



# BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

## OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

### URGENT ACTION NEEDED TO BRING ATTENTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY IN IRAN

---

#### ACTION NEEDED

---

We urge members of Congress to take the following actions to address the human rights violations against the Bahá'í community in Iran:

- **Cosponsor Legislation:**
  - Support and cosponsor legislation that condemns the persecution of the Bahá'í community in Iran and calls for the protection of their basic rights.
- **Floor Statements:**
  - Make a statement on the floor of the House or Senate to bring attention to the ongoing human rights violations faced by the Bahá'í community in Iran.
- **Social Media Engagement:**
  - Utilize your social media platforms to raise awareness about the plight of the Bahá'í community and advocate for their rights.
- **Defending Freedoms Project:**
  - Representatives participate in the Defending Freedoms Project of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission by adopting a Bahá'í prisoner, thereby offering direct support and solidarity.

The former U.N. Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed, recently [reported](#) an escalating threat to the Bahá'ís in Iran and neighboring Middle Eastern countries. Comprising the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran, the Bahá'ís confront persistent discrimination, particularly in educational and occupational spheres. The Iranian government, viewing them as a heretical sect, has systematically targeted Bahá'í leaders, enforcing policies that curtail their social, economic, and cultural activities. The absence of legal recognition exacerbates their challenges, impacting matters such as marriage, divorce proceedings, child custody, and inheritance. Recent amendments to Iran's Penal Code further jeopardize their freedom of religion. The [report](#) underscores smear campaigns and speeches inciting violence against the Bahá'í community, emphasizing the urgency for global attention and action to address these ongoing human rights violations. Legislative initiatives worldwide supporting the Bahá'ís in Iran can spotlight their persecution and thereby either decrease it or prevent it from getting worse. The international leadership role the United State Congress holds is critical to maintaining pressure on the Iranian government to end persecution. The most current situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran is available [here](#).

#### TALKING POINTS:

---

1. **Persecution and Violations:**
  - Over 220 Bahá'ís killed between 1978 and 1998, with continued harassment, arrests, and imprisonments.
  - The nine-member governing council for the religious affairs of the Baha'i community, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, faced abductions and executions beginning in 1980. A total of 24 members of three successive NSAs were executed from December 1980 through the mid-1980's.
  - The Bahá'í community endures ongoing arrests, imprisonments, and harassment, including the 2022 arrests of three formerly imprisoned volunteers managing the national community's affairs, known as the Yaran (the "Friends"). Arrests have recently intensified, with over 50 individuals arrested since early October 2023, with a disturbing and significant increase in arrests of women. Over 100 homes have been searched, frequently with electronics, religious books, gold, and other valuables being confiscated.

## 2. Economic and Social Challenges:

- Economic and social pressures on Bahá'ís are acute, with exclusion from government jobs, arbitrary business closures, and discrimination in various professions and educational institutions.

## 3. Property Confiscation:

- Government-led raids on Bahá'í properties have resulted in widespread confiscation, destruction, and denial of property rights.
- Bahá'í cemeteries have been systematically desecrated, and access to them has been regularly denied or restricted. Burials have, in some cases, been prohibited.

## 4. Media Propaganda:

- State-sponsored media disseminates baseless propaganda against Bahá'ís, contributing to a surge in anti-Bahá'í sentiments. In July 2023, agents of the Iranian government engaged in an intense campaign on X in Persian (formerly Twitter) to promote anti-Baha'i hate propaganda with over 17,000 postings in four days.

## 5. Arbitrary Arrests and Imprisonment:

- Over 50 Baha'is arbitrarily detained and about 1,200 who, while not in prison, are facing legal proceedings from release on bail after initial arrest to final appeal and sentencing.

## 6. Denial of Access to Education

- Enrollment procedures for both primary and higher education have recently been implemented that required disclosure of religious affiliation, but forms do not include any option for either "Bahá'í" or "other." Schools have refused to enroll students unless the form has been completed.
- It is an official policy of the government to expel individuals from universities and vocational training institutions as soon as they are identified as members of the Bahá'í community. The 1991 government memorandum concerning "The Bahá'í Question," produced by Iran's Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, specifically called for Iran's Bahá'ís to be treated such "that their progress and development shall be blocked."

## BACKGROUND

---

The Bahá'í Faith, originating in Iran in the mid-nineteenth century, has evolved into a global religion with over eight million followers across 200 countries. Unfortunately, the Bahá'í community in Iran has faced intensified persecution, particularly since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Some 300,000 Bahá'ís live throughout Iran, making the Bahá'í Faith the country's largest non-Muslim, minority religion. It is an independent religion – not a sect of Islam – with its own sacred scriptures which recognize the divine origin of all of the world's great religious systems, the oneness of the human race, the equality of men and women, the harmony of science and religion, the elimination of racial prejudice and the importance of universal education. It regards these foundational principles as key elements for the establishment of world peace and an advancing global society. It rejects violence as a tool for religious or social change.

June 18, 2023, marked the 40th anniversary of the execution of 10 Bahá'í women, who the Iranian government hanged for refusing to recant their faith. They were hanged one after the other, each forced to watch, in an attempt to coerce them into abandoning their faith. None recanted. The ten women were: [Mona Mahmoudnejad](#), 17; [Roya Eshraghi](#), 23, (executed along with her mother); [Simin Saberi](#), 24; [Shahin \(Shirin\) Dalvand](#), 25; [Akhtar Sabet](#), 25; [Mahshid Niroumand](#), 28; [Zarrin Moghimi-Abyaneh](#), 29; [Tahereh Arjomandi Siyavashi](#), 30 (her husband, Jamshid Siavashi, was executed two days earlier); [Nosrat Ghufrani Yaldaie](#), 46 (Her son, Bahram Yaldaie, was executed two days earlier); [Ezzat-Janami Eshraghi](#), 57 (executed along with her daughter Roya. Her husband, Enayatullah Eshraghi was executed two days earlier).

The Bahá'í International Community has promoted the [#OurStoryIsOne campaign](#) to commemorate the anniversary of the execution of these 10 Bahá'í women whom the Iranian government put to death for refusing to recant their faith. The campaign invites original contributions from artists, officials, civil society organizations, prominent individuals, celebrities, government officials, and the public to support the message of advancing gender equality for all Iranian women.