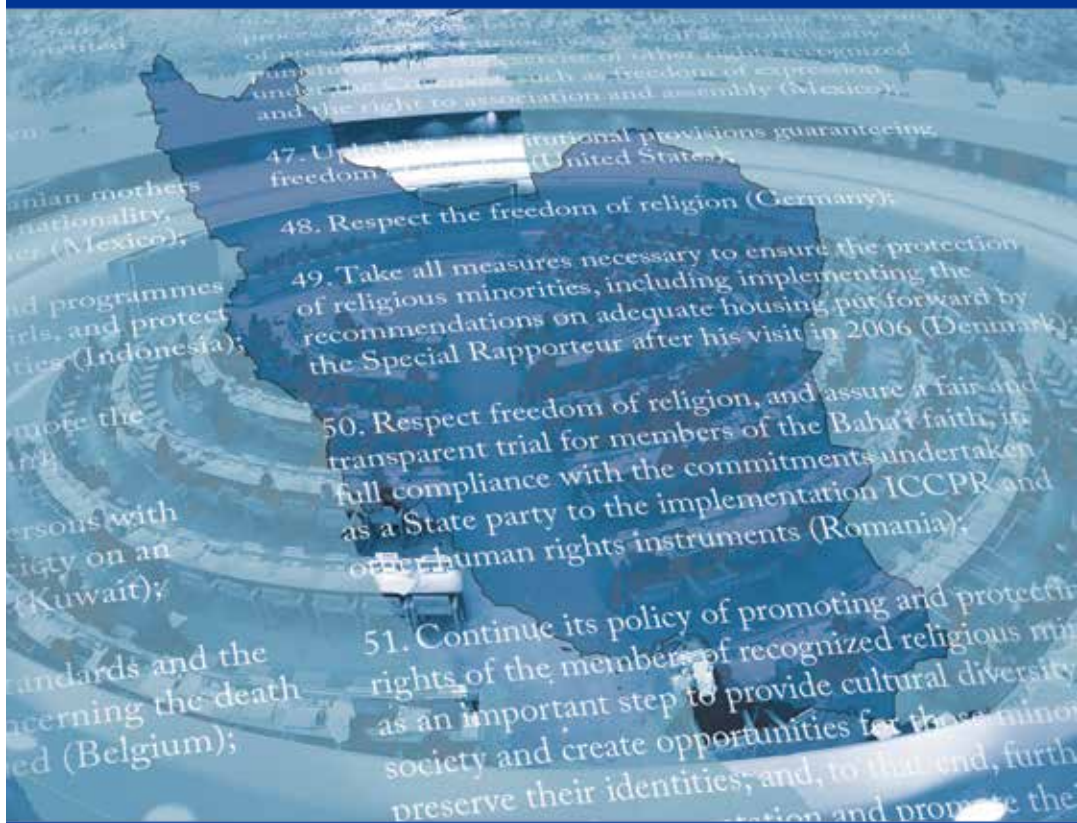


Unfulfilled Promises

Iran's failure to act after its 2010 Universal Periodic Review



A special report of the
Bahá'í International Community
September 2014

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About the cover: The graphic image on the cover of this booklet shows the chamber of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, where Iran's 2010 Universal Periodic Review was conducted, overlaid with a map of Iran and the text of several UPR recommendations to Iran regarding religious freedom and its treatment of the Iranian Bahá'í community.

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1) Introduction

In February 2010, the Islamic Republic of Iran underwent its first Universal Periodic Review. In the process, Iran accepted 123 of the 188 recommendations on how it could improve its human rights — recommendations that ranged from suggestions that Iran should “take steps to eliminate torture” to more general entreaties that it should “comply fully with the international human rights obligations.”

At least four of the recommendations that Iran accepted concern religious freedom, and four others directly mention Iran’s treatment of its Bahá’í religious minority.

The sad reality is this: In the four years since those commitments were made, the Islamic Republic of Iran has not done anything to implement the measures that specifically concern Iranian Bahá’ís. In fact, the opposite is true: the degree and intensity of human rights violations undertaken against Bahá’ís has continued unabated — and, by some measures, intensified.

Further, when gauged against some of the wider commitments Iran made in 2010 — such as on the elimination of torture, the rights of detainees, legal due process, and steps to promote economic and social rights for all of its citizens — Iran’s continuing persecution of Bahá’ís is a case study in its failure to implement UPR recommendations generally. In all, at least 34 of the recommendations that Iran accepted concern violations that Bahá’ís face — and none have been addressed by the government.

Bahá’ís represent Iran’s largest non-Muslim religious minority and they have been systematically persecuted as a matter of government policy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. During the first decade of this persecution, more than 200 Bahá’ís were killed or executed; hundreds more were tortured, imprisoned, or both; and tens of thousands lost jobs, access to education, and other rights — all solely because of their religious belief.

After a brief respite in the 1990s, government-led attacks surged in the mid-2000s. Since 2005, more than 725 Bahá’ís have been arrested for their faith, and the number of Bahá’ís in prison has risen from fewer than five to more than 100. The list of prisoners includes Bahá’ís from all walks of life, from educators to shop owners, from students to



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Interior of a Bahá’í home in Shiraz, Iran, after agents of the Ministry of Intelligence conducted a raid in May 2011.

The constant threat of raids, arrests, and detention or imprisonment has been among the main features of Iran's persecution of Bahá'ís over the last decade — and it remains unabated today, despite Iran's promises during the UPR and, more recently, promises by President Hassan Rouhani to end discrimination on the basis of religion.

all seven members of a former leadership group serving the Bahá'í community of Iran, who were arrested in dramatic fashion in 2008. The list extends through all age groups; even infants have been imprisoned with their mothers.

The constant threat of raids, arrests, and detention or imprisonment has been among the main features of Iran's persecution of Bahá'ís over the last decade — and it continues today, despite Iran's promises during the UPR and, more recently, promises by President Hassan Rouhani to end discrimination on the basis of religion.

Other types of continuing persecution include economic and educational restrictions, strict limits on the right to assemble and worship, and the dissemination of anti-Bahá'í propaganda in the government-led news media. Attacks on Bahá'ís or Bahá'í-owned properties go unprosecuted and unpunished, which gives other would-be attackers a sense of impunity and the signal that the government fully accepts if not condones attacks on Bahá'ís.

As this report will show, Iran accepted a wide range of recommendations from other countries to address these and other concerns. And yet, across the board, the discrimination against and the persecution of Bahá'ís remains unabated. Specifically:

- Bahá'ís continue to be arrested, at an increasing pace. During the period between Iran's 2010 UPR through August 2014, more than 440 Bahá'ís were arrested, all solely for charges related to their beliefs. This is in contradiction to numerous accepted recommendations, ranging from the treatment of detainees to religious freedom and calling for fair trials for Bahá'ís explicitly and improvements in due process and conditions for detainees generally. Since President Hassan Rouhani took power in August 2013, this situation has not improved. Between August 2013 through August 2014, at least 55 Bahá'ís have been arrested.
- Violent attacks on Bahá'ís continue — and they continue to go unprosecuted, despite accepted recommendations that call for steps to “end the current culture of impunity.” In August 2013, for example, a Bahá'í in Bandar Abbas was murdered by unknown assailants, shot in the head in a religiously motivated crime. No one has been brought to justice for the killing — nor has the attacker who stabbed a family of three in January 2014 in Birjand. Attacks on Bahá'í cemeteries have also continued with impunity.
- Hateful, anti-Bahá'í propaganda continues to be disseminated in Iran's official media, and those responsible continue to go unprosecuted. During the first half of 2014, in fact, the volume of such media attacks rose sharply, from 55 in January to at least 565 in June. This explicitly violates a recommendation, accepted by Iran, that calls on the government to “[f]ully respect the rights of the adherents of the Baha'i faith and to judicially prosecute those inciting hatred against them in religious environments.”
- Bahá'í youth remain deprived of access to higher education as a matter of government policy, in clear violation of Iran's acceptance of recommendations that call for an end to discrimination on the basis of religion and those that suggest improving access to higher education.
- The economic suppression of Bahá'í businesses continues unabated, in sharp contrast

to Iran's commitments to promote full economic and social rights for all its citizens. During the period from 2010 through 2014, a limited survey shows that at least 50 Bahá'í-owned shops or businesses were arbitrarily closed, resulting in the loss of more than 200 jobs for Bahá'ís. A number of Muslims who work in Bahá'í-owned businesses also lost their jobs from these closures.



A Bahá'í-owned shop in Rafsanjan, Iran, targeted by arsonists. Several businesses run by Bahá'ís there have suffered serious damage in a wave of attacks in the city since 25 October 2010. The attacks were accompanied by an anonymous letter warning "members of the misguided Bahaist sect" not to teach their faith.

2) Iran and the 2010 UPR

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was instituted as an integral feature of the Human Rights Council when it was created in 2006. Member States created a process that treats all states equally in considering their human rights records, and makes such an assessment in a regular or “periodic” manner — every four years.

The goal was to create a “cooperative mechanism, based on interactive dialogue, with the full involvement of the country concerned” that would support the Council’s overall mandate of “promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.”¹

Recommendations Iran accepted under the UPR

Iran first came up for review in 2010² — and it cooperated fully with the Council’s procedures for the session, duly submitting a national report in advance, responding to questions during the review, and later formally accepting many of the recommendations made by other countries for how it might improve its human rights record.

More specifically, of the 188 recommendations made by other members of the Council, Iran said that 102 “enjoyed its support,” and that another 21 were already “implemented or in the process of being implemented.” Iran promised to “examine” another 20 of those recommendations, and it rejected 45, saying they were “inconsistent” with existing laws or commitments.

Of note, 12 of those rejected recommendations dealt specifically with Iran’s persecution of Bahá’ís. They ranged from recommendations that Iran should release Bahá’í leaders from prison to one asking that it reprimand any school administrator or teacher who discriminates against Bahá’í children. In this report, however, we have chosen to focus on those recommendations that were accepted by Iran, on the basis that their record of fulfilling such promises tells the most about their real commitment to the UPR process.

In this light, it is important to state that many of those recommendations that were supported by Iran dealt with the broad scope of international human rights, such as the recommendation by New Zealand that Iran should “comply fully with the international human rights obligations to which it is bound.”³

Significantly, four of the recommendations that Iran said it supports specifically refer to Iran’s treatment of the Iranian Bahá’í community. This is noteworthy because Iran did not mention Bahá’ís in its national report and, in international forums and elsewhere in recent

¹ UN Document A/RES/60/251 — “Human Rights Council”

² The date of the interactive dialog that constituted Iran’s formal review before the Council was 15 February 2010 — but that session had been preceded by a filing period during which numerous documents were submitted to the Council regarding Iran’s human rights record.

³ UN Document A/HRC/14/12 “Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review — Islamic Republic of Iran” p. 13

years, it has repeatedly denied that it discriminates in any manner against Bahá'ís or that it has a policy of persecution against them.

The four accepted recommendations that mention Bahá'ís specifically are:

50. Respect freedom of religion, and assure a fair and transparent trial for members of the Baha'i faith, in full compliance with the commitments undertaken as a State party to the implementation ICCPR⁴ and other human rights instruments (Romania);

117. Ensure that the trials of seven Baha'is are fair and transparent and conducted in accordance with international standards, and that Iran amend all legislation that discriminates against minority groups (Australia);

118. Ensure that the trial of the Yarran⁵ is conducted in a fair and transparent manner, consistent with Iranian law, natural justice and due legal process (New Zealand);

119. Fully respect the rights of the adherents of the Baha'i faith and to judicially prosecute those inciting hatred against them in religious environments, the media and the Internet (Luxembourg);⁶

Moreover, four of the recommendations that were accepted by Iran directly address freedom of religion or protections for religious minorities. These were:

9. Ensure that its legislation and practice conform fully with requirements of article 18 of ICCPR and with its other obligations under international human rights law (Poland);

48. Respect the freedom of religion (Germany);

49. Take all measures necessary to ensure the protection of religious minorities, including implementing the recommendations on adequate housing put forward by the Special Rapporteur after his visit in 2006 (Denmark);

103. Guarantee, in compliance with its obligations under ICCPR, the effective in-



Chamber of the United Nations Human Rights Council. (UN Photo by Jean-Marc Ferré)

⁴ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

⁵ The word “Yarran,” which is more commonly spelled “Yaran,” refers specifically to the seven imprisoned Iranian Bahá'í leaders.

