

BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

United Nations Office

Situation of the Baha'is in the Islamic Republic of Iran

UN Human Rights Council – 19th session
14 March 2012
Geneva

Just a few days ago, the Baha'i International Community obtained a confidential document: a directive issued in November last year by the Ministry of Education's Board in a city in Tehran Province, calling for all Baha'i children to be identified, and explicitly including pre-schoolers: children in kindergarten. It is understood that this is not an isolated case but reflects a general order issued by the Ministry of Education.

In March 2006, Ms. Asma Jahangir, then Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, publicly expressed her grave concern about a confidential document that she had obtained at the time. In that letter, the Head of Iran's Armed Forces told the Ministry of Information, Revolutionary Guard, *Basij*, Police, Army and others, that "according to the instructions of the Supreme Leader" (Ayatollah Khamenei), they must identify all of the Baha'is in Iran. Since then, violations against the members of this religious community have drastically increased. Today the rights of tens of thousands of Baha'is are violated solely because of their religious beliefs. More than 100 Baha'is are in prison. Several hundred more are awaiting the outcome of the legal proceedings against them. The seven former leaders of the community are serving the longest sentences currently imposed on prisoners of conscience in Iran: 20 years each.

The report to this session by the Special Rapporteur on Iran makes it clear that Baha'is have no rights in that country. The government subjects them to arbitrary detention, violence, prolonged solitary confinement (qualified by the Special Rapporteur as a form of torture). Procedures at their trials violate Iran's own laws; courageous Muslim lawyers are condemned for defending them; their homes and property are confiscated; they are denied employment and access to university... and Baha'i educators who try to provide alternative higher education for Baha'i students, in the privacy of their own homes, are also put behind bars.

Now the government is trying to identify their children, in kindergarten. Surely we must all ask: what for? The government is well aware that Baha'is are **not** a threat, that schoolchildren are **not** a threat. So the question is: In the face of the Iranian government's policy to eliminate the Baha'i community as a viable entity in that country, what is the international community going to do to protect the Baha'is of Iran?

Source URL: <http://www.bic.org/statements/situation-bah%C3%A1%C3%ADs-islamic-republic-iran-0>