

BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

United Nations Office

Oral statement to the 18th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Situation of the Baha'is in Iran – item 4
23 September 2011
Geneva

September is the time of year when students in the northern hemisphere get ready for their academic year to begin, holding hopes for a bright future.

Sadly, in Iran so many young people are deprived of this education simply because they hold an opinion or a belief that differs from those of the few men in power. They are student activists; they are members of ethnic minorities; they are Baha'is.

For Baha'i youth, this has been going on for nearly 30 years. The most recent injustice concerns a young woman, Shohreh Rowhani, who obtained a top ranking in the 2011 national university entrance exam, only to be turned away. The pretext was that her file was "incomplete" – a euphemism for being a Baha'i.

The recent crackdown on the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education, a grassroots endeavour that stemmed from this injustice and was trying to alleviate the failure of the State to act fairly towards its citizens, is proof – if yet another proof is needed – that, despite all their claims (whether at the Human Rights Council, at UNESCO or on State television), the Iranian government aims at turning the entire Baha'i community of its country into an impoverished and marginalized group.

The Baha'is will not allow this to happen. They have not allowed it for the past 30 years – always in a peaceful, law abiding manner.

Today, nearly 100 Baha'is are in prison because of their beliefs. Among prisoners of conscience in Iran, the eight longest sentences are being served by Baha'is. Scores are detained and interrogated, and the entire Baha'i community is deprived of all basic rights. None are spared, not even the dead whose resting places are desecrated, not even the little girl, a six year old child, whose hand is burnt in punishment by her ethics teacher, simply because she is a Baha'i. Despite all this, the Baha'is of Iran are relentless in their quest for a better Iran for all Iranians, regardless of sex, age, class, ethnicity and belief.

Baha'is hope, as all Iranians do, that the international community will also be relentless in telling the government of Iran that its crimes do not go unnoticed and its lies are now exposed, and in demanding that Iran fulfils its international human rights obligations.

Source URL: <http://www.bic.org/statements/oral-statement-18th-session-un-human-rights-council>