⁶ Iran says that the last three of these recommendations, #117, #118, and #119, are among those it considers “already implemented or in the process of implementation.”

Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

dependence of the procedures and administration of justice, restricted emergency legislation, adequate protection for human rights defenders and political opposition members, and the effective guarantee of freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of religion and belief (Chile);

In addition to these eight accepted recommendations, Iran accepted another 26 that have a direct impact on the way in which the government currently treats Bahá'ís. These range from recommendations about how to eliminate torture to those that promote economic rights.

These will be enumerated in the next chapter, which shows how, in all, 34 of the recommendations that were accepted by Iran have been disregarded as they concern the Iranian Bahá'í community.

Indeed, at the top of the list of accepted recommendations are explicit references to upholding the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and “international obligations” generally, which have direct and general implications for the treatment of Bahá'ís, not to mention all Iranian citizens.

The ICCPR in relation to the UPR

The ICCPR, of course, obligates governments to protect a wide range of human rights, from legal due process to protection from torture. Iran ratified the ICCPR in 1976 and it remains obligated to uphold its provisions. Iran has also cooperated with the Human Rights Committee, the monitoring body for the ICCPR.

In the 2010 UPR, moreover, Iran explicitly accepted recommendations that call for adherence to “international obligations” generally (#2).

As noted, many of the provisions of the ICCPR relate directly to Iran's treatment of Bahá'ís, from those that concern due process and various protections for detainees and prisoners to those that protect against torture or cruel treatment.

The ICCPR also explicitly protects freedom of religion and, as noted above, Iran accepted a recommendation from Poland (#9) that referred specifically to this, citing Article 18.

In Article 18, the ICCPR explicitly safeguards “the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.” This includes protections against coercion that would impair that freedom and the right to manifest belief in “worship, observance, practice, and teaching.”

Article 18 also upholds the “freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”

Iran fails completely in all of these categories in its treatment of Iranian Bahá'ís. Bahá'ís not only face restrictions in the manner of their “worship, observance, practice and teaching” but they are quite dramatically “coerced” in ways that impair their freedoms through arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, the denial of access to education, economic restrictions, and other forms of discrimination.

In its public statements, Iranian officials have denied that such discrimination or persecution exists — or claimed that if any Bahá'ís are imprisoned or otherwise restricted in their activities, it is because the Bahá'í Faith is merely a seditious political movement and not a legitimate religion.

Such claims are entirely false and do not meet even the most basic test of believability in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

What President Rouhani has promised since the UPR

In reviewing what Iran committed to in the 2010 UPR and the degree to which it has failed to meet those commitments, it is important to consider also the new promises that were made by President Hassan Rouhani in 2013. President Rouhani came to power in August 2013 after making a series of broad promises to improve human rights in Iran, promises that included explicit references to ending religious discrimination.

And since the election of President Hassan Rouhani last year, there has been a clear shift in emphasis among Iranian diplomats when they speak about their human rights record at the United Nations and the Human Rights Council. While continuing to deny that their nation has engaged in gross violations of human rights, or that Bahá'ís have in any way been discriminated against, officials representing Iran have nevertheless pointed to the moderate tone of the new president on human rights, as if to say “just give us some time.”

“We underscore the necessity for the international community to seize the momentum created by the new democratically elected government to positively and constructively engage with my country in dialogue for the promotion and protection of all human rights,” said Iran’s representative to the Human Rights Council on 17 March 2014.

Yet even in this context, the new government has displayed a huge gap between its rhetoric and reality.

On 11 April 2013, candidate Rouhani said: “All Iranian people should feel there is justice. Justice means equal opportunity. All ethnicities, all religions, even religious minorities, must feel justice.”¹

Central to these pledges was a promise to draft a new “charter of citizen’s rights” once he was elected. That charter, he said explicitly, would call for equality for all citizens without discrimination based on race, religion or sex.²



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani addresses the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September 2013. (UN Photo)

¹ “Fulfilling Promises: A Human Rights Roadmap for Rouhani,” International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, report, 21 August 2013.

² “Iran: New President must deliver on human rights promises,” 17 June 2013 press release from Amnesty International.

The international community took note of these pledges. In recent reports to the Human Rights Council, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon specifically referenced President Rouhani's promises about the charter.

"The President made promising pledges during the election campaign to address serious human rights concerns, including by introducing a citizens' rights charter, eliminating discrimination against women and ethnic minorities, promoting freedom of expression and alleviating censorship,"³ said Mr. Ban's report.

On 26 November 2013, a draft of the charter was published on President Rouhani's official website.⁴

Almost immediately, scholars on international human rights law pointed out a number of flaws. In general terms, the charter was vague, with open-ended conditionalities that sharply limited its effect by saying, for example, that that charter should be understood with "due consideration of Islam" or as outlined in the Iranian Constitution.⁵

More specifically, on the issue of religious minorities, the draft charter did nothing to overturn or address the constitutional exclusion of the Bahá'í Faith, which has been used as the main legal pretext for official discrimination against Bahá'ís.⁶

Ahmed Shaheed, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, pointed out this shortcoming in his recent report to the Human Rights Council:

"The charter currently fails to address laws and policies that discriminate against religious minorities, including the Bahá'í, and insufficiently addresses discrimination against women, including their ability to pass their citizenship on to their children."⁷

In the world today, Iran's persecution of Bahá'ís is among the most clear-cut example of state-sponsored religious discrimination. By ending that policy, President Rouhani could make a loud and unambiguous statement about his real commitment to human rights.

3 UN Document A/HRC/25/75 "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran." Page 3.

4 <http://president.ir/fa/72975>

5 Nazila Ghanea, "The Iranian Charter of Citizens' Rights" — 10 December 2013 — Blog of the European Journal of International Law. <http://www.ejiltalk.org/the-iranian-charter-of-citizens-rights/>

6 The Iranian Constitution explicitly recognizes Islam as the "official religion" of Iran, and states that "Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities."

7 UN Document A/HRC/25/61 "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran." Page 6.

3) Iran's unfulfilled promises and the current situation of Bahá'ís

Since 2010, the persecution of Iranian Bahá'ís has continued unabated and, by some measures, it has worsened. The number of Bahá'ís serving time in prison has increased, not decreased. This population is fed by a system of revolving door arrests and detentions that apparently strive mainly to harass the Bahá'í community and prevent them from attaining any sense of security or ability to plan for the future. Anti-Bahá'í propaganda continues to be disseminated by government-controlled media and has recently intensified. Young Bahá'ís continue to be prevented from freely attending university, leaving thousands without access to higher education. Bahá'ís who own businesses continue to face arbitrary shop closings and other measures aimed at economic suppression. Those making attacks on Bahá'ís continue to do so with impunity, facing no threat of prosecution. And the official policy documents that outline the scope and nature of this persecution have not been rescinded, revised or otherwise changed.

These human rights violations run counter to both international law and the numerous commitments Iran made under the 2010 UPR. In this chapter, we will provide an update on the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran — and point specifically to Iran's 2010 UPR commitments that directly address that persecution.

Imprisonments

As of this writing there are more than 100 Bahá'ís in prison in Iran — all held solely because of their religious beliefs. In addition to violating commitments made in accepting recommendations regarding respecting freedom of religion (#9, #48, #49, #103), these wrongful imprisonments violate agreed to commitments regarding due process of law (#46). Further, because many Bahá'ís are or were held in prisons or detention centers without adequate access to exercise, hygiene, or in conditions that are otherwise sub-standard, these wrongful imprisonments violate accepted commitments regarding the treatment of detainees (#44).

At the end of 2010, there were 52 Bahá'ís in prison in Iran. By the end of 2011, that figure had risen to 97. By December 2012, there were 116 Bahá'ís in prison. And at the end of 2013, 136 Bahá'ís were imprisoned.

The best known of these prisoners are the seven former national Bahá'í leaders who were arrested in 2008, held without charges or access to lawyers for nearly a year and in solitary confinement for almost half that time, tried in a closed courtroom in 2010, and given 20-year sentences on false charges of “espionage” or “disturbing national security.” The seven — whose names are Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm — remain in prison, and their 20-year sentences are the longest of any that have been given to the hundreds of other prisoners of conscience in Iranian prisons. The specifics of their case will be examined more completely in the next chapter — which discusses in greater detail the three accepted UPR

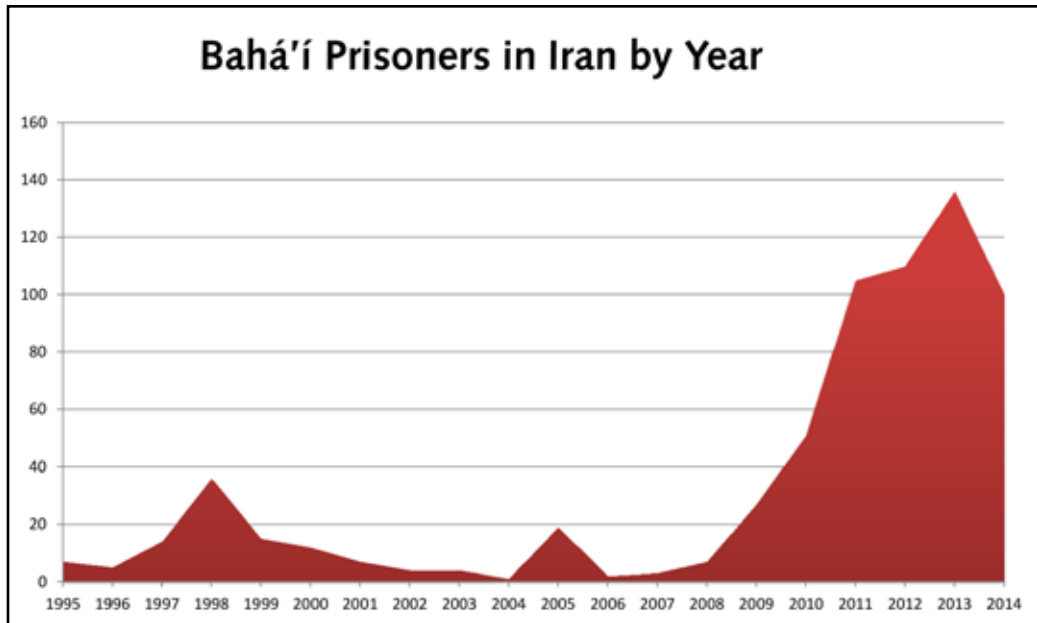
Relevant UPR Recommendations Accepted by Iran

#2. Comply fully with the international human rights obligations to which it is bound (New Zealand);

#46. Ensure, in law and practice, all guarantees of due process of law established in ICCPR, including the principle of presumption of innocence, as well as avoiding any punishment for the exercise of other rights recognized under the Covenant, such as freedom of expression and the right to association and assembly (Mexico);

#44. Ensure that the treatment of detainees duly follows international standards and that irregularities to those standards are properly investigated (Estonia);

The number of Bahá'ís imprisoned in Iran has grown sharply since Iran's 2010 UPR, hitting a high of 136 at the end of 2013. As of this writing, there are about 100 Bahá'ís in prison, according to the best information available.



Relevant UPR Recommendations Accepted by Iran

#41. Take measures to ensure that no torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment occurs (Netherlands);

#42. Take further steps to eliminate torture and other forms of ill treatment, and ensure an effective and impartial judicial system (Denmark);

#43. Respect the human rights of prisoners and detainees, and investigate and stop immediately any alleged abuses (Ireland);

#105. Ensure that competent bodies investigate allegations of torture, enforced disappearance and secret detention, that those responsible are punished and that programmes providing reparation for victims are established (Chile);

recommendations that dealt specifically with their treatment in the legal system — recommendations that Iran has likewise utterly failed to adhere to.

