

BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

United Nations Office

Oral statement to HRC 20th Session

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Geneva

Madam President,

To our great regret, the Baha'i International Community has to raise, at each session, the gross violations perpetrated against the Baha'is of Iran. Unfortunately, despite its claims in Council plenary or at UPR, the Iranian government totally ignores recommendations made by other governments and UN Special Procedures – whether these come from the Special Rapporteur on Iran or the thematic mandates that it pledges to value.

At this session, we will focus on economic strangulation: a slow but relentless ESCR violation, whose aim is nothing less than the annihilation of an entire community as a viable entity in Iran.

Baha'is are not allowed to work in the public sector, and they face severe restrictions in the private sector, too. Officials are following the government's instructions^[1] to drive Baha'is out of 25 trades from which they have been banned and from any other professional activity providing more than a minimum wage. In Kerman and elsewhere, officials systematically refuse to renew business licenses for Baha'is, and even revoke valid ones. Baha'i-owned businesses have been shut down all over the country, including 15 shops and two factories recently in Semnan – where Baha'i owners are under constant surveillance and receive threatening phone calls. Barred from bringing merchandise from outside the province for trade and sale, some have been severely limited and others totally prevented from earning a living.

The government is so determined to suffocate the Baha'i community economically that officials do not bat an eye when these measures also cause hardship for the majority Shi'i Muslim population. Licenses are revoked for Muslim business partners of Baha'is, as well, and in Semnan, one of the factories closed in May had 51 employees: 15 Baha'is and 36 non-Baha'is.

All of this goes to show that the Iranian government has no qualms when violating any of the rights of any of its citizens.

[1] These instructions were promulgated in 2007 by the Public Places Supervision Office, a government bureau in charge of maintaining morality in public places, including shops, offices and other places of work.

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