

[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] Deutsche Welle (DW)

[Date:] 25 Khordad 1389 [15 June 2010]

Conclusion of the Trial Of the Leaders Of the Iranian Baha'i Community

The last court hearing of the leaders of the Iranian Baha'i community ended on Monday, without the release of a verdict. According to the defendants' attorneys, the court ruling will probably be announced sometime next week.

The open trial of the seven Baha'i leaders in Iran was convened in Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court, on the three consecutive days of 12, 13 and 14 June [2010], in the presence of the attorneys and family members of the defendants. Judge Moghiseh had the responsibility of presiding over the court hearings.

Allegations against the Baha'i Leaders

Mahvash Sabet was arrested in early March 2008 and Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, who were arrested in May 2008, have been in prison ever since their arrest.

“These seven individuals had the responsibility of assisting with the spiritual affairs of the Baha'i community in Iran, and the judiciary system has accused them of espionage for foreign countries, acting against the national security, propaganda activities against the regime and spreading corruption on earth,” said Diane Ala'i, the Baha'i International Community's representative in Europe.

The defendants' legal team consists of Shirin Ebadi, Mahnaz Parakand, Abdolfattah Soltani and Dr. Hadi Esmailzadeh.

Holding Open Court Hearing

The court [hearing] cross-examining the allegations in the case of the seven Baha'i leaders came to its conclusion yesterday, without any ruling, as confirmed by the defendants' attorneys. This was the fourth court hearing of the defendants, while their third court hearing in May 2010 was held in the absence of their family members and in the presence of a number of interrogators, agents of the Intelligence Service and a cameraman.

This time, however, the trial was held in an open court, and three members of the defendants' legal team, as well as the members of their families, were present. According to Dr. Hadi Esmailzadeh, "The two court hearings held yesterday and the day before were open, and as many family members as it was physically possible to fit in the court room were present. We were also able to present our defence and make our remarks before the trial came to an end."

Attorneys' Reasoning

Dr. Esmailzadeh confirmed that the court would only issue a ruling once the last defence has been submitted to the court by the legal defence team. According to him, he will most probably be submitting his defence brief to the court on Wednesday.

Regarding the method of reasoning by the legal defence team to reject all the allegations, as well as to demand the release of his clients, Dr. Esmailzadeh said, "Regarding the existence of sufficient evidence, our view is naturally different from the prosecutor's view, and it is possible that the court will even come up with a separate view all together. Our case is based on lack of evidence for these allegations. It means that a number of reasons have been submitted, which have to be cross-examined and given to us for review, but we have been unable to find them in the files. It was decided that we would go to the court and see these reasons. But the main basis for our reasoning is the fact that the evidence and documents presented do not support and substantiate these allegations that the defendants have been accused of, which means we consider the evidence not to be sufficient."

Hadi Esmailzadeh also added that in the hearing they had held, [they] seriously argued over the allegations of corruption on earth, with which his clients have been charged. He said, "Our reasoning was based on rejecting the allegation of corruption on earth, which comes under one law, together with waging war, which carries specific punishments. The prosecutor argued based on the view of one of the great ayatollahs. In our view, according to the constitution, the verdict of a senior cleric is sought only in the absence of a law. Therefore, we very much hope that the court will acquit our clients of the charges of waging war and corruption on earth."

Additionally, regarding the allegations leveled against her clients, Mrs. Mahnaz Parakand, one of the defendants' attorneys, told Deutsche Welle, "In our view, there is no evidence to support any of the allegations pressed against our clients and, in fact, no evidence has been submitted to us. They were just saying that they had evidence, but they did not present it to us. In our view, the defendants must be acquitted."

Court's Possible Verdict

Mahnaz Parakand insisted that her clients were innocent but added that it was not predictable what type of ruling the court would release in this case. She said that for this reason, she was unable to comment on the matter.

Hadi Esmailzadeh also said, "Personally, I cannot predict a verdict of innocence, because prediction in our judiciary system is not the right thing to do. But personally, and with all my heart, I hope that, through God's mercy, it will not be a heavy ruling. I am not too hopeful of getting a verdict of innocence. Of course, God will do as He wants, but God's servants might do something else. This is my personal view; Mr. Soltani and Mrs. Parakand may have a different view, but I do not have much hope of getting a verdict of innocence. Even if they are [sentenced to the time in prison] that they have already endured, I will be happy with that verdict."