Their story, however, is emblematic of the situation facing all of the 100 some Bahá'ís who are currently imprisoned in Iran. As a group, like the seven national-level leaders, those Bahá'ís who are currently in prison (or who have been imprisoned at various points during the last four years and been released), have been subject to arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention, unfair trials, and plainly illegal imprisonment on false charges of espionage or “propaganda against the regime,” which in fact stem solely from their religious beliefs.

Violence, torture, and ill-treatment under interrogation

During the period from 2010 to the present time, the Bahá'í International Community has been able to document at least 46 incidents where Bahá'ís in government custody experienced torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. These incidents violate not only international law, of course, but also Iran's accepted recommendations regarding torture (#41, #42, #43, #105).

Incidents range from assaults during arrest or detention to outright beatings in prison and the use of solitary confinement, which is widely recognized as cruel and inhumane. Many Bahá'ís have also been held incommunicado during detention or placed in solitary confinement, sometimes for periods as long as three months; in the case of the seven former Bahá'í leaders, their initial period of solitary confinement extended at least six months. Of two Bahá'í women arrested in Mashhad in 2010, one was held in solitary confinement for six months and the other for more than 100 days. In a case involving the sentencing of 20 Bahá'ís in Yazd in April 2014, at least five are known to have been held in solitary for periods ranging from five to 27 days.

A few incidents during the period in question include:

- In October 2012, a Bahá'í who had been arrested at the passport office in Karaj was transferred to the Public Places Supervision Office headquarters and held there in solitary confinement, three floors underground. During the first interrogation session, he was beaten continually with a hose. During two later sessions, he was repeatedly doused with ice water while seated on a metal chair, until he lost consciousness.
- During a raid on the private residence of a Bahá'í family in July 2011 in Isfahan, where 15 individuals were involved in a religious meeting, ten agents of the Ministry of Intelligence began to videotape everything in the house, including all of those present. When the homeowners asked the purpose of the search and videotaping, they were slapped and kicked. They were arrested and held in detention for a month, during which time they were interrogated while blindfolded and placed under severe psychological pressure.
- In July 2011, a Bahá'í was transferred from prison in Isfahan to a solitary cell at Evin Prison. There, during four days of interrogation, he was severely beaten and verbally abused in an effort to get him to sign a false confession that he had been working against the regime and had organized a pornography network. Using a form of psychological torture, interrogators also threatened to do “unimaginable” things to his mother, sister and wife.

Arrests and arbitrary detention

Since 2010, Bahá'ís have continued to be arrested and detained in an arbitrary and unjust manner that is apparently designed to prevent them from enjoying any sense of security or a reasonable community life. These arrests and accompanying detentions violate not only accepted recommendations regarding religious freedom and non-discrimination, but also those pertaining to the rights of detainees (#43) and due process (#46).

Since the 2010 UPR, more than 440 Iranian Bahá'ís have been arrested, at a pace that reflects a substantial increase from prior years, as indicated in the chart on the following page. Most of the arrests and detentions follow a similar pattern: agents of the Ministry of Intelligence arrive at the homes of Bahá'ís, search the premises, confiscate items such as computers and books, and then make arrests.

Some incidents during the period from 2010 through 2014 include:

- On 27 April 2010, Intelligence Ministry agents went to the homes of four Bahá'ís in Hamadan, claiming at first to be from the post office services. They searched each household and confiscated materials linked to Bahá'í religious beliefs as well as other personal belongings, including cell phones and computers. Five individuals were arrested and taken for interrogation to the local information office of the Ministry. One was released the next day; the other four were released two days later.
- On 15 December 2012, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence in Karaj raided a meeting

Relevant UPR Recommendations Accepted by Iran

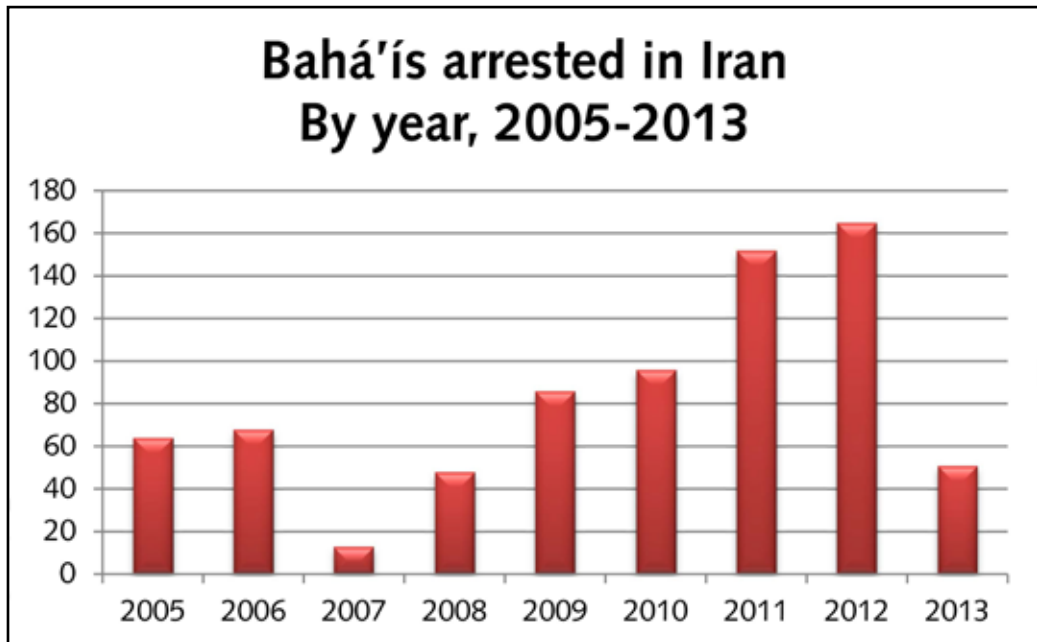
#43. Respect the human rights of prisoners and detainees, and investigate and stop immediately any alleged abuses (Ireland);

#46. Ensure, in law and practice, all guarantees of due process of law established in ICCPR, including the principle of presumption of innocence, as well as avoiding any punishment for the exercise of other rights recognized under the Covenant, such as freedom of expression and the right to association and assembly (Mexico);

organized for youth on marriage and family life. They videotaped the participants and arrested 16 individuals, including the homeowner, taking them away in a minibus they had brought for that purpose. By midnight, all were released except three, who were held for periods ranging from three days to several weeks.

- A Bahá'í woman was arrested on 13 January 2013 in Babol and released on bail. On 25 September 2013, she was tried on ten counts of “spreading propaganda against the regime by teaching the Bahá'í Faith”—a charge routinely levelled against Bahá'ís who are arrested. One of the charges accused her of holding memorial meetings and reciting the Bahá'í Prayer for the Dead at Bahá'í funerals held throughout the city — showing clearly that such arrests and trials are an effort to interfere with how Bahá'ís worship and practice their religion.
- In September 2013, agents raided the homes of three Bahá'ís in Tonekabon, arresting them and taking them initially to the Ministry of Intelligence. Their families, while trying to pursue the matter and discover their whereabouts, were attacked with pepper spray.

As indicated in the chart at right, the number of Bahá'ís arrested in Iran accelerated after Iran's 2010 UPR.



Incitement to hatred

The Iranian government has in recent years waged an extensive hate campaign against Iranian Bahá'ís in the government controlled media. This campaign, which has been well documented, has portrayed Bahá'ís as the source of every conceivable evil. They have been accused of being foreign agents or agents for imperialist or colonialist factions; they have faced continuous but utterly unfounded allegations of immorality; they have been branded as social pariahs to be shunned.

During the 2010 UPR, Iran accepted a recommendation by Luxembourg (#119) “to judicially prosecute those inciting hatred against them in religious environments, the media and the Internet.”

To date, as far as can be determined, no one has been prosecuted for disseminating anti-Bahá'í propaganda. And the government has continued to sanction the distribution of anti-Bahá'í propaganda in official news media — a policy that has continued under the new administration of President Hassan Rouhani.

This campaign, of course, is also counter to international law. The ICCPR, which Iran also pledged to uphold during the 2010 UPR, expressly provides that:

“Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.”

Anti-Bahá'í propaganda long a feature of repression

False, hateful anti-Bahá'í propaganda has long been a feature of the government's overall campaign of repression against Bahá'ís. It has been disseminated through government channels since the earliest days of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Newspaper articles in the 1980s announcing the execution of Bahá'ís, for example, declared that they had been killed “for treason to the Muslim people of Iran” as “spies.”

In 2011, the Bahá'í International Community documented the dissemination of more than 400 items of anti-Bahá'í propaganda in government-controlled or pro-government media over 16 months from late 2009 to early 2011.⁷

Many of the articles detailed in that report were published after Iran accepted Luxembourg's UPR recommendation. (#119)

Indeed, the duplicity with which Iran has approached this issue can be seen in the fact that the campaign emanates from the highest level of Iran's leadership. In October 2010, the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, gave a speech in Qom in which he identified Bahá'ís as “enemies of the Islamic Revolution.” The speech itself and news accounts of its content were widely disseminated by national media outlets, which, in turn, were followed by a number of other anti-Bahá'í articles that echoed Ayatollah Khamenei's statements about Bahá'ís.

Other elements of this campaign have portrayed Bahá'ís as foreign agents. Specifically, government media has sought to tie Bahá'ís to Zionism or to Israel.

During the 16-month period from late 2009 through May 2011, for example, the charge that Bahá'ís are Zionists or agents of Israel appeared in more than 75 articles or broadcasts.

Relevant UPR Recommendations Accepted by Iran

#119. Fully respect the rights of the adherents of the Baha'i faith and to judicially prosecute those inciting hatred against them in religious environments, the media and the Internet (Luxembourg);

⁷ “Inciting Hatred: Iran's media campaign to demonize Bahá'ís.” Bahá'í International Community, October 2011. <http://www.bic.org/inciting-hatred-irans-media-campaign-demonize-bahais>

In January 2011 the official Sima Television News Network broadcast three episodes in its long-running series *The Secrets of Armageddon*, which presented various conspiracy theories about Israel, focused on the Bahá'í Faith. Among other things, those episodes suggested the “misguided Bahaist sect” acted as an arm of international Zionism during the monarchist regime to systematically influence the political, military, and cultural branches of the Shah's regime, seeking to turn Iran into a second Israel.

Such inflammatory propaganda has not abated.

In 2013, for example, the media continued to disseminate anti-Bahá'í statements — state-

A religiously motivated killing

The family of Ataollah Rezvani, a well-known Bahá'í in Bandar Abbas, became concerned after he did not return home one night in late August 2013. A search confirmed their worst fears. His body was found in his car near the railway station on the outskirts of the city, located in southwest Iran. He had been shot in the back of the head.

Despite appeals for a full investigation, no one has ever been brought to justice for the crime, which by all accounts was motivated by religious hatred.

Mr. Rezvani, 54, was well loved and widely respected. He had also faced his share of discrimination for his beliefs. As a young man, he was expelled from his engineering studies at university because he was a Bahá'í. He nonetheless came to be regarded as an expert in water purification, and his work took him to other cities.

In the months before his death, because of pressure and threats from agents of the Ministry of Intelligence, he was dismissed from his job and forced to resort to selling water purification equipment. These agents also pressured him to leave the city. And he had begun receiving menacing telephone calls from unknown persons.

All of this came against a backdrop of anti-Bahá'í sermons by senior local clerics in Bandar Abbas. And his death came just weeks after Iranian news media re-published an old fatwa by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei that labeled the Bahá'í Faith as a “deviant and misguided sect” whose members should be shunned.

Iran's failure to live up to its human rights commitments can be directly tied to his death. By allowing such targeted hate speech, by directly pressuring him to leave, by forcing him out of a job, even by expelling him from his studies — his life is a picture of what happens when human rights obligations go unmet. Even after death, his family suffers knowing that the perpetrators will never be brought to justice.



Ataollah Rezvani

ments that were made at the highest levels of government. An article published on 29 July 2013 by a government-aligned news agency, Tasnim, cited a large selection of fatwas issued by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Among the new fatwas was an older one that had been previously disseminated. It quoted Ayatollah Khamenei as saying that Iranians are to avoid association with Bahá'ís:

All of the followers of the perverse sect of Baháism are condemned to be impure [*najis*] and if they come in contact with anything, it is absolutely necessary [for Muslims] to practice the guidance related to purification...

