فرقه ای ضالّه است و بسیار منحرف

۲) از سگ هم نجس تر هستند و فرقه ای من در آوردی است .

۳) تبلیغ فرقه آنها حرام است ، چون گرایش به کفر دارند و سبب جردت در دین انسان ها می شوند.

• حضرت آیت اعلیٰ مکارم شیرازی

۱) بله، بهائیان کافر حساب می شوند .

۲) بهائیان کافر و مرتد هستند و نجس

۳) از نظر شرعی تبلیغ این فرقه ضالّه حرام است چون بهائیان نجس و کافر هستند .

• حضرت آیت اعلیٰ وحید خراسانی

۱) بله

۲) نجس هستند چون کافرند .

۳) اجازه تبلیغ فرقه منحرف و ضالّه خود را ندارند .

• حضرت آیت اعلیٰ العظمی آقای بروجردی

لازم است مسلمان نسبت به این فرقه معاشرت و مخالطه و معامله را ترک کنند فقط از مسلمان تقاضا دارم آرامش و حفظ احتکام را از دست ندهند . (مقصود از لزوم در اینجا عرفی نیست بلکه لزوم فقهی است که همان معنای واجب را می دهد .)

• حضرت آیت اعلیٰ محمد رضا الموسوی گلپایگانی

په نحوی که حضرت آیه اله العظمی آقای بروجردی قدس سره فرموده اند لازم است مسلمان نسبت به این فرقه ضالّه معاشرت و معامله را ترک کنند و از عموم مسلمان تقاضا دارم آرامش و حفظ انتظام را رعایت نمایند . خداوند تعالی همه را از شر و فتن آخر الزمان حفظ فرماید .

• نظر دانشمند ارجمند، حضرت جمیع الاسلام شیخ حسین انصاریان پیرامون فرقه ضالّه بهائیت :

تذکره : این فرقه را دشمنان استعمالگر برای مقابله با اسلام امیل، طراحی نموده اند، که باید از گرایش به آن فرقه اجتناب نمود، که سرانجامی جز ضلالت و گمراهی ندارد. بعضی از مذاهب ساختگی که در قرون اخیر پیدا شده اند، برای رسیدن به اهداف شوم خود، لازم حیده اند که قبل از هر چیز پایه خانیتم پیامبر اسلام (ص) را به گمان خویش متزلزل سازند، لذا بعضی از آیات قرآن را که هیچ دلالتی بر هدف آنها ندارد را به کمک تفسیر به رأی (برداشت شخصی) و سفسطه بر مقصود خود تطبیق ساخته اند که یکی از آنها آیه ۳۵ سوره اعراف است. آنها بخون اینکه قبل و بعد این آیات را در نظر بگیرند، می گویند: این آیه (آیه ۳۵ سوره اعراف) با توجه به جمله « ای فرزندان آدم، چون پیامبرانی از جنس خودتان به سوی من آیند که آیاتم را بر شما بخوانند [به آنان ایمان آورید و آیاتم را عمل کنید] » که فعل مضارع دارد دلیل بر این است که امکان دارد پس از پیامبر اسلام، پیامبران دیگری مبعوث شوند. ولی اگر کسی به عقب برگردیم و آیات گذشته را که از آفرینش آدم و سکونت او در بهشت و سپس رانده شدن او و همسرش از بهشت سخن می گوید مناظره کنیم روشن می شود که مخاطب در این آیات مسلمانان نیستند، بلکه مجموع جامعه انسانی و تمام فرزندان آدمند، زیرا شک نیست که برای مجموعه فرزندان آدم رسولان زیادی آمده اند. منتهی این عده از دین سازان برای اغفال مردم، آیات گذشته را به دست فراموشی سپارند و مخاطب در این آیه را خصوص مسلمانان می گیرند و از آن نتیجه گیری می کنند که احتمالاً رسولان دیگری در کار است. در این گونه سفسطه ها جمله ای از یک آیه را از بقیه جدا می کنند و قبل و بعد آن را نادیده می گیرند و بر مفهومی که تمایل دارند تطبیق می دهند.

تذکره : پیروان فرقه بهائیت از آن جهت که دارای افکار و عقایدی کاملاً باطل و ضد حقیقت و خلاف شریعت دین محمدی (ص) هستند، از نظر علما و فقهای اسلام، نجس هستند و هر گونه ارتباط با آنها نیز جایز نمی باشد و شرعاً نباید با آن ها معاشرت داشت.

