

[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:] Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran

[Date:] 23 Ordibehesht 1392 [13 May 2013]

United Nations

United Nations Human Rights Experts Call on Iran to Release Leaders of the Baha'i Community

Four UN Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights

United Nations

23 Ordibehesht 1392 [13 May 2013]

Notification

Geneva (23 Ordibehesht 1392 [13 May 2013]) – Today, regarding arbitrary detention, a group of independent UN Human Rights experts called on the Iranian authorities to immediately release seven leaders of the Baha'i community, known as the Yaran, as the fifth anniversary of their arrest approaches on 30 Aban 1387 [20 November 2008], [a date] which was declared arbitrarily by the UN Working Group.

Ahmad Shaheed, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, said, "The Iranian government must demonstrate its commitment to religious freedom through the immediate and unconditional release of these prisoners of conscience. The appearance of these cases shows the inability to protect the trial with fair standards and in general endangers religious freedom in Iran."

On 25 Ordibehesht 1387 [14 May 2008], authorities in Tehran arrested Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm. The seventh Baha'i leader, Mahvash Sabet, had been arrested on 15 Esfand 1386 [5 March 2008] in Mashhad. Together, they formed a single national administrative group called Yaran for Iranian Baha'is. Authorities reportedly detained them for more than 20 months without charge and severely restricted their access to a lawyer.

In Mordad 1389 [July/August 2010], they were sentenced to 20 years in prison on charges of espionage, "propaganda against the regime", "association and collusion with intent to endanger national security" and "spreading corruption on earth." The following month, their sentence was reportedly reduced to 10 years, but in Esfand 1389 [February/March 2011] the court reinstated the original sentence of 20 years.

El Hadji Malick Sow, a human rights expert who is the chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, said, "These seven Baha'is have been imprisoned solely for managing the religious and

administrative affairs of their community. They were convicted after the trials, which failed to comply with the guarantees of a fair trial set out in international law.”

The Iranian constitution formally recognizes and protects four religions: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. Baha’is, on the other hand, fall outside the scope of domestic constitutional protections. The UN body, including the UN Human Rights Committee, has repeatedly expressed concern about discriminatory laws restricting Baha’is from forming religious institutions, entering universities, and accessing public sector jobs in Iran.

Heiner Bielefeldt, the UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, warned, “The Baha’is in Iran face numerous restrictions on their ability to worship freely. I reiterate to the Government of Iran, as a member of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, that as far as religious freedom is concerned, there cannot be a distinction between groups of interest and groups of dislike.”

Mr. Bielefeldt said, “Iran must give assurance that Baha’is and other unrecognized minorities can practice their own beliefs without fear or hindrance.”

Rita Isaac, an independent UN expert on minority issues, stated that the Baha’is are Iran’s largest non-Muslim religious minority. She said, “Their existence and religious identity must be protected under the United Nations Declaration on Minorities; otherwise, their right to express and freely practice their religion without interference or discrimination may be violated.”

According to reports, hundreds of Baha’is were arrested for activities such as organizing religious gatherings and defending the right to education. The special rapporteur on Iran, in his report of Esfand 1391 [February / March 2013]\*, informed the UN Human Rights Council that at least 110 Baha’is have been imprisoned in the country since the beginning of that year.

Mr. Shaheed said, “After five years, I am concerned that not only will the Yaran be unjustly deprived of their liberty, but that all Baha’is in Iran will be increasingly at risk of arrest if they become active in their community.” The special rapporteur called on the international community, including religious leaders around the world, to join the appeal to the Iranian government for the release of the Baha’is.

(\*) See the full report:

[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-56\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-56_en.pdf)