All of the believers should resist the trickery and corruption of the misguided sect of Baháism...

Avoid any association with the perverse and misleading sect of Baháism. They are najis [*impure*] and they are the enemy of your religion and what you believe in; therefore, my dear children, absolutely avoid them.⁸

The recent publication of one of these instructions from the Supreme Leader — falsely presented by Tasnim as a new fatwa — is particularly concerning, as it was issued one day before the inauguration of Iran's new president, Mr. Hassan Rouhani.

Soon after, in November 2013, a series of disturbing posts intended to instill fear in the Iranian population against the Bahá'í community was posted on Facebook. The posts included headings such as “Be aware, Bahá'í killers are in your city and at the school of your children, until they are completely eliminated, you are in danger.” Also included were blatant lies showing graphic and gruesome photos of the murder of a couple with the caption “Bahá'ís committed violent murders for disruption caused in their informational gathering.”⁹

In December 2013, government agencies intensified their campaign against the Bahá'ís. A new six-part documentary was broadcast on channel 6 of the Islamic Republic of Iran News Network called *Meet the Darkness*. Here is how the channel's website describes the documentary:

Meet the Darkness explores the relationship between the misguided sect of Bahá'ism and Israel, and the influence of the Bahá'ís on the sinister Pahlavi family.

8 This fatwa was originally posted on Ayatollah Khamenei's official website at <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/treatise-content?uid=2&tid=13>. It has since been removed but can be found at a site titled “Against Baháism” at <http://zedbahaayat.blogfa.com/post/104>.

9 Facebook has since removed the page due to inappropriate and dangerous content.

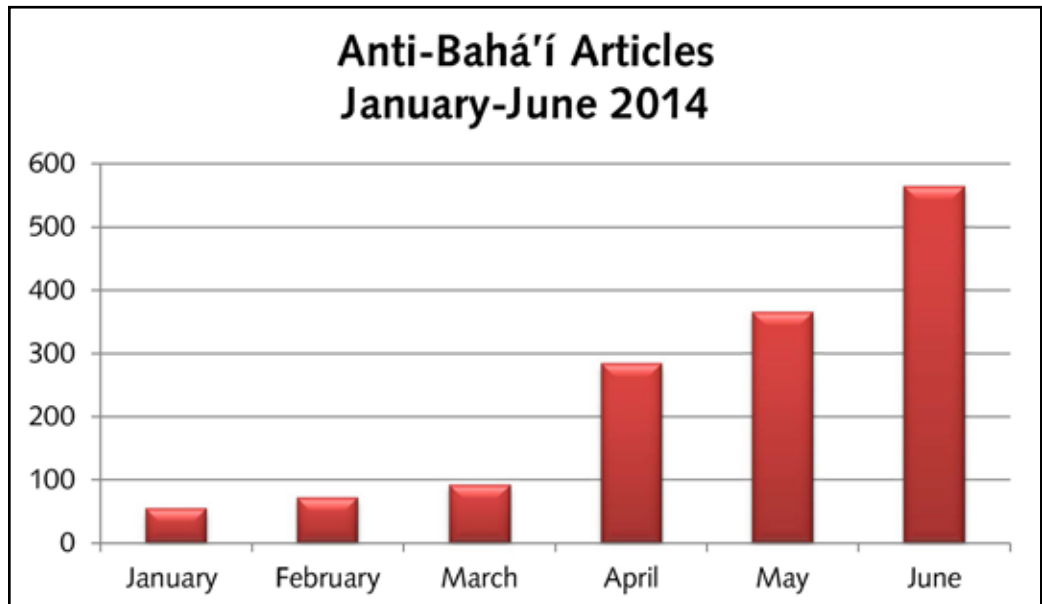


The above image was used to illustrate an anti-Bahá'í article that appeared on a government-sanctioned website in May 2014. The word “Baháism” is juxtaposed with a Jewish Star of David and a ghoulish spectre. The article was one of more than 365 that month alone.

The first part of the documentary was aired the second week of December after the 8:00 pm news. The teaser of the documentary begins with a cleric stating: “The supporters of the Shah were all Bahá’ís.” This was followed by dark ominous music playing in the background as photos were shown of the Faith’s Prophet Founder and early Bahá’ís.¹⁰

During the first part of 2014, moreover, the amount of anti-Bahá’í propaganda rose dramatically. The Bahá’í International Community catalogued at least 55 anti-Bahá’í articles on Iranian websites in January, 72 in February, 93 in March, 285 in April, 366 in May, and 565 in June.

The number of anti-Bahá’í articles in official or semi-official Iranian media rose sharply in 2014, from 55 in January to 565 in June.



Discrimination in higher education

Iran’s continued effort to deny young Bahá’ís access to higher education clearly violates its acceptance of recommendations on freedom of religion (#48, #50, #103) and the protection of religious minorities (#49, #117). Its educational policies concerning Bahá’ís also run counter to an accepted recommendation from Qatar to “intensify efforts to further opportunities for access to higher education” (#22).

In addition, Iran’s exclusion of Bahá’ís from higher education violates its promises with respect to accepted recommendations concerning conformance with economic, social and cultural rights (#5, #6, #7, #21, #61), which cover the right to education. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), for example, states clearly that “higher education shall be made equally accessible to all.”

Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, after which Bahá’ís were expelled from all universities and colleges, Bahá’ís have faced steep barriers to higher education. In 2003, in response to

¹⁰ 3 January 2014. http://roshangari.ir/index.php?option=com_jvideodirect&v=VuQoapWM3sQl9

international pressure condemning the government's policy of debarring Bahá'í students from access to higher education, the authorities modified the forms on the college entrance examination so that Bahá'ís might be allowed to take it without having to lie about their religion. However, most Bahá'ís continued to be excluded from colleges and universities in Iran in practice through a computerized scheme that routinely returns their applications as “incomplete” and through case-by-case expulsions once their Bahá'í identity is determined.

These policies of exclusion and discrimination, moreover, are codified in official policy documents. In 2006, for example, the government wrote a confidential letter to 81 universities ordering that Bahá'ís be expelled if their religious beliefs become known.¹¹

That this policy continues is evidenced by the fact numerous Bahá'ís have been expelled during the years 2012, 2013, and 2014. Examples of such incidents include:

- In April 2013, Bayan Sokouti, a third year associate diploma student studying for a bachelor's degree in civil engineering at Babol University, was expelled after having completed 59 credit hours.
- On 15 December 2012, Misagh Salmanzadeh Noushabadi, a physics student at the Khajeh Nasir Toosi University of Technology (KNTU) in Tehran, was expelled for being a Bahá'í. He was admitted in 2010/2011 and had already completed 77 credit hours.
- In January 2013, it was learned that Alhan Shadabi of Kermanshah was prevented from completing her enrollment at university, despite passing the National University Entrance Examination and selecting a course of study. This was because she received a message stating that she had an “incomplete file” when viewing her test results online. When she pursued the matter with the testing office, she was told that every student is expelled once it becomes known that he or she is a Bahá'í. The office refused to give this explanation in writing.

Discrimination in primary and secondary schools

Discrimination in education also extends to high school and primary school students. While they are allowed to enroll and attend school, Bahá'í youth of high school and primary school age still face various forms of harassment by school administrators and teachers.

In March 2013 in Semnan, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence visited Shakhid Beheshty and Amir Kabir high schools and detained four Bahá'í students. They were interrogated for a few hours about the activities of the Bahá'í community and released.

In February 2013, a report was received regarding a high school student in Isfahan who was severely beaten, verbally assaulted, and whose Bahá'í beliefs were insulted by his teacher. When he and his family protested, the teacher stated that owing to his previous administrative post at a school in Isfahan, he personally knew members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and security officials and that their complaints would not have any effect.

Relevant UPR Recommendations Accepted by Iran

#22. Continue to implement measures aimed at further promoting and protecting children's rights, and intensify efforts to ensure further opportunities for access to higher education (Qatar);

#49. Take all measures necessary to ensure the protection of religious minorities, including implementing the recommendations on adequate housing put forward by the Special Rapporteur after his visit in 2006 (Denmark);

#117. Ensure that the trials of seven Baha'is are fair and transparent and conducted in accordance with international standards, and that Iran amend all legislation that discriminates against minority groups (Australia);

¹¹ The text of this letter is available at: <http://news.bahai.org/story/575>

The Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education

Since 2010, the government has continued its efforts to shut down the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE). This informal arrangement of the Bahá'í community in Iran has been in operation since 1987 and arose out of the need to provide means for young Bahá'ís to continue their studies upon completion of high school. Drawing on volunteer faculty and staff (many who were Bahá'í professors fired from government universities at the time of the Revolution), it offers a correspondence-school type college education in a wide range of subjects.

In 1998, the government staged a series of sweeping raids in late September and early October, arresting at least 36 members of the BIHE's faculty and staff and confiscating much of its equipment and records, which were located in over 500 homes.

In response, with the help of the international community, the BIHE's efforts moved more and more towards providing education online. Nevertheless, the government has repeatedly arrested those faculty and staff on the ground in Iran who give it necessary support.

In the period since Iran's 2010 UPR, the government sought again to shut down the BIHE by arresting and imprisoning its Iran-based administration. In May 2011, government agents raided some 30 homes in Tehran, Karaj, Isfahan, and Shiraz, arresting 16 individuals involved in supporting the BIHE. Twelve of those people were ultimately put on trial and given prison sentences of either four or five years.

The crackdown on the BIHE continues. On 13 August 2013, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence in Mashhad raided a site where the BIHE was holding an examination. They arrested two students and an individual who was hosting the exam.

Among the 12 Bahá'í educators who have been imprisoned for their support of the BIHE are: Mahmoud Badavam, Ramin Zibaie, Riaz Sobhani, Farhad Sedghi; (bottom row, left to right) Noushin Khadem, Kamran Mortezaie, and Kamran Rahimian.



Economic suppression

The government has systematically sought to deprive Bahá'ís of a decent living through discrimination in employment, shop closings and a number of other economic mechanisms. This effort violates a number of commitments that Iran made during the 2010 UPR when it accepted recommendations to promote and improve its record in the area of economic, social, and cultural rights, as in recommendations #5, #6, #7, #21, and #61.

Indeed, economic pressure on Iran's Bahá'í community remains acute, with both jobs and business licenses being denied to Bahá'ís. Government jobs, including not only in the civil service but also in such fields as education and law, have been denied to Bahá'ís since the years immediately following the Revolution, and Muslims often are pressured to fire Bahá'ís in their employ in the private sector.

During the period in question, from 2010 through 2014, the Bahá'í International Community has been able to document more than 50 incidents where Bahá'í shops or businesses were arbitrarily closed or deprived of business licenses, contributing to the loss of more than 200 jobs. The figure is undoubtedly much higher, since not every incident is reported from Iran because of the difficulty in getting information about human rights violations out of the country.

This type of economic discrimination and oppression also clearly violates international agreements, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognizes the right to work “without discrimination of any kind as to race, color, sex, language, religion.”

Recent incidents of economic discrimination or suppression against Bahá'ís during the period in question include:

- In July 2013, five Bahá'ís from Najafabad, who were employed at a contracting company, were dismissed without receiving their salary or other benefits.
- In April 2013, four Bahá'í-owned shops in Birjand were closed and sealed by authorities. Business permits for other Bahá'ís there were denied or denied renewal.
- In January 2013, the manager at a Bahá'í-owned elevator company in Isfahan was summoned by the Public Places Supervision Office and threatened in an effort to force him to provide a list of all of his employees and their religions along with similar lists for other Bahá'í-owned companies. The Office had previously collected the names and addresses of all the Bahá'í-owned optometry shops, including a list of their employees and their religions.
- In January 2013, a large, Bahá'í-owned distributor of hygiene products in Tehran was closed down, causing some 70 employees to lose their jobs. The Bahá'í owner was threatened against filing complaints.
- Over the course of 2013, all Bahá'í-owned shops in the city of Semnan were closed down and sealed by authorities.