تذکره : لازم است به بخشی از عقاید بهائیت توجه کنید تا خود قضاوت نمایید که آن ها چگونه راه خذلان و جهنم را در پیش گرفته اند و هذاهای را نیز فریب داده و با خود همراه ساخته اند :

رهبر فرقه بهائیت شخصی به نام «علی محمد باب» است که خود را پیامبر (ص) می داند و ادعای نبوت کرده است، از دواج معارم مانند ازدواج با خواهر را جایز می داند و حتی به مردان اجازه می دهد همسران خود را در اختیار دیگران قرار دهند. بهشت و جهنم را قبول ندارند، نبوت پیامبر اکرم (ص) را انکار می کنند، خود را منجیب شریعت می پندارند، خود را در زمره پیامبران بلکه برتر و بالاتر می پندارند، شریعت و کتاب ساختگی خود را که موهوب از مطالب بی اساس و مرفرفات است را ناسخ شریعت و کتب آسمانی قلمداد نموده اند. «علی محمد باب» که رهبر بهائیت است با را فرا گذاشته و ادعای الوهیت (خدایی) نیز نموده است.

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM persian]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets [].]

List of religious enquiries, the opinion and the decrees issued by six Grand Ayatollahs and sources of authority concerning the perverse sect of Baháism:

Questions:

1. Is Baháism misguided and perverse?
2. Are Bahá'ís Najis [unclean]?
3. From a religious point of view, do the Bahá'ís have permission to teach their sect in the country?

Answers:

The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei:

Keep away altogether from this perverse and misguided sect.

1. Yes, they are completely perverted.
2. Yes, they are Najis.
3. As they will misguide and lead the people astray, they should not be allowed to teach.

Ayatollah Nouri Hamadani:

1. It is a misguided sect and absolutely perverse.
2. They are even more Najis than dogs. It is a man-made sect.
3. Propagation of their sect is Harám [religiously forbidden], as they are infidels and will lead people to apostasy.

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi:

1. Yes, Bahá'ís are considered infidels.
2. Bahá'ís are infidels, apostates, and Najis.

Persian original of a list issued circa 2010 of fatwas and decrees by religious authorities concerning Bahá'ís and commerce.

English translation of a list issued circa 2010 of fatwas and decrees issued by religious authorities concerning Bahá'ís and commerce.

Ayatollah Vahid Khorasani:

1. Yes.
2. They are Najis because they are infidels.
3. They do not have permission to teach their misguided and perverse sect.

Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi:

It is necessary that Muslims cut off their association or trade with this sect. I only ask the Muslims not to forget to keep the peace and order. (By necessity we do not mean the same way as it is used in common law; rather, from a religious point of view, which means it is obligatory.)

Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mousavi Golpayegani:

In the same way that Ayatollah Boroujerdi has decreed, it is incumbent upon Muslims to cut off association and trade with this perverse sect. I ask all the Muslims to keep the peace and order. May God save us all from the evils of the end of the world.

The view of the esteemed scholar, Hujjatu'l-Islám Sheikh Hosein Ansarian concerning the perverse sect of Baháism:

Firstly, this sect was created by colonialist enemies to confront the noble Islám. Attachment to this sect must be avoided, as it will have no end but misery and perversion. Some of the man-made religions that have appeared during the recent centuries—in order to achieve their evil goals—have found it necessary to, in their own mind, shake the Khátimíyyat¹ of the prophet of Islám. Thus, they have interpreted some verses of the Qur'án that have nothing to do with their goal and by fallacy have tried to make them in conformity with their own ideas. One of them is Verse 35 of A'ráf. Without quoting the before and after verses, they say that this verse which states, “O ye Children of Adam, whenever there come to you messengers from amongst you, rehearsing My signs unto you...” (believe in them and follow my verses), has a future verb that means it is possible for other prophets to come after the prophet of Islám.

¹ Belief that Muhammad is the last prophet

Cont'd — English translation of a list issued circa 2010 of fatwas and decrees issued by religious authorities concerning Bahá'ís and commerce.

