

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets.]

[Personal information has been **redacted**.]

[The excerpt below is from the section of the article that pertains to the Baha'i Faith]

[Adapted from website:] Asre Nou

[Date:] 29 Bahman 1378 - 17 February 2009

Iran's Baha'i Community Is In Danger

The semi-official news agency in Iran called for the "complete annihilation" of Baha'ism.

29 Bahman 1387 [17 February 2009] – The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran announced today that the attack on the Baha'i community in Iran, with the semi-official announcement of its "complete annihilation", has reached a dangerous level. The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran called on the Iranian government to immediately stop its increasingly violent threats against members of the Baha'i community and to release the detainees [belonging to] the Baha'i religious minority who are being held in prisons without charges. This campaign has also called on the international community to strongly condemn the growing persecution of the Baha'i religious minority.

The government has intensified its attacks on members of the Baha'i community over the past year. At least 30 Baha'is are currently in prison across the country. Baha'is, with a population of about 300,000, are a religious minority not recognized by the Iranian constitution. The Baha'is have been subjected to official discrimination for the past 30 years, and about 200 of them have been executed since the Revolution in the year 1357 [1979] onwards.

According to the Student News Agency - ISNA, on 23 Bahman 1387 [11 February 2009], Judge Haddad, an official from the judiciary, announced that the trial of seven leaders of the Baha'i community would be held soon. The report quoted Haddad as saying that some of the charges against them were "espionage for Israel, insulting the [Islamic] sanctities and propaganda against the regime."

Leading members of the Baha'i community have been detained since Farvardin 1387 [March/April 2008] without access to a lawyer. Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, who is representing them, told the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran that she did not yet know the details of the indictment and the trial. The defendants' case is expected to be made available to her before the trial this week. The severity of the authorities' attacks on Baha'is seems to be a public relations trick to influence their court outcome. The semi-official Fars News Agency reported on 27 Bahman 1387 [15 February 2009] that the attorney general, Ayatollah Ghorban-Ali Dorri-Najafabadi, in a letter to the minister of intelligence, Mohsen Ejeie, wrote that the Baha'i organization is "illegal and unofficial at all levels, and that their affiliation with Israel and their opposition to Islam and the Islamic regime, and their danger to national security, are justified and well documented."

The report published by Fars News Agency concludes that the letter is a licence from the attorney general to “deal decisively with the elements of the organization, until their complete annihilation.”

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran called on the judiciary to conduct a fair trial in accordance with international standards and to guarantee the rights of the accused in a transparent and free environment.

Hadi Ghaemi, a spokesman for the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, said about the accusations against the members of the Baha’i community, “These accusations are very serious. Everything, from their arrest to the forthcoming trial, seems to be proof of the baselessness of these allegations and their political origins.” Ghaemi said of the defendants’ trial, “The trial of these people will be completely invalid if the court fails to prove these allegations publicly, and if they are not able to defend themselves properly, it would be completely invalid. In such a situation, this trial would be nothing more than a persecution, like a medieval illusion.”

The Iranian government has always accused the Baha’i Faith of being a tool of the Israeli government, but has never provided information to substantiate this claim. Official propaganda to prove this allegation always mentions that the Baha’i international centre is located in Haifa, Israel. But the establishment of this centre dates back to the exile of its founders in 1868, during the period of the Ottoman Empire.