Relevant UPR Recommendations Accepted by Iran

#5. Continue its efforts to promote human rights in the economic, social and cultural fields (Sudan);

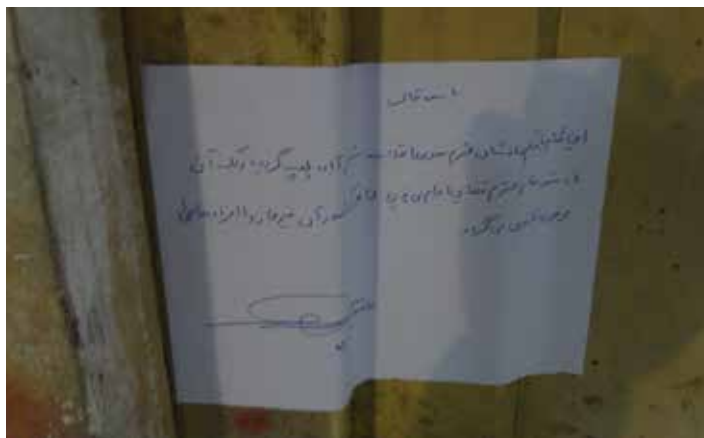
#6. Continue to take innovative measures to ensure that its development policies permit the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in the country (Plurinational State of Bolivia);

#7. Enhance efforts to further promote economic and social rights, as well as the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children and people with disabilities (Viet Nam);

#21. Coordinate efforts in a manner that promotes the effective enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and tackle obstacles in that regard (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya);

#61. Continue to promote the living standards of the people by allowing the further enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights (Kuwait);

- On 16 November 2012, the government authorities closed all Bahá'í businesses in Hamadan province. This day in the Muslim calendar marks a holy day for Bahá'ís, the anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, Founder of the Bahá'í Faith. At least 32 stores and warehouses belonging to Bahá'ís were sealed by the authorities. Over the following days, the shop owners were summoned to the Information Office of the Ministry of Intelligence in groups of three each day, and were asked to sign pledges not to close their shops on Bahá'í holy days.



Authorities continue to arbitrarily close Bahá'í-owned businesses and shops. Above is a close-up of a seal placed on the door of a Bahá'í-owned workshop in Abadeh in October 2013. It says: "This shop has been shut down by warrant of the general and revolutionary prosecutor of the city."

Impunity from prosecution

The perpetrators of violence against Bahá'ís and Bahá'í properties have utterly escaped prosecution in recent years. During the period from 2005 through 2012, there were more than 220 attacks of various sorts against Bahá'ís or Bahá'í properties. During the same period, there were no reports of prosecution or convictions against attackers.

The pace of attacks has not lessened since Iran's 2010 UPR review, despite all of the recommendations it accepted to respect religious freedom and abide by international human rights law. More specifically, Iran also accepted a recommendation (#119) to "fully respect" the rights of Bahá'ís and to "judicially prosecute" those responsible for inciting hatred against them — a commitment which could be understood to apply also to those who have attacked Bahá'ís.

Yet, as noted, no one has been prosecuted for inciting hatred against Bahá'ís, let alone launching attacks against them.

In the period since February 2010, among the most dramatic of such attacks was the stabbing of three Bahá'ís in Birjand by an anonymous individual, an apparent hate crime.

According to reports from Iran, the masked attacker entered the home of Ghodratollah Moodi and his wife, Toubá Sabzehjou, at about 8 p.m. on 3 February 2014. He immediately assaulted Mr. Moodi, Mrs. Sabzehjou, and their daughter, Azam Moodi, with a knife or sharp instrument, seriously injuring all three of them.

Hatred against the living — and the dead

Since the Islamic Revolution, Bahá'í cemeteries have been frequently attacked or vandalized, often with government complicity. It is among the most disturbing aspects of the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran.

In recent years, these attacks have included the firebombing of mortuary buildings, the toppling of gravestones, the uprooting of landscape shrubbery, the spray-painting of anti-Bahá'í graffiti on cemetery walls and the exhumation of bodies. Given cultural norms that hold last rites as sacred and cemeteries as holy ground, these attacks seem especially egregious and hateful — and, while the connection cannot be definitively proved, it seems likely they have been instigated or at least inflamed by the anti-Bahá'í campaign in the media, which, of course, Iran promised to address in the 2010 UPR.

Many of these incidents have occurred with overt or tacit government support — at least at the local level. And it is clear that many of those attacks for which the perpetrators remain unidentified could not have taken place without some type of governmental backing. In several attacks on Bahá'í cemeteries, for example, heavy construction equipment has been used — equipment which is not easy to operate without governmental sanction, and which could not go unnoticed by officials.



In early 2014, Revolutionary Guards dug this hole, allegedly for the foundation of a new cultural and sports center, in a historic Bahá'í cemetery in Shiraz.

Since 2010, there have been 22 such attacks on Bahá'í cemeteries.

Among the most egregious examples of this continuing persecution, and the government's utter failure to change its policies or take action against those who persecute Bahá'ís, is the dramatic excavation at a historic Bahá'í cemetery in Shiraz in April 2014. Elements of Iran's Revolutionary Guard began a large excavation there, apparently in preparation to build a new "cultural and sports" center, despite numerous appeals by the Bahá'í community. The site is, among other things, the resting place of some 950 Bahá'ís — including ten Bahá'í women whose cruel hanging in 1983 came to symbolize the government's deadly persecution of Bahá'ís. At one point, at least 40 trucks were lined up to take away earth or other material removed during the excavation.

Mr. Moodi was injured in his abdomen and side; Mrs. Sabzehjou was wounded in the neck. Both lost consciousness from the loss of blood. However, Azam Moodi was able to call the police and all three were taken to the hospital. They have since recovered.

There has been no reported effort by police to find and bring the attacker to justice.

The Moodi family, shown recovering at home, after a stabbing attack on 3 February 2014. The arm of Azam Moodi is visibly bandaged. No one has been brought to justice for the attack, which sent all three to the hospital.



4) The case of the seven imprisoned Bahá'í leaders

In its 2010 UPR, Iran accepted three recommendations by other governments calling for fair and transparent trials for Bahá'ís. Two of those recommendations specifically referred to the situation of seven imprisoned Iranian Bahá'í leaders, who were then on trial for a range of false charges.

The recommendations advocating fair trails for Bahá'ís were made by the governments of Romania, Australia, and New Zealand, numbered 50, 117, and 118. The operative language is quite similar, asking that Iran “[e]nsure that the trials of seven Baha'is are fair and transparent and conducted in accordance with international standards,” as the Australian recommendation put it.

The sad fact is that, as with the other accepted recommendations involving Bahá'ís, Iran has utterly failed to live up to its promises regarding legal due process.

The details of the case show the sharp discrepancy between what Iran promised and how the government actually acted.

The seven Bahá'í leaders formed the entire membership of the now-disbanded group known as the “Yaran,” which means “friends” in Persian. The group operated with the explicit knowledge of the government to tend to the spiritual and social needs of the 300,000-member Bahá'í community of that country. The group was formed because, in the years immediately



The seven Iranian Bahá'í leaders, imprisoned since 2008, several months before their arrests. Seated from left, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Saeid Rezaie, and, standing, Fariba Kamalabadi, Vahid Tizfahm, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, and Mahvash Sabet.

Relevant UPR Recommendations Accepted by Iran

#50. Respect freedom of religion, and assure a fair and transparent trial for members of the Baha'i faith, in full compliance with the commitments undertaken as a State party to the implementation ICCPR and other human rights instruments (Romania);

#117. Ensure that the trials of seven Baha'is are fair and transparent and conducted in accordance with international standards, and that Iran amend all legislation that discriminates against minority groups (Australia);

#118. Ensure that the trial of the Yaran is conducted in a fair and transparent manner, consistent with Iranian law, natural justice and due legal process (New Zealand);

following the Islamic Revolution, the authorities had outlawed official Bahá'í institutions at the national and local levels, executing scores of Bahá'í individuals who had been elected to these Bahá'í institutions. The group was tolerated because there was a need not only for coordination but also for a liaison between the community and the government.

On 14 May 2008, in a series of early morning raids in Tehran, six members of the group were arrested: Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm. A seventh member, Mahvash Sabet, had been detained two months earlier on 5 March 2008.

Because these raids were conducted in a manner similar to raids some 25 years earlier when the national level leaders of Iran's Bahá'í community were likewise swept up and taken away, only to be swiftly executed, the event stirred considerable alarm among international human rights activists.

And, indeed, for the first few weeks, there was no word of the whereabouts of the seven — nor any charges filed against them — a clear violation of Article 9 of the ICCPR regarding the legal rights of a person who has been arrested.

Injustices continued to mount:

- International *and* Iranian law require that detainees be quickly and formally charged with crimes. The seven were held at least nine months before any charges against them were mentioned by officials, and even then it was at a press conference, not in a court setting.

Their real crime: service to their community



Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi

Fariba Kamalabadi is a developmental psychologist and mother of three who was denied the chance to study at a public university as a youth because of her Bahá'í belief. Prior to her current incarceration, she had been arrested twice before, and was held for periods of one and two months respectively, all due to her volunteer work for the Bahá'í community.

Born in Tehran on 12 September 1962, she graduated from high school with honors but was nevertheless barred from attending university. In her mid-30s, she embarked on an eight-year period of informal study in developmental psychology from the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education (BIHE), the educational initiative established by the Bahá'í community of Iran to provide higher education for its young people.

Mrs. Kamalabadi married fellow Bahá'í Ruhollah Taefi in 1982. They have three children, the youngest of whom was only 13 when she was arrested in 2008. Mrs. Kamalabadi's experience with persecution extends beyond her immediate situation. Her father was fired from his job as physician in the government health service in the 1980s because he was a Bahá'í, and he was later imprisoned and tortured.

- The right to legal counsel is spelled out in both international law and Iranian law. The seven were denied access to their lawyers for more than a year and then only allowed barely an hour of contact before their trial began.
- Detainees who have been charged also have the right to seek bail and to be released pending trial. The Bahá'í leaders were denied bail, despite numerous requests.

The actual trial of the seven commenced on 12 January 2010 — just a few weeks before Iran's formal UPR session in Geneva. Court sessions continued intermittently over the next six months, until a final, three-day session in June 2010.

In August, the results of the trial were announced. Convicted on spurious charges of espionage, “propaganda activities against the regime,” and organizing an “illegal administration,” among other things, each Bahá'í was sentenced to 20 years in prison. The five men are currently serving their sentences in Gohardasht Prison in Karaj, outside Tehran. The two women remain at Evin Prison in Tehran.

Violations of Iranian and international law during the trial

On top of the injustices during the illegal pre-trial detention of the seven, there were numerous violations of Iranian and international law during the trial — not to mention Iran's promises under the 2010 UPR.



Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani

Jamaloddin Khanjani is a once-successful factory owner who lost his business after the 1979 Islamic revolution because of his belief in the Bahá'í Faith. He then spent most of the 1980s on the run under the threat of death from Iranian authorities, arrested three times before his current incarceration.

Born 27 July 1933 in the city of Sangsar, Mr. Khanjani grew up on a dairy farm in Semnan province and never obtained more than a high school education. Yet his dynamic personality soon led to a successful career in industrial production — and as a Bahá'í leader.

In his professional career, he has worked as an employee of the Pepsi Cola Company in Iran, where he was a purchasing supervisor. He later left Pepsi Cola and started a charcoal production business. Later he established the first automated brick factory in Iran, ultimately employing several hundred people.

In the early 1980s, he was forced to shut down that factory and abandon it, putting most of his employees out of work, because of the persecution he faced as a Bahá'í. The factory was later confiscated by the government.

Mr. Khanjani married Ms. Ashraf Sobhani in the mid-1950s. They have four children. His wife passed away in March 2011 while he was in prison. Authorities refused to furlough Mr. Khanjani even to attend her funeral.