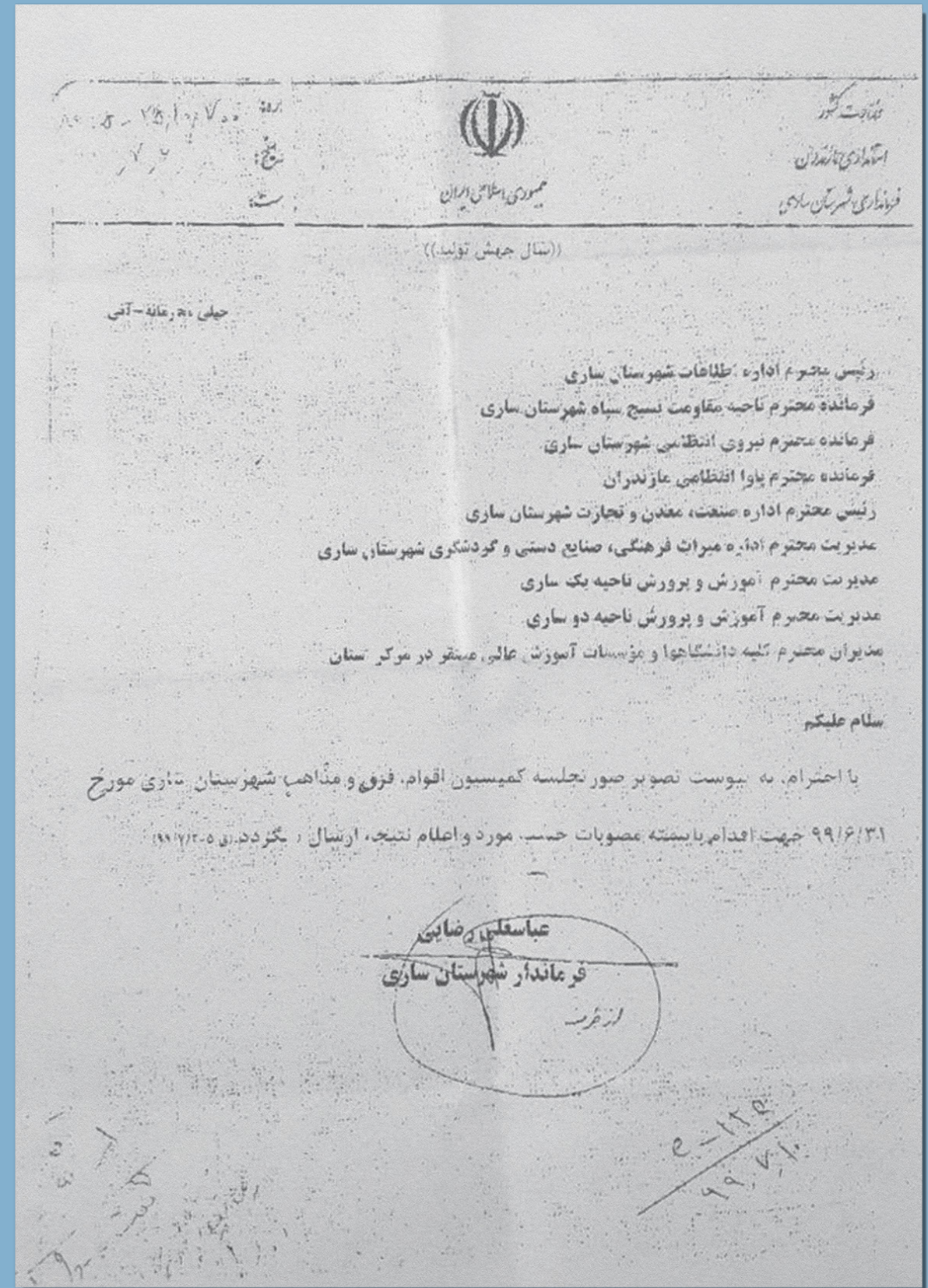
But if we go back a little and look at the previous verses that talk about the creation of Adam and his life in heaven and then his being expelled from heaven with his wife, we clearly see that these verses are not addressed to Muslims; rather, [they were addressed] to the whole society and the children of Adam. There is no doubt that many prophets have appeared for all the children of Adam. But these creators of religions ignore the previous verses and state that these verses have been addressed to Muslims and then conclude that possibly there will be other prophets of God. In these fallacies, they separate one verse from the others and ignore the verses that come before and after it and adjust it to their own desired interpretation.

Secondly, because the followers of the sect of Baháism have thoughts and beliefs that are absolutely false and against the noble religion of Islám, according to the decree of the religious leaders and scholars of Islám, they are Najis and any association with them is not permitted, and from a religious point of view, association with them is forbidden.

