

BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

United Nations Office

Situation of the Baha'is in Iran

Oral Statement of the Baha'i International Community to the Fourth Session of the Human Rights Council
12 March 2007
Geneva

Just about a year ago, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief released a statement to express her grave concern about a letter that had been sent by the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Ministry of Information, the Revolutionary Guard, the Police and the Army, among others – instructing them to identify people who adhere to the Baha'i Faith and to monitor their activities. The letter had been prepared under the guidance of the Iranian Supreme Leader.

These instructions are being implemented. Iran's Ministry of the Interior ordered provincial officials throughout the country to step up surveillance of Iranian Baha'is in August last year, requiring these officials to complete a detailed questionnaire about local Baha'is and to monitor their activities. We also received indications that certain Iranian trade and technical associations had begun to compile lists of Baha'is in every trade and employment.

This monitoring has already been followed by acts that target members of the community. Managers of private companies have been pressured to dismiss Baha'i employees, landlords have been asked to refuse lease renewals to Baha'i shopkeepers, and some of the Baha'is who have their own businesses have received death threats or been ordered to close down.

During the same period, the public has been incited to hostility through a media campaign of slander and defamation against the Baha'i Faith. Baha'is in many localities have received letters and messages from strangers that are becoming more and more blatantly threatening. And dozens of Baha'is were arrested over the past year – adding to the numbers of those subjected to a “revolving door” sequence of imprisonment and release on bail. The fact that these people were imprisoned only because of their adherence to the Baha'i Faith is confirmed by the charges brought against the few that have been tried and sentenced.

The Baha'i International Community is particularly worried about all this because it seems to be part of a larger, coordinated strategy. Of course, persecution against Iranian Baha'is is nothing new. The Baha'is have been persecuted throughout their history in Iran, with over 200 dead since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, many hundreds imprisoned and tens of thousands deprived of jobs, homes, pensions, businesses, inheritance and educational opportunities. The community's holy places, cemeteries and properties have been confiscated, vandalized or destroyed, and the Iranian Government still bans all Baha'i religious institutions. The policy laid down in the government memorandum obtained and published by the UN Special Representative on Iran in 1993 is still in effect today.

Right now, however, we feel it is essential for the international community to express its concern at the coordinated nature of the attempt to identify all members of the community in Iran, combined with the upsurge, during the same period, of articles, broadcasts and websites condemning the Baha'is and their beliefs.

We cannot forget that twice before, in the 1950s and again in the 1980s, media campaigns of this nature led to violence against the Baha'i minority and the deaths of Baha'i men, women and children.

This must not happen again.

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