- The trial was closed to the public. Although relatives of the seven were allowed to be present, diplomats, the media, and the general public were barred from attendance. This obviously violates Iran's promise for "transparency" during the trial.
- The seven were frequently prevented from speaking or defending themselves. Reports that emerged from the trial sessions indicated that the chief judge cut off testimony from the seven at numerous points during the trial, violating every standard of judicial fairness.
- There was obvious evidence of bias on the part of the judge, who seemed clearly in league with the prosecutors, according to reports that emerged from the trial. For example, the final court judgment, issued on 7 August 2010 by Mohammad Moghiseh, Chief Judge of Branch 28 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court, expresses deep religious prejudice, as he goes well beyond the activities allegedly at issue to characterize the activities of an entire global religious community:

...the modus operandi of the world administration of the perverse Bahaist sect, both in Iran and in other countries, is to engage in illegal acts, conceal the administrative decisions from the public and authorities, attempt to undermine and deceive government authorities, engage with opposition groups and collaborate with hostile governments with the aim of assisting in propaganda against the Islamic Iran.

Mahnaz Parakand, a member of the Defenders of Human Rights Center, which handled

Mr. Afif Naeimi

Aff Naeimi is an industrialist who was unable to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor because as a Bahá'í he was denied access to a university education. Instead, he diverted his attention to business, one of the few avenues of work open to Bahá'ís, taking over his father-in-law's blanket and textile factory.



Born on 6 September 1961 in Yazd, Mr. Naeimi has long been active in volunteer Bahá'í service. He has taught Bahá'í children's classes, conducted classes for adults, taught at the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education, and been a member of the Auxiliary Board, an appointed position which serves principally to inspire, encourage, and promote learning among Bahá'ís. He married Ms. Shohreh Khallokhi in the early 1980s. They have two sons.



Mr. Saeid Rezaie

Saeid Rezaie is an agricultural engineer who has run a successful farming equip-

the defense of the seven, and who was in the courtroom with them, enumerated these and other injustices in testimony to the European Parliament in 2011:

The bill of indictment that was issued against our clients, the Yaran, was more like a political announcement, rather than a legal document. It was a fifty-page document, one fifth of which was devoted to explaining the history of the Bahá'í Faith, how it originated and the perspective of the person preparing the indictment on the way the Bahá'í Faith was founded and spread in Iran. This bill of indictment was full of accusations and humiliations leveled against the Bahá'í community of Iran, especially our clients. It was written without producing any proof for their allegations.

Ms. Parakand also said the presiding judge showed an utter lack of impartiality, “which is one of the conditions of a fair trial.”

He was using the same language and phrases outlined in the bill of indictment such as “perverse Bahaist sect.” This clearly shows the lack of impartiality of the presiding judge and an unfair trial based on one’s belief. In numerous instances, the presiding judge cut short the clients’ defence statements on the pretence that their argument was considered to be teaching Bahaism, depriving them of making their defence.

Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi, founder of the Defenders of Human Rights Center, who participated in the early stages of the defense of the seven but was out of the country at the time of the actual trial, told the BBC in August 2010 that she was “stunned” by the 20-year jail terms.

ment business in Fars Province for more than 20 years. He is also known for his extensive scholarship on Bahá'í topics, and is the author of several books.

Born in Abadan on 27 September 1957, Mr. Rezaie spent his childhood in Shiraz, where he completed high school with distinction. Mr. Rezaie has actively served the Bahá'í community since he was a young man. He taught Bahá'í children’s classes for many years, and served the Bahá'í Education and Bahá'í Life Institutes. He was also a member of the National Education Institute. He has experienced various forms of persecution for his Bahá'í belief, including an arrest and detention in 2006 that led to 40 days in solitary confinement. In 1981, he married Ms. Shaheen Rowhanian. They have three children, two daughters and a son.



Mrs. Mahvash Sabet

Mahvash Sabet is a teacher and school principal who was dismissed from public education for being a Bahá'í. Prior to her 2008 arrest, she was director of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education, which provides alternative higher education for Bahá'í youth. She also served as secretary to the Friends in Iran, before becoming a member of the group.

Born Mahvash Shahriyari on 4 February 1953 in Ardestan, Mrs. Sabet moved to Tehran when she was in the fifth grade. She began her professional career as a

“I have read their case file page by page and did not find anything proving the accusations, nor did I find any document that could prove the claims of the prosecutor,” said Mrs. Ebadi in a television interview, broadcast on 8 August by the Persian-language service of the BBC.

The charges of espionage, for example, revolve almost entirely around the fact that the seven sent reports of the religious activities of Iranian Bahá'ís to the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, the Universal House of Justice, which is located at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel. And so, as with the anti-Bahá'í propaganda, the evidence used to “convict” the seven of spying make much of this connection to Israel.

Moreover, the entire episode of the arrest, detention, trial and conviction of the seven, is emblematic of the situation that has faced other Iranian Bahá'ís who have been arrested in Iran in recent years. Like the seven, they have faced similar charges relating to espionage, “propaganda against the regime,” or “illegal activities” — all in connection with legitimate religious activities.¹²

12 The injustices facing the seven have been compounded by the fact that, according to Article 134 of the new 2013 Iranian penal code, only the longest of any compound sentences should be served — meaning that the consecutive 10 year sentences that yielded a 20 year prison term should be automatically reduced now to 10 years — an action that has not occurred as of this writing.

teacher and also worked as a principal at several schools. In her professional role, she also collaborated with the National Literacy Committee of Iran. After the Islamic revolution, however, like thousands of other Iranian Bahá'í educators, she was fired from her job and blocked from working in public education. She married Siyvash Sabet on 21 May 1973. They have a son and a daughter.

While the other members of the Friends were arrested at their homes in Tehran on 14 May 2008, Mrs. Sabet was arrested in Mashhad on 5 March 2008. Although she resides in Tehran, she had been summoned to Mashhad by the Ministry of Intelligence, ostensibly on the grounds that she was required to answer questions related to the burial of an individual in the Bahá'í cemetery in that city.



Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli

Behrouz Tavakkoli is a former social worker who lost his government job in the early 1980s because of his Bahá'í belief. Prior to his current imprisonment, he has also experienced intermittent detainment and harassment and, in 2005, he was jailed for four months without charge, spending most of the time in solitary confinement.

Born 1 June 1951 in Mashhad, Mr. Tavakkoli studied psychology in university and then completed two years of service in the army, where he was a lieutenant-

ant. He later took additional training and then specialized in the care of the physically and mentally handicapped, working in a government position until his firing in 1981 or 1982. Mr. Tavakkoli married Ms. Tahereh Fakhri Tuski at the age of 23. They have two sons.

To support himself and his family after he was fired from his government position, Mr. Tavakkoli established a small millwork carpentry shop in the city of Gonbad. He also established a series of classes in Bahá'í studies for adults and young people.

He has been periodically detained by the authorities. Among the worst of these incidents was in 2005 when he was held incommunicado for 10 days by intelligence agents, along with fellow Friends' member Fariba Kamalabadi. He was then held for four months and during that confinement developed serious kidney and orthotic problems.



Mr. Vahid Tizfahm

Vahid Tizfahm is an optometrist and owner of an optical shop in Tabriz, where he lived until early 2008, when he moved to Tehran.

Born 16 May 1973 in the city of Urumiyyih, he spent his childhood and youth there and, after receiving his high school diploma in mathematics, he went to Tabriz at the age of 18 to study to become an optician. He later also studied sociology at the Advanced Bahá'í Studies Institute (ABSI).

At the age of 23, Mr. Tizfahm married Furuzandeh Nikumanesh. They have a son, who was in the third grade when he was arrested in 2008. Since his youth, Mr. Tizfahm has served the Bahá'í community in a variety of capacities. At one time he was a member of the Bahá'í National Youth Committee. Later, he was appointed to the Auxiliary Board, an appointed position which serves principally to inspire, encourage, and promote learning among Bahá'ís. He has also taught local Bahá'í children's classes.

5) Background to the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran

The Bahá'ís in Iran have been discriminated against since the inception of the religion in the mid-nineteenth century, with some 20,000 followers having been massacred in a bloodbath of persecution that immediately attended the declaration of the new religion. Over the following decades, although persecution remained a fact of life for all Bahá'ís living in the country, its severity was not as extreme as it had been and there were even periods of relative quiet. However, the sporadic nature of the persecution came to an end in the late 1970s, when the conservative clerical elements responsible for creating the Revolution began to instigate systematic attacks against Bahá'ís. At least seven Bahá'ís were killed by mobs or by anonymous attackers in 1978, and numerous Bahá'í homes were torched that year.

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the persecution of Bahá'ís became official government policy.

Between 1979 and late 1988, more than 200 Bahá'ís were executed by the government, died in prison, or otherwise “disappeared.” Hundreds more were imprisoned and tortured, while tens of thousands were denied employment, education, freedom of worship, and other rights — all solely because their religion was declared to be a “heretical sect.”

During the 1990s, apparently in response to the international outcry against the wholesale execution of Bahá'ís, the modes of persecution shifted to social, educational, and economic exclusion, as outlined in the 1991 Bahá'í Question memorandum. [See page 33]

In the mid-2000s, however, with the ascendancy of ultra-conservative elements in the government, arrests, imprisonments, and various forms of attacks on Bahá'ís once again began to rise — as documented in this and previous reports from the Bahá'í International Community.

The antipathy directed at Bahá'ís by Iran's ruling clergy can be traced to blind religious prejudice, stemming from a view that the Bahá'í Faith represents a religious apostasy that must be stamped out.

The Bahá'í Faith was founded in Iran in 1844 and, like many new religions, its followers faced immediate harassment, exclusion, and violence from members of the prevailing religious order.

From the beginning, Iran's dominant Shi'a clergy viewed the Bahá'í Faith as heretical and a threat to their authority. Their opposition was stirred mainly by the Faith's claim to be a new revelation from God — something the ruling elite among Iran's clergy have long viewed as counter to the teachings of Islam, which they claim is God's “final” religion.

Moreover, the progressive teachings of the Bahá'í Faith—such as its emphasis on the equality of women and men, the importance of education and the acquisition of knowledge, and

Between 1979 and late 1988, more than 200 Bahá'ís were executed by the government, died in prison, or otherwise “disappeared.” Hundreds more were imprisoned and tortured, while tens of thousands were denied employment, education, freedom of worship, and other rights — all solely because their religion was declared to be a “heretical sect.”



In 1955, Muslim clerics and members of the Shah's army destroyed the National Bahá'í Center in Tehran with pickaxes.

the elimination of the institution of clergy — rankled traditional sensibilities and sparked violent opposition.

In the decades immediately following the Faith's founding, at least 20,000 early Bahá'ís — known then as Bábís — were killed in a widespread pogrom, often after gruesome torture.

Outbreaks of violence against Bahá'ís continued until the early part of the 20th century. Among the best documented of such episodes was a cycle of killing and looting that raged for a month in the city of Yazd and nearby villages. In 1903, at least 70 Bahá'ís lost their lives as mobs went on a rampage, killing Bahá'ís wherever they found them and looting or destroying their properties. Authorities made no attempt to protect the Bahá'ís.

After the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1906, the situation improved for Iranian Bahá'ís, allowing them to become more visible, to prosper economically, and to excel socially, especially after 1911 and through the 1920s, as the increasingly centralized state of Reza Shah offered better security. They were able to build and operate dozens of modern schools and to win a reputation as a progressive force in society. At one point in the late 1920s, Bahá'í-run schools educated as much as 10 percent of the school-age population in Iran, according to several scholars.

Bahá'ís, however, were still subject to various forms of opposition and attack. In 1934, the government of Reza Shah closed down all Bahá'í schools — a decision that was likely influenced by clerical opposition to the Bahá'í Faith.

The degree to which the Islamic clergy in Iran never gave up its aim of ostracizing Bahá'ís was revealed in 1955, when an Islamic clergyman named Mohammad Taqi Falsafi began attacking Bahá'ís in his live daily radio program during the holy month of Ramadan.

Among other things, he denounced the Bahá'í Faith as a “false religion.” In response, there were widespread attacks on Bahá'ís and Bahá'í holy places and properties throughout the country. Bodies of Bahá'ís in cemeteries were disinterred and mutilated. Bahá'í shops and farms were plundered, crops burned, and livestock destroyed. The government did little to stop the violence—indeed, in an attempt to mollify the cleric, it put Falsafi's sermons on national and army radio. On 7 May, the Minister of the Interior joined with representatives of the clergy in using pickaxes to destroy the national Bahá'í headquarters building in Tehran.