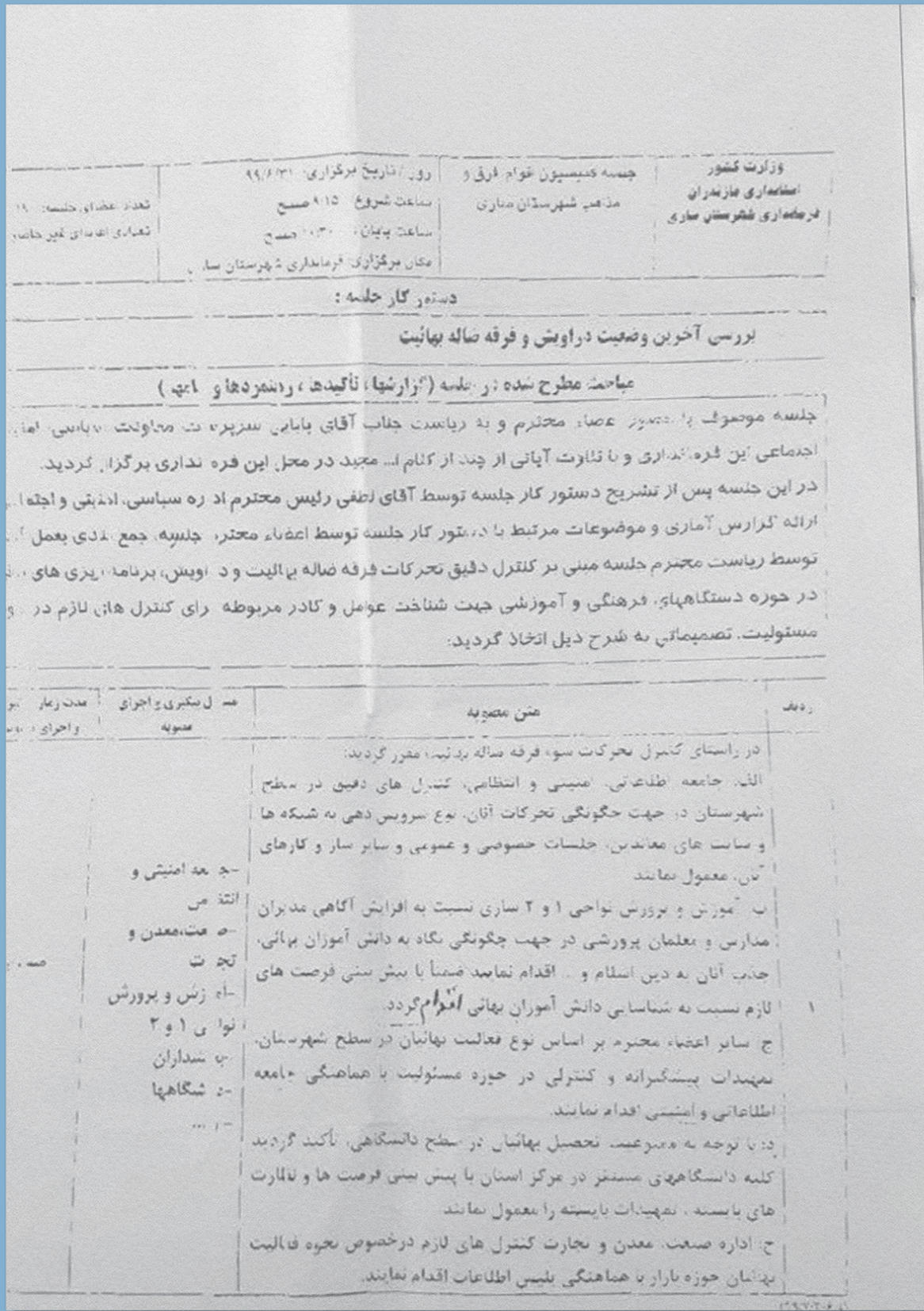
Thirdly, it is necessary to look at some of the beliefs of Baháism so that you can judge for yourself how they are pursuing the way of infamy and hell and how they have deceived a number of people into following their own way of life:

The leader of the sect of Baháism was an individual by the name of 'Alí-Muhammad Báb, who considered himself a Messenger of God and claimed to be one. He allows marriage of those who are forbidden to each other such as one's own sister. He even permits men to offer their wives to others. They do not believe in heaven and hell. They deny that the Prophet of Islám is a Messenger of God. They consider themselves followers of a religion. They consider themselves among the prophets and even better and higher than them. They consider their own man-made book that is full of nonsense and baseless words, the nullifier of all the heavenly books and religions. 'Alí-Muhammad Báb, who is the leader of Baháism, has even gone further and claimed to be God.

