

Situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran with regard to religious discrimination and denying access to employment and higher education

(September 2016)

We submit the following report about the situation of the Bahá'ís in the Islamic Republic of Iran as it relates to the International Labour Organization's Convention No.111 on Discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, to which Iran is a signatory. To our knowledge, no other ILO Conventions pertain to human rights abuses that specifically target members of the Bahá'í community with regard to issues under the organization's mandate.¹

We note that Article 1 of ILO Convention No.111 defines discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.” In addition, it stipulates that “the terms employment and occupation include access to vocational training, access to employment and to particular occupations, and terms and conditions of employment.”

Introduction

For almost four decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has waged a widespread and systematic campaign of persecution against the country's Bahá'í religious minority. This persecution has impacted the lives of generations, from young infants to frail elderly. Iranian law and official policy denies Bahá'ís their civil, political, economic and cultural rights to education, work, freedom of religion, freedom from arbitrary detention and others. Since the early 1980s, over 200 Bahá'ís have been executed or murdered, thousands arrested, detained and interrogated, and tens of thousands more deprived of jobs, pensions and educational opportunities — all solely because their religion is declared to be a “heretical sect.”

¹ It should be noted that the persecution against Iran's Bahá'ís includes recurrent violations of a wide range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Recent developments are regularly reported online at: <http://news.bahai.org/human-rights/iran/iran-update/>, and additional information can be found at: <https://www.bic.org/what-we-do/27>. For in-depth background and photos, the publication “*Their Progress and Development Are Blocked*”, *The economic oppression of Iran's Bahá'ís*, dated 19 October 2015 can be downloaded at: <https://www.bic.org/publications/their-progress-and-development-are-blocked#bHxWglwReqs7wEYm.97> or obtained in a bound edition from Bahá'í International Community representatives.

Since 2005, more than 820 Bahá'ís have been arrested, and the number of Bahá'ís in prison has risen from fewer than five to more than 80, as of September 2016.

Overall, there has been a continuation of the government's official policy of discrimination and persecution against Bahá'ís, marked by revolving door arrests, the denial of access to higher education, and a government campaign of anti-Bahá'í propaganda in the media. Government actions have been accompanied by numerous attacks by anonymous individuals on Bahá'ís and their properties, including arson attacks, anti-Bahá'í graffiti, and the desecration of Bahá'í cemeteries.

The economic suffocation of the Bahá'í community is a matter of official state policy. It has been systematic and wide-ranging, and has been the result of the government's effort to block Bahá'ís from earning a decent livelihood for themselves and their families. This policy is confirmed in a 1991 Iranian government memorandum² obtained by the then United Nations Special Representative on Iran in 1993. Prepared by Iran's Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council and approved by the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, this document, concerning "The Bahá'í Question", sets forth specific guidelines for dealing with the Bahá'ís. Stamped "confidential", the memorandum was signed by Hujjatu'l Islam Seyyed Mohammad Golpaygani, Secretary of the Council, and approved by Mr. Khamenei, who added his signature to the document. The memorandum specifically calls for Iran's Bahá'ís to be treated so "that their progress and development shall be blocked." The memorandum outlines a series of repressive measures to be taken against Bahá'ís to "block" their development, including restrictions on education and economic activity, such as: "Deny them employment if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís." Its provisions, still in effect today, also include instructions that students "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."

Bahá'ís are non-violent and non-partisan, and pose no threat to the government. Their only wish – besides being able to practice their religion freely – is to contribute to the development and prosperity of their country. This insidious exclusion of Bahá'ís from the economic life of the nation extends to all levels of the country's economic structure and is embedded in the government's policy by the 1991 memorandum, whose instructions continue to be implemented throughout the country. Tens of thousands of Bahá'ís have been deprived of jobs, pensions, business and educational opportunities – a truth that we are documenting in this report, but that is systematically denied by the representatives of the Iranian government at the ILO. As you will surely recall, in its 2015 report, the ILO Committee of Experts noted "that the situation of non-recognized religious minorities, in particular the Bahá'ís, remains sensitive, including the societal attitude towards members of this group."³

² The text of the 1991 government memorandum can be accessed through the following links:

Persian original: http://news.bahai.org/documentlibrary/575/5_TheISRCCdocument.pdf

English translation: http://news.bahai.org/documentlibrary/575/5_TheISRCCdocument_en.pdf

³ The full text is available at: [http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09661/09661\(2015-104-1A\).pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09661/09661(2015-104-1A).pdf).

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Bahá'ís are banned from all public sector jobs, from any government employment, including in education, health care, or government institutions. Bahá'í-owned factories and shops are sealed because their owners ceased to work in observance of Bahá'í holy days, and efforts are made to persuade Muslim-owned businesses in the private sector to fire their Bahá'í employees. By one estimate, more than 10,000 Bahá'ís lost their jobs, pensions or property under this policy. From 2007 to June 2016, at least 950 incidents of direct economic persecution against Iranian Bahá'ís have been documented by the Bahá'í International Community; more recently, between January and August 2016 alone, over 150 cases have been documented. This figure is undoubtedly higher, given the difficulty of getting accurate information about human rights violations from Iran.

