

Trial of Iran's seven Baha'i leaders

Oral Statement of the Baha'i International Community to the Tenth Session of the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, March 2009

<http://news.bahai.org/human-rights/iran/yaran-special-report/un-statements/bic2>

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

Iran's Minister for Foreign Affairs stated, to this session of the Council, that his government is committed to promoting and protecting "human rights for all".

The Baha'i International Community is deeply concerned about "human rights for all" within Iran's own borders. In Iran, "human rights for all" does not always include peaceful protesters, students, journalists, trade unionists, women's rights activists, human rights defenders... and, of course, non-recognized religious minorities.

The human rights of Baha'is in Iran are more abused today than at any time since the 1980s. Arbitrary arrests, confiscations, denial of employment and education: waves of violations, city by city, across the country. The increase in official persecution has gone hand in hand with ever more violence: arson, attacks on homes and vehicles, the desecration of cemeteries. Over 300,000 Iranian citizens are being terrorized because the government does not include

Baha'is among the people whose rights are to be respected.

The authorities have publicly stated that freedom of religion or belief applies only to the convictions held by individuals. They deny the right of the same individuals to express their convictions in words and action. But what does it mean to have faith, if this faith is not manifested in word and deed?

Is it a threat for a nation if Baha'is discuss high-minded ideals with their neighbours? Is it a threat to society if Baha'is speak about the true nature of their Faith, in the privacy of their homes, with friends who have wondered about the negative portrayal of Baha'is in the Iranian media? What harm is done if families gather for communal worship and discussion? Is it

unreasonable for a group of Baha'is – in the absence of their administrative institutions, denied them by the government – to facilitate the marriage of couples, the education of children and the burial of the dead in accordance with the tenets of their Faith?

It is because the Baha'is manifest their Faith, in word and deed, that they are persecuted in Iran.

The Iranian Foreign Minister said that his country promotes and protects human rights in accordance with its international obligations. We come before you today to call upon Iran to abide by those obligations. It is for the same reason that the Baha'i International Community recently wrote an open letter to the Prosecutor General of Iran, raising these issues. A copy of the letter is available here today, with the printed copy of our statement.

What is at stake is, indeed, what the Iranian government claims to uphold: “human rights for all on the basis of inclusion, justice, equality and human dignity.”