Cont'd — English translation of a list issued circa 2010 of fatwas and decrees issued by religious authorities concerning Bahá'ís and commerce.



Cont'd — Persian original of an official Iranian directive, dated 21 September 2020, instructing local authorities in the city of Sari, in the northern province of Mazandaran, to "conduct strict controls" on the Bahá'ís in the city by "monitoring their operations", and introduce measures to "identify Bahá'í students" to "bring them into Islam."



Persian original of an official Iranian directive, dated 21 September 2020, instructing local authorities in the city of Sari, in the northern province of Mazandaran, to "conduct strict controls" on the Bahá'ís in the city by "monitoring their operations", and introduce measures to "identify Bahá'í students" to "bring them into Islam."

Mazandaran Governorate General

Governorate of the City of Sari

Meeting of the Commission on Ethnicities, Sects and Religions in the City of Sari Date of meeting:
21 September 2020

Start Time: 9:15 a.m.

End Time: 10:30 a.m.

Location of meeting: The governorate of the City of Sari

Number of members present: 19

Number of absentees:

Agenda: reviewing the latest status of the Dervishes and the subversive Baha'i sect

Topics discussed in the meeting (reports, highlights, guidelines, letters)

The said meeting was held with esteemed members present and chaired by Mr. Babaie, the Deputy Governor for Political, Security and Social Affairs and began with the recitation of some verses from the sacred Quran at the governorate.

At this meeting, following a review of the agenda by Mr. Lotfi, the honourable Head of the Political, Security and Social Affairs Department, and after a presentation of the statistical report and issues related to the agenda by the honourable members, the issues were summed up by the honourable chairman. It was decided that the movements of the subversive Baha'i sect and the Dervishes are to be rigorously controlled as well as a detailed plan to be adopted with regard to cultural and educational institutions. In order to make the relevant arrangements and identify the personnel for the required controls and the allocation of responsibilities, the following decisions were made:

Text of the resolution

To control the misguided movements of the subversive Baha'i sect, it was decided:

A- The intelligence, security and law enforcement community should conduct strict controls at the county level by monitoring their operations, the type of services provided to the networks and websites of enemies, private and public meetings, and their other activities.

Responsible for following up and implementation of the decree: The Security and Law Enforcement Community

Duration [illegible] and implementation of the decree: [Illegible]

B- Departments of Education in Districts 1 and 2 of Sari shall increase the level of alertness and awareness among school principals and educators on their handling of Baha'i students in order to win them to Islam. Furthermore, efforts shall be made to identify Baha'i students.

Responsible for following up and implementation of the decree: Education Departments in Sari Districts 1 and 2

Duration [illegible] and implementation of the decree: [Illegible]

English translation of an official Iranian directive, dated 21 September 2020, instructing local authorities in the city of Sari, in the northern province of Mazandaran, to "conduct strict controls" on the Bahá'ís in the city by "monitoring their operations", and introduce measures to "identify Bahá'í students" to "bring them into Islam."

C- Based on the type of Baha'i activities in the city, other honourable members shall take deterring and controlling measures in the area of [their] responsibility in coordination with the intelligence and security community.

Duration [illegible] and implementation of the decree: [Illegible]

D- With a view to the ban on Baha'i education at the university level, it was emphasized that all universities located in the centre of the province shall anticipate the opportunities, undertake the necessary surveillance, and take the necessary measures.

Responsible for following up and implementation of the decree: Universities Duration [illegible] and implementation of the decree: [Illegible]

E- The Department of Industry, Mines and Commerce shall take the necessary controls over the activities of the Baha'is in the Bazaar area in coordination with the intelligence police.

