

Bahá'í International Community

United Nations Office

Situation of the Bahá'ís in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Bahá'ís have been oppressed in Iran throughout the history of their Faith, but official persecution and discrimination have greatly increased since 2005. UN mechanisms and agencies have documented many hundreds of cases of human rights violations that specifically target Bahá'ís in this country, e.g.:

- The Bahá'í Faith has no clergy; its sacred institutions (councils) are banned in Iran. Consequently, ad hoc groups administered activities and served the needs of some 300,000 Bahá'ís in the Islamic Republic. In 2008, the authorities declared all Bahá'í administrative arrangements illegal and stepped up efforts to stop all Bahá'í social, educational and community-related activities – in other words, all activities that go beyond the individual observance of religious obligations. For members of the Bahá'í Faith, many of these activities are an integral part of their religious practice.
- The seven former members of the Bahá'ís' national leadership group were arbitrarily detained for over two years before facing trial. There was no basis to any of the accusations against them, but in 2010 the court convicted them on six charges and imposed the maximum penalty, 20 years in prison. The appeals court later revoked three of the charges and reduced the sentences to 10 years, but in March 2011 the prisoners were informed that their 20-year sentences had been reinstated.
- There were five Bahá'ís in Iranian prisons in 2001, four in 2002-2003, and only two were arrested in 2004. Then the persecution intensified again. Since 2005, there have been over 500 arrests, and the number of arbitrary imprisonments continues to rise: as of early November 2011, over 100 of Iran's Bahá'ís were in prison.
- Arson and other violent attacks on Bahá'í homes, farms, shops, vehicles, cemeteries and other property have greatly increased over the past few years. These attacks are condoned by the authorities and committed with total impunity.
- Some officials and clerics encourage and condone persecution and discrimination against Bahá'ís. Since late 2004, media affiliated with the government have published many hundreds of articles inciting hatred against them, portraying their Faith in ways clearly intended to be highly offensive to Muslims, and accusing them of engaging in activity that threatens national security.
- Bahá'í children and adolescents in primary and secondary schools are subjected to intimidation and harassment by teachers and school officials.
- Members of the Bahá'í Faith are denied access to higher education. It is an official policy of the government to expel Bahá'ís from universities and vocational training institutions when they are identified as adherents of this religion. The authorities have repeatedly tried to stop members of the community from providing university-level courses to other Bahá'ís in Iran, in the privacy of their own homes (an initiative known as the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE)). In the latest concerted attack on the BIHE in May/June 2011, officers raided and searched 40 households, confiscated computers and materials, and arrested 19 Bahá'ís. Seven of those

arrested received four- or five-year prison sentences on baseless accusations that presented BIHE activities as crimes with the alleged aim of subverting the State.

- The government established a list of 25 trades from which Bahá'ís are banned, applies a range of restrictions on employment specifically to them, denies their rights to pensions and inheritance, and confiscates Bahá'í farmland, homes and property.