Despite these periodic bouts of violence, the Bahá'í Faith has nevertheless expanded steadily in Iran. Scholars have estimated that by the late 1800s, there were about 100,000 Bahá'ís in Iran. That number had risen to perhaps 200,000 by 1950 and an estimated 300,000 or more in 1979.

With the coming of the Iranian Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, however, attacks against Bahá'ís once again surged as the persecution of Bahá'ís became state policy.

The Bahá'í Question memorandum: Iran's secret blueprint for repression of the Bahá'í community

The most powerful evidence that Iran's oppression of Bahá'ís is official government policy can be found in a secret 1991 memorandum that outlines a national policy for dealing with “the Bahá'í question.”

Signed by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the document lays down a series of carefully calculated restrictions on Bahá'ís. The goal, which is apparent from first reading, is to utterly oppress the Iranian Bahá'í community without drawing too much attention from international human rights monitors.

Its central focus is a call for Iran's Bahá'ís to be treated in such a way “that their progress and development shall be blocked.”

To accomplish this, the memorandum specifies that Bahá'ís should be denied “positions of influence,” and instead only be allowed to “lead a modest life similar to that of the population in general” — and even that “employment shall be refused to persons identifying themselves as Bahá'ís.”

In other words, it essentially dictates that Bahá'ís should be kept illiterate and uneducated, living only at a subsistence level, and fearful at every moment that even the tiniest infraction will bring the threat of imprisonment or worse.

The memorandum also clearly seeks to shift tactics from overt persecution, such as killing, torture and imprisonment, to the kind of covert social, economic, and cultural restrictions that would be thought less likely to bring intense international scrutiny and condemnation. The document also goes so far as to stipulate that a “plan must be devised to confront and destroy their cultural roots outside the country.”

Given the continuing nature of Iran's systematic persecution of Bahá'ís, which range from imprisonments and arbitrary arrests to educational and economic suppression, there can be little doubt that its policies remain in effect. And, indeed, there has been no indication since the 2010 UPR — or from President Rouhani — that it has been abrogated.

THE ISRCC DOCUMENT

[Translation from Persian]

[Text in square brackets added by translator]

In the Name of God!

The Islamic Republic of Iran

The Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council

Number: 1327/....

Date: 6/12/69 [25 February 1991]

CONFIDENTIAL

Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Golpaygani

Head of the Office of the Esteemed Leader [Khamenei]

Greetings!

After greetings, with reference to the letter #1/783 dated 10/10/69 [31 December 1990], concerning the instructions of the Esteemed Leader which had been conveyed to the Respected President regarding the Bahá'í question, we inform you that, since the respected President and the Head of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council had referred this question to this Council for consideration and study, it was placed on the Council's agenda of session #128 on 16/11/69 [5 February 1991] and session #119 on 2/11/69 [22 January 1991]. In addition to the above, and further to the [results of the] discussions held in this regard in session #112 of 2/5/66 [24 July 1987] presided over by the Esteemed Leader (head and member of the Supreme Council), the recent views and directives given by the Esteemed Leader regarding the Bahá'í question were conveyed to the Supreme Council. In consideration of the contents of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the religious and civil laws and general policies of the country, these matters were carefully studied and decisions pronounced.

In arriving at the decisions and proposing reasonable ways to counter the above question, due consideration was given to the wishes of the Esteemed Leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran [Khamenei], namely, that "in this regard a specific policy should be devised in such a way that everyone will understand what should or should not be done." Consequently, the following proposals and recommendations resulted from these discussions.

The respected President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the Head of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, while approving these recommendations, instructed us to convey them to the Esteemed Leader [Khamenei] so that appropriate action may be taken according to his guidance.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

A. General status of the Bahá'ís within the country's system

1. They will not be expelled from the country without reason.
2. They will not be arrested, imprisoned, or penalized without reason.
3. The government's dealings with them must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked.

B. Educational and cultural status

1. They can be enrolled in schools provided they have not identified themselves as Bahá'ís.
2. Preferably, they should be enrolled in schools which have a strong and imposing religious ideology.
3. They must be expelled from universities, either in the admission process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Bahá'ís.

4. Their political (espionage) activities must be dealt with according to appropriate government laws and policies, and their religious and propaganda activities should be answered by giving them religious and cultural responses, as well as propaganda.
5. Propaganda institutions (such as the Islamic Propaganda Organization) must establish an independent section to counter the propaganda and religious activities of the Bahá'ís.
6. A plan must be devised to confront and destroy their cultural roots outside the country.

C. Legal and social status

1. Permit them a modest livelihood as is available to the general population.
2. To the extent that it does not encourage them to be Bahá'ís, it is permissible to provide them the means for ordinary living in accordance with the general rights given to every Iranian citizen, such as ration booklets, passports, burial certificates, work permits, etc.
3. Deny them employment if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís.
4. Deny them any position of influence, such as in the educational sector, etc.

Wishing you divine confirmations,

Secretary of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council

Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Golpaygani

[Signature]

[Note in the handwriting of Mr. Khamenei]

In the Name of God!

The decision of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council seems sufficient.

I thank you gentlemen for your attention and efforts.

6) Conclusion

Since President Hassan Rouhani came to power last year, there has been much discussion in the international news media as to whether his failure to institute promised reforms in the area of human rights reflects merely his inability to win the struggle against hardliners — or whether, in fact, his inaction simply represents a grand deception.

In this regard, Iran's willingness to live up to the promises it made during the Universal Periodic Review is perhaps the clearest window into the sincerity of the government in its international dealings.

The UPR is a unique venue for considering the human rights record of a country. It is, as its name suggests, universal in nature — something that all countries undergo. And because it recurs every four years, it provides an important yardstick by which to measure progress.

In the case of Iran, it is also significant that the government participated fully in the UPR. Indeed, its diplomats have said Iran prefers the UPR as the standard for human rights assessment, rejecting the special mechanisms and procedures that seek to monitor human rights outside the UPR, such as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran.

In that light, Iran's treatment of Bahá'ís offers an especially potent example of the gap between Iran's rhetoric and reality on human rights. As this booklet has shown, Iran has utterly failed to address those recommendations that concern Bahá'ís, recommendations that comprise nearly one-third of those that Iran accepted.

Many commentators have suggested that Iran's treatment of Bahá'ís might well be considered a “litmus test” of the government's sincerity with respect to human rights and other reforms. In September 2013, Reza Aslan and Michael Brooks wrote in a *Washington Post* news blog:

[I]f President Rouhani is truly serious about repairing Iran's image in the world and living up to his promises for greater rights, he must address the proverbial third rail in Iranian politics: the horrific human rights abuses aimed at Iran's small yet historic Bahá'í community.¹³

Yet Iran's systematic persecution of Bahá'ís continues undiminished.

At the time of this writing, more than 100 Bahá'ís are in prison, solely for their religious beliefs. The justice system that put them there has violated virtually every accepted element of due process, from arbitrary arrest and detention to closed trials and biased judges. The government stands behind a broad-based media campaign that spreads lies and rumors about Bahá'ís in a clear effort to incite hatred. One apparent result of this campaign has been an increase in attacks and assaults on Bahá'ís and their properties — attacks that continue to go unprosecuted and unpunished. And Bahá'ís continue to be denied access to education, restricted and obstructed in their economic activities, and severely limited in their freedom to worship.

13 “For Iran's Rouhani, the human rights of Bahá'ís are the ultimate test of reform,” 25 September 2013, *On Faith* blog of the *Washington Post*.



In May 2014, influential Iranians, human rights activists, journalists and a prominent religious leader gathered in Tehran at the home of one of the seven imprisoned Bahá'í leaders to commemorate the sixth anniversary of their arrest. The gathering, an unprecedented show of solidarity, reflects the ever more vocal call inside Iran for an end to the government's persecution of Iranian Bahá'ís.

Iranian Bahá'ís have repeatedly told the government that they want nothing more than to practice their religion according to the dictates of their conscience — and to contribute where they can to the betterment and progress of Iranian society as a whole. Their holy writings require them to eschew violence and to obey and respect the laws of the government under which they live. In other words, they pose no threat to the regime, making the discrimination and persecution they endure all the more unjust.

As the Islamic Republic of Iran prepares to face its second Universal Periodic Review, its officials are likely to claim, as they have in the past, that Bahá'ís are not subject to persecution in their country and that, if any are in prison, it is because of crimes related to non-religious activities. They are likely to claim, as they have in the past, that discrimination in education, business or social affairs is virtually non-existent — or, if it does exist, it is because of long standing prejudices among the general population that they are unable to control or adjust. They are also likely to claim, as they have in the past, that the Bahá'í Faith is merely a seditious political movement, and not a “divine” religion, and so therefore not subject to laws regarding freedom of belief or worship.

Such claims would be wrong.

Governments and the news media should, then, examine carefully Iran's record on human rights in the approach to and during the 2014 Universal Periodic Review. The degree to which it has lived up to the promises it made four years ago, when the government accepted 123 of the 188 recommendations that were made by the other governments, should be carefully considered. And it is on that record that Iran's testimony in 2014 should be weighed and judged.

APPENDIX — List of recommendations accepted by Iran during the 2010 UPR

A/HRC/14/12 — Human Rights Council — Fourteenth session — Universal Periodic Review

Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review

Islamic Republic of Iran

Conclusions and/or recommendations

The recommendations listed below enjoy the support of Iran, out of which recommendations 102 to 123 Iran considers as already implemented or in the process of implementation:

1. Continue to respect international humanitarian law and international law in general (Kuwait);
2. Comply fully with the international human rights obligations to which it is bound (New Zealand);
3. Continue efforts to implement its obligations in the sphere of human rights protection (Russian Federation);
4. Ensure the full implementation of international obligations and constitutional guarantees, including with regard to the prohibition of torture (Austria);
5. Continue its efforts to promote human rights in the economic, social and cultural fields (Sudan);
6. Continue to take innovative measures to ensure that its development policies permit the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in the country (Plurinational State of Bolivia);
7. Enhance efforts to further promote economic and social rights, as well as the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children and people with disabilities (Viet Nam);
8. Reconsider the inclusion of “apostasy”, “witchcraft” and “heresy” as capital offences in its updated penal code (New Zealand);
9. Ensure that its legislation and practice conform fully with requirements of article 18 of ICCPR and with its other obligations under international human rights law (Poland);
10. Establish a national human rights institution (NHRI) in full compliance with the Paris Principles (Poland);
11. Explore the possibility of seeking the accreditation of the High Council for Human Rights as Iran's NHRI through the International Coordinating Committee for NHRIs (Malaysia);
12. Continue to promote the work of the High Council for Human Rights to achieve the establishment of an NHRI, as well as the timely implementation of a national plan for human rights (Plurinational State of Bolivia);
13. Proceed with the implementation of strategies and policies to support human rights infrastructures and to achieve further progress in promoting a culture of respect for human rights (Qatar);
14. Continue its ongoing efforts, in accordance with the Twenty-Year Vision Strategic Plan for Development, to achieve global and sustainable development (Lebanon);
15. Continue to promote its successful social policies aimed at satisfying the needs of its population (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);
16. Continue its capacity-building programmes related to all aspects of human rights (Zimbabwe);
17. Continue to promote human rights training for public officials and authorities (Plurinational State of Bolivia);
18. Continue to provide and improve human rights education and training for judicial and law enforcement officials (Pakistan);
19. Continue to include human rights in school curriculums (Sudan);
20. Expedite the completion of its strategic national action plan for human rights (Pakistan);
21. Coordinate efforts in a manner that promotes the effective enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and tackle obstacles in that regard (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya);
22. Continue to implement measures aimed at further promoting and protecting children's rights, and intensify efforts to ensure further opportunities for access to higher education (Qatar);