Responsible for following up and implementation of the decree: Department of Industry, Mines and Commerce

Duration [illegible] and implementation of the decree: [Illegible]

Ministry of Interior

Mazandaran Governorate General Governorate of the City of Sari

[Emblem]

Islamic Republic of Iran

Case Number: [Illegible] / 25/10/700 Date: 27 September 2020

Enclosure: ----((Year of Leap in Production)) Highly confidential - Immediate

Esteemed Head of the Intelligence Department of the City of Sari

Esteemed Commander of the Basij Resistance [Force] in Sari

Esteemed Commander of the Sari Police Force

Esteemed Commander of the Mazandaran Police Force

Esteemed Head of the Industry, Mining and Trade Department of the City of Sari

Esteemed Management of the Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Department of the City of Sari

Esteemed Management of the Education Department in Sari District 1 Esteemed Management of the Education Department in Sari District 2

Distinguished heads of all universities and higher education institutions located in the centre of the province

Greetings,

Respectfully, the minutes of the Commission on Ethnicities, Sects and Religions in the City of Sari, dated 21 September 2020, are enclosed for required action as the case may be and reporting back the outcome.

Abbas-Ali Rezaie Governor of Sari [Signed: On behalf of]

[Number illegible] 1 October 2020

Cont'd — English translation of an official Iranian directive, dated 21 September 2020, instructing local authorities in the city of Sari, in the northern province of Mazandaran, to "conduct strict controls" on the Bahá'ís in the city by "monitoring their operations", and introduce measures to "identify Bahá'í students" to "bring them into Islam."

بسمه تعالی

وزارت علوم، تحقیقات و فن آوری
سازمان سنجش آموزش کشور
دبیرخانه هیأت مرکزی گزینش دانشجو

فرم شماره ۲

برگ تعهد نامه داوطلبین

تذکر مهم: تکمیل دقیق این برگ برای سیر مراحل گزینش داوطلبین محترم ضروریست

شماره پرونده	رشته امتحانی داوطلب	سال آزمون

اینجانب فرزند متولد / / ۱۳..... با کد ملی صادره از
که بر اساس فرم شماره ۱ خود را بهایی و بهایی زاده معرفی نموده ام. در آزمون ورودی دانشگاه ها شرکت داشته و نتیجه
انتخاب رشته اینجانب اعلام شده است؛ لذا متعهد می گردم کلیه قوانین و مقررات آموزشی را رعایت و از
هرگونه اقدام تشکیلاتی و فرقه ای اعم از تبلیغ یا همکاری با هیئت های منحل فرقه بهائیت پرهیز نمایم. اطاعت از قوانین و
مقررات نظام را بر اطاعت از بیابته ها، دستورالعمل ها و فرامین مرکزیت فرقه مستقر در سرزمین های اشغالی فلسطین
موسوم به بیت العدل و یا رابطین آن ترجیح دهم.

امضاء اثر انگشت تاریخ

اینجانب فرزند متولد / / ۱۳..... با کد ملی صادره از
خود را مطیع محض بیت العدل به عنوان مرجع مضمون و معصوم دانسته و متن فوق را نمی پذیرم.

امضاء اثر انگشت تاریخ

Declaration form for Bahá'ís to sign for
University Entrance

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets]

[Personal information has been **redacted**.]

In the Name of the Almighty

The Ministry of Science, Research and Technology

Sanjish[1] Organization

The Secretariat of the Central Committee for Guzínish[2]

Form Number 2

Applicants Undertaking Form

Important Note: Accurate completion of this sheet is necessary for the selection process of the Applicants.

File Number Applicant's Examination Field Examination Year

I,, daughter/son of, born in .../.../13..., national identification smart card
....., issued by, have identified myself as a Bahá'í, born in a Bahá'í family according
to form number 1. I participated in the National University Entrance Examination and the result of
my field of study selection has been announced as..... Therefore, I make a pledge to ob-
serve all the education statutes and regulations, and to avoid all kinds of administrative and sectarian
activities, including propagation or collaboration with the dissolved entities of the Bahaist Sect, and
to prefer obedience to the statutes and regulations of the regime to obeying the statements, directives
and the instructions from the centre of the sect, located in the occupied territories of Palestine, called
the House of Justice, or its liaisons.

Signature

Fingerprint

Date

I,, daughter/son of, born in .../.../13..., national identification smart card
....., issued by, consider myself completely obedient to the House of Justice as an
infallible authority and do not accept the foregoing text.

Signature

Fingerprint

Date

English translation, Declaration form for
Bahá'ís to sign for University Entrance

Bahá'í International Community

The Bahá'í Question: Persecution and Resilience in Iran

A document prepared by the
Bahá'í International Community 2024

United Nations Office
866 United Nations Plaza
Suite 120 New York, NY
USA 10017

www.bic.org

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**The Bahá'í Question:
Persecution and
Resilience in Iran**