

BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

United Nations Office

Current situation of the Baha'is in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Oral Statement of the Baha'i International Community to the seventh session of the UN Human Rights Council
14 March 2008
Geneva

The Baha'i International Community is gravely concerned about many and various aspects of the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran. The Iranian authorities have been conducting a crackdown on everyone who holds opinions or beliefs that differ from those of the ruling theocracy academics, women's rights and labour activists, students, journalists and, of course, the Baha'i religious minority.

Widespread persecution of the Baha'is has steadily increased, with arrests, interrogations and intimidation unleashed against Baha'is of all ages – even kindergarten children have been humiliated in class and expelled from local schools. Across the country, Baha'i cemeteries have been desecrated and, in some instances, razed.

The pattern of this latest repression follows the guidelines set down in two confidential government documents, both endorsed by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei:

- the 1991 memorandum that established a detailed policy on how the Baha'is should be treated, given no religious freedom and limited to a minimum livelihood;
- and the letter sent by the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces, at the end of 2005, to all of Iran's intelligence and enforcement agencies, instructing them to identify Baha'is throughout the country – presumably to ensure that the 1991 memorandum could now be thoroughly implemented.

Aside from this pattern of official persecution, we are witnessing a sharp increase in violent attacks and threats by plainclothes militia. These attacks are clearly condoned by government authorities, as the Baha'is have never been able to obtain redress when referring such cases to the police or the judiciary.

Moreover, the totally irrational nature of this persecution – and the fact that it is solely based on intolerance of a differing religious belief – is evident when one analyzes last year's sentencing of the 53 Baha'is in Shiraz. They were doing volunteer work, together with some Muslims, in service projects to help children of underprivileged families. Greatly appreciated by the Muslim parents, the projects assisted hundreds of children for several years. But then the Baha'is were identified and arrested, and the projects were shut down. Muslims working alongside the Baha'is were also detained but freed the same day.

Mr. President, during the High Level Segment, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs began his statement by declaring that: "The culture of human rights is a core component of the common heritage of humanity". We hope that this culture will one day be extended, in Iran, in such a way as to encompass **all** the citizens of that country.

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