23. Consider favourably the inclusion of the outcome of the present review in the human rights national strategic plan referred to in paragraph 124 of the national report (Mexico);
24. Continue to consider greater interaction with international human rights mechanisms (Viet Nam);
25. Continue to implement the advice of the important United Nations treaty bodies (Kazakhstan);
26. Cooperate with the United Nations special procedures, and follow up on the requests of visits of special rapporteurs, as announced today (Luxembourg);
27. Respond positively to the pending requests of several special procedures, and to allow the timely carrying out of their visits (Czech Republic);
28. Fully implement the standing invitation extended to the United Nations human rights special procedures (Chile);
29. Allow for a visit by OHCHR and other United Nations Special Rapporteurs and experts who have requested access to Iran (United States);
30. Finalize arrangements for the visit by the delegation from OHCHR (Australia);
31. Redouble its efforts to prevent any form of discrimination (Nicaragua);
32. Develop a legal framework for protecting and promoting the rights of women (Brazil);
33. Adopt measures to guarantee women's equality under the law (Chile);
34. Ensure the equal treatment of women and girls in law and practice (Austria);
35. Facilitate for all children born to Iranian mothers access to a birth certificate and Iranian nationality, regardless of the nationality of the father (Mexico);
36. Continue to improve its policies and programmes to advance the status of women and girls, and protect children, including those with disabilities (Indonesia);
37. Take further concrete steps to promote the rights of disabled persons (Kazakhstan);
38. Continue its efforts to support persons with disabilities and integrate them in society on an equal footing, as real social partners (Kuwait);
39. Respect at least the minimum standards and the provisions of ICCPR and CRC concerning the death penalty, for as long as it is maintained (Belgium);
40. Consider the abolition of juvenile execution (Kazakhstan);
41. Take measures to ensure that no torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment occurs (Netherlands);
42. Take further steps to eliminate torture and other forms of ill treatment, and ensure an effective and impartial judicial system (Denmark);
43. Respect the human rights of prisoners and detainees, and investigate and stop immediately any alleged abuses (Ireland);
44. Ensure that the treatment of detainees duly follows international standards and that irregularities to those standards are properly investigated (Estonia);
45. Conduct a policy of zero tolerance towards the trafficking in women and girl children, child prostitution and the production of pornography involving children (Germany);
46. Ensure, in law and practice, all guarantees of due process of law established in ICCPR, including the principle of presumption of innocence, as well as avoiding any punishment for the exercise of other rights recognized under the Covenant, such as freedom of expression and the right to association and assembly (Mexico);
47. Uphold its constitutional provisions guaranteeing freedom of worship (United States);
48. Respect the freedom of religion (Germany);
49. Take all measures necessary to ensure the protection of religious minorities, including implementing the recommendations on adequate housing put forward by the Special Rapporteur after his visit in 2006 (Denmark);
50. Respect freedom of religion, and assure a fair and transparent trial for members of the Baha'i faith, in full compliance with the commitments undertaken as a State party to the implementation ICCPR and other human rights instruments (Romania);
51. Continue its policy of promoting and protecting all rights of the members of recognized religious minorities, as an important step to provide cultural diversity in society and create opportunities for those minorities to preserve their identities; and, to that end, further ensure

their political representation and promote their greater involvement in the planning and implementation of various projects aimed at providing financial assistance for their educational and cultural needs (Armenia);

52. Take timely and extensive measures to guarantee to its citizens the right to express dissent (Denmark);

53. Enhance freedom of expression and assembly, and to safeguard all groups, journalists and especially human rights defenders (Brazil);

54. Allow freedom of expression, freedom of the media and of assembly (Germany);

55. Fully guarantee the right to freedom of expression, press and political activity, including through the adoption of concrete measures aimed at the implementation of articles 24, 25, 26 and 27 of the Iranian Constitution (Italy);

56. Make a full explanation of the relationship between the restrictive actions taken by the authorities and the Constitution (Japan);

57. Conduct a review of legislation to ensure that it complies with article 19 of ICCPR, which protects the right to freedom of expression (Slovenia);

58. Guarantee free and unrestricted access to the Internet (Netherlands);

59. Strengthen cooperation with non-governmental organizations, and ensure that the rights of all those involved in human rights advocacy are protected under Iranian law, in accordance with its obligations under ICCPR, and that freedom of association is enshrined in Iranian law (Ireland);

60. Step up efforts to enhance the participation of women in all spheres of socio-economic life, in keeping with the progress made in women's education (Bangladesh);

61. Continue to promote the living standards of the people by allowing the further enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights (Kuwait);

62. Continue efforts to guarantee effective social coverage and all related services (Kuwait);

63. Continue to take measures to increase access for its population to health and education services (Cuba);

64. Continue to make progress in education and health care, with a particular focus on women and girl children (Bangladesh);

65. Continue its efforts to provide health, education and social assistance services in rural areas (Kuwait);

66. Continue efforts aimed at the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and achieve prosperity for the people, in particular by facilitating access for the population to the necessary health services (Qatar);

67. Strengthen mechanisms at the national level to reduce poverty among members of socially vulnerable groups and the problems facing them, and share its experiences with interested developing countries (Kyrgyzstan);

68. Continue to combat poverty, with due regard for regional particularities (Bangladesh);

69. Continue efforts to reduce poverty and limit disparities in education and income (Zimbabwe);

70. Pursue its endeavours to guarantee basic education for all citizens (Lebanon);

71. Continue efforts to develop education, particularly in the rural parts of the country, with the participation of the private and public sectors and nongovernmental organizations, with a view to reducing poverty through employment opportunities and the strengthening of human resources (Kyrgyzstan);

72. Continue its efforts to provide educational facilities for students with special educational needs (Sri Lanka);

73. Continue its innovative programmes to eradicate illiteracy, and continue its initiatives to spread education at all levels and throughout the country (China);

74. Continue to implement its literacy plan at the national level to achieve the full elimination of illiteracy (Plurinational State of Bolivia);

75. Sustain its designed programmes aimed at the availability and affordability of higher education (Syrian Arab Republic);

76. Continue to promote and protect its rich historical and cultural heritage (Cuba);

77. Share its experiences in the realization of the cultural rights of the people, including through diversified cultural initiatives and activities (Tajikistan);

78. Strengthen its efforts to include the various Iranian cultures and traditions in its national legislation (Sudan);

79. Continue providing support to the vulnerable group of people who have sought refuge on its territory (Algeria);

80. Continue the extraordinary initiatives of cooperation with developing countries, as a way to achieve the full realization of the right to development (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);
81. Continue its efforts to promote and protect human rights in accordance with the characteristics, values and needs of Iranian society (Lebanon);
82. Continue to raise awareness about human rights, and to strengthen national efforts to protect them, with due respect for cultural specificities and Islam (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya);
83. Explore the possibility of undertaking a comprehensive study on the positive implications of the implementation of a legal system based on civil and Islamic law, and share its experiences and best practices in that regard (Malaysia);
84. Continue its efforts to strengthen and protect human rights in accordance with the cultural values of the Iranian people (Sri Lanka);
85. Share its experience and best practices with other interested countries, regarding the protection and consolidation of the rights of persons with disabilities (Pakistan);
86. Share its experiences, expertise and initiatives with interested countries in the field of public health and “health tourism” (Pakistan);
87. Continue efforts and contributions at the international level aimed at strengthening international human rights mechanisms; and, in particular, help to make those mechanisms work on the basis of non-politicization and dialogue based on respect and cooperation, which guarantees the realization of the interests of the international community (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya);
88. Continue to promote initiatives in defence of international solidarity and equality dialogue at the relevant United Nations organs, with a view to promoting human rights and solidarity among all nations and peoples of goodwill (Zimbabwe);
89. Continue its international efforts to create an international order based on cooperation and inclusion (Tajikistan);
90. Pursue its efforts at the international level to create an international order based on justice and equality (Syrian Arab Republic);
91. Continue its policies aimed at promoting dialogue among religions and civilizations, at both the national and international levels (Sri Lanka);
92. Continue to promote initiatives on dialogue among cultures (Syrian Arab Republic);
93. Continue, in view of its rich history, culture and tradition, its efforts and initiatives to promote dialogue among religions and civilizations, including by focusing on the theme of promoting and protecting human rights and a culture of peace (Malaysia);
94. Continue its initiative on dialogue among cultures, in particular intercultural dialogue on human rights (China);
95. Share with regional and other interested countries its good practices regarding the protection of the cultural heritage of members of traditional minorities (Armenia);
96. Pursue and enhance its contributions to the dialogue among civilizations (Algeria);
97. Share with interested countries the Iranian experience with regard to promoting the participation of civil society (Algeria);
98. Share with other countries, in particular multicultural countries, its experiences in the strengthening of education (Tajikistan);
99. Continue its efforts to combat drug trafficking (Tajikistan);
100. Share with other developing countries its experiences and best practices in guaranteeing the right to food and combating poverty, in particular in the area of microcredit (Tajikistan);
101. Continue in its plans to realize the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and tackle the problems related to the illegal and unjustified economic sanctions against the country (Zimbabwe);
102. Guarantee the protection of the civil and political rights of all, particularly dissidents and members of minority groups (Chile);
103. Guarantee, in compliance with its obligations under ICCPR, the effective independence of the procedures and administration of justice, restricted emergency legislation, adequate protection for human rights defenders and political opposition members, and the effective guarantee of freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of religion and belief (Chile);
104. Investigate and prosecute all those, including

Government officials and paramilitary members, suspected of having mistreated, tortured or killed anyone, including demonstrators, political activists, human rights defenders and journalists (Canada);

105. Ensure that competent bodies investigate allegations of torture, enforced disappearance and secret detention, that those responsible are punished and that programmes providing reparation for victims are established (Chile);

106. Establish effective complaint mechanisms for victims of torture (Czech Republic);

107. Take measures to ensure an effective and impartial judicial system, in conformity with ICCPR is guaranteed (Netherlands);

108. Release or charge and bring before a court — in a manner consistent with international fair trial standards and Iran's own Constitution — all persons detained in connection with the demonstrations following the 2009 presidential elections (Canada);

109. Guarantee access to legal representation for those detained in connection with the demonstrations following the 2009 presidential elections (Poland);

110. With regard to those arrested after the presidential elections, fully respect the right to a fair trial of all persons under arrest and detainees, in compliance with articles 32, 35, 38 and 39 of the Iranian Constitution (Italy);

111. Provide information concerning the whereabouts of detainees, to their families and legal defenders and to provide access to them (Austria);

112. Establish strict accountability of members of the police and military, prison and detention personnel and the judiciary for any violations of human rights, in particular for torture (Czech Republic);

113. Immediately investigate all allegations involving the torture and other ill treatment of those arrested or detained during the demonstrations in June 2009 (Australia);

114. Conduct an independent investigation regarding killings, arrests and detentions following the demonstrations following the 2009 presidential elections, including the possible excessive use of force by security forces (Poland);

115. Conduct a transparent and public inquiry into the violence emanating from security forces following the presidential elections of 2009 (Austria);

116. Take measures to ensure that Government and security officials implicated in human rights abuses relating to extrajudicial and arbitrary detention and the possible use of torture are investigated, prosecuted and punished (Netherlands);

117. Ensure that the trials of seven Baha'is are fair and transparent and conducted in accordance with international standards, and that Iran amend all legislation that discriminates against minority groups (Australia);

118. Ensure that the trial of the Yarran is conducted in a fair and transparent manner, consistent with Iranian law, natural justice and due legal process (New Zealand);

119. Fully respect the rights of the adherents of the Baha'i faith and to judicially prosecute those inciting hatred against them in religious environments, the media and the Internet (Luxembourg);

120. Repeal all criminal provisions dealing with freedom of expression and freedom of assembly to comply with international human rights standards (Slovakia);

121. Take measures to ensure that security forces, including police, armed forces and Basij, do not use excessive force against those exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly (Australia);

122. Amend its press law to define the exceptions to article 24 of its Constitution in specific terms that do not infringe upon the internationally guaranteed rights of free speech and a free press (Canada);

123. Ensure that laws do not criminalize legitimate freedom of expression, association and assembly (Australia).

Unfulfilled Promises

Iran's failure to act after its 2010 Universal Periodic Review

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