

**...that since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, Iranian government authorities have killed more than 200 Baha'i leaders solely because of their religious beliefs?□**

Last month, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, Ahmad Shaheed, stated that the Baha'i community is "the most persecuted religious minority in Iran." Baha'is in Iran long have been subject to particularly severe religious freedom violations. With a population of at least 300,000, the Iranian authorities consider them to be "heretics" and may face repression on the grounds of apostasy. Thousands have been arrested and imprisoned since 1979, and more than 10,000 have been dismissed from government and university jobs. At present, about 120 Baha'is remain in prison in Iran.

Baha'is may not establish places of worship, schools, or any independent religious associations in Iran. Baha'is also are barred from the military and denied government jobs and pensions as well as the right to inherit property. Their marriages and divorces also are not recognized, and they have difficulty obtaining death certificates. Baha'i cemeteries, holy places, and community properties often are seized or desecrated, and many important religious sites have been destroyed. The Baha'i community faces severe economic pressures, including denials of business licenses and jobs in both the public and private sectors. Iranian authorities often pressure private sector employers of Baha'is to dismiss them. Baha'is in Iran recently have faced increasingly harsh treatment, including increasing numbers of arrests and detentions and violent attacks on their homes and personal property. Even Baha'i schoolchildren in primary and high schools routinely are vilified, pressured to convert to Islam, and in some cases expelled on account of their religion.

Among the Baha'is in prison are seven Baha'i leaders – Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naemi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm. They were arrested in 2008 and sentenced to 20-year prison terms. Attorneys for the seven Baha'is, including Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, have had extremely limited access to them and to the court proceedings and have categorically denied the charges against them. In May 2011, in at least four different cities, Iranian authorities raided more than 30 homes of Baha'is involved with the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE), the community's 24 year-old initiative to educate its youth, whom the government bars from undergraduate or graduate studies. In October 2011, seven Baha'is were tried and found guilty of *membership in a deviant sect with the goal of taking action against the security of the country*.<sup>1</sup> The seven were sentenced to either four- or five-year prison terms. In January 2012, Vahid Mahmoudi, one of the seven educators imprisoned, was released after his sentence was suspended. The other six educators

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*Mahmoud Badavam, Noushin Khadem, Farhad Sedghi, Riaz Sobhani, Ramin Zibaie, and Kamran Mortezaie* –

remain in prison. In September 2011, prominent human rights defender Abdolfattah Soltani was arrested for preparing a defense for the Baha'i educators. In March 2012, Soltani received an 18-year prison sentence and was banned for an additional 20 years from practicing law.

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