A key element of this overall economic suppression has been the effort to deny young Bahá'ís access to higher education. Thousands of young Bahá'ís have, year after year, been barred from attending university or college in Iran. When the Bahá'í community created its own ad hoc Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) to respond to the educational needs of young Bahá'ís, the government repeatedly sought to shut it down with raids and arrests. In 2011, for example, 17 volunteer teachers and administrators of the BIHE were arrested and sentenced to prison terms ranging from four to five years.

The government has, moreover, fuelled hatred against Bahá'ís through a relentless campaign in the media. Attacks on Bahá'í businesses have come amid a government-sponsored campaign to incite hatred against Bahá'ís, marked by numerous anti-Bahá'í articles or broadcasts in state-run or state-affiliated media. Since President Hassan Rouhani took office in August 2013, there have been more than 7,000 articles, videos, or webpages appearing in government-controlled or government-sponsored media featuring anti-Bahá'í propaganda. In all cases, the disseminations were sponsored and/or approved by the State. Since August 2016, over 220 influential figures, including clerics, religious figures, academics, editors and government representatives have publicly issued speeches, articles or written declarations against the Bahá'ís. Such statements have been published on websites of various media organizations affiliated with the Iranian government which regularly attack the Bahá'ís.

This report focuses on recent aspects of Iran's policy aimed at closing those few avenues for economic livelihood that remain open to Bahá'ís, which have resulted in numerous cases of shop closings, dismissals, the actual or threatened revocation of business licenses, and other efforts to suppress the economic activity of Bahá'ís. It covers events occurring over the past months, when, despite promises to the contrary, the economic pressures facing Bahá'ís have not abated and the barriers erected towards their free and unfettered engagement in the economic life of the nation have not been removed. We will not be providing here the names of victims of human rights abuses for their own security; notwithstanding this, all cases mentioned in this report have been fully documented in submissions to the relevant UN Special Procedures and agencies.

Denial of employment, pensions and other rights

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran ensures “conditions and opportunities of employment for everyone”, and in Article 43, regarding the economy, it prohibits “the infliction of harm and loss upon others”. However, in thousands of cases, officials have taken measures to make it impossible for those who are known to be Bahá’ís to earn a living.

Official documents prove that these abuses are government policy. In particular, a letter from the Amaken, the Public Places Supervision Office,⁴ dated 9 April 2007, ordered commanders of police and heads of intelligence and security to prevent members of the “perverse Bahaist sect” (as well as members of “anti-revolutionary political organizations” and other illegal groups) from engaging in certain occupations. The orders stipulated that Bahá’ís must be denied work permits and licences for over 25 kinds of business, specifically listed, and barred from all other “high-earning businesses”.⁵ The 25 trades included many independent businesses and shops that Bahá’ís have opened over the years throughout Iran because this was the only way they could earn a living. Members of the community have long been banned from employment in the public sector, and many have been refused or fired from private sector jobs once their religious affiliation became known.

A wide range of measures are being used to discriminate against Bahá’ís. In 2006 trade associations, unions and business organizations had been instructed to compile lists of Bahá’ís in every type of employment. Identification was followed by action, involving an untold number of officials who:

- refused to issue or renew business licenses, work permits and/or trade membership cards to Bahá’ís;
- issued instructions to chain stores, government offices and other organizations to avoid purchasing from or to stop all business dealings with companies and independent contractors because the owners or managers were Bahá’ís;
- incited the population to shun Bahá’í-owned businesses;
- instructed landlords of stores to refuse lease renewals to Bahá’í tenant shopkeepers;
- banned Bahá’ís who were working independently from continuing their activities;
- warned private-sector employers against hiring members of the community and/or harassed them to dismiss Bahá’í employees, threatening them with closure of their business if they did not do so (some were shut down; others banned from advertising, etc.);
- conducted unexpected inspection visits to workplaces, summoning and interrogating Bahá’ís;
- raiding and even vandalizing some Bahá’í-owned stores; or
- closed many Bahá’í-owned businesses, sealing the premises.

⁴ Reportedly responsible for the enforcement of accepted moral codes in places of work and other offices.

⁵ A copy of this 2007 letter (in Persian original and English translation) is on pages 86–87 of *Bahá’í International Community, The Bahá’í Question – Cultural Cleansing in Iran*, September 2008, (pgs 86–87) available at <http://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/TheBahaiQuestion.pdf>.

In addition, banks have refused to proceed with loan approvals for and/or frozen the assets in accounts belonging to Bahá'ís. Business licenses and banking services are vital – as mentioned above, many Bahá'ís in Iran have launched private enterprises over the years because they and other members of the community could not obtain employment. Some of those deprived of their rightfully earned pensions have attempted to pursue legal remedies, but the courts systematically rule against them. Copies of court decisions in such cases explicitly state: “payment of pension to those individuals connected with the Bahá'í sect is illegal” [or an “unlawful act”].

Bahá'í farmers are also affected. Agricultural land owned by members of the community has been confiscated. For example, just over two years ago, the fraudulent seizure of land from two Bahá'ís in Lavdar village (Semnan) was endorsed by the courts, despite the objection of the Muslim gentleman who had been a tenant farmer on the land for many years. There have also been targeted attacks, with trees uprooted in Bahá'í-owned orchards, crops destroyed and Bahá'í farms forced to shut down.

Iranian authorities have greatly intensified their discriminatory policies and practices to deny members of the Bahá'í community the right to work and earn a decent living. Authorities throughout the country continue to use harassment, intimidation and false accusations to shut down or impede the activities of tens of Bahá'í-owned businesses. The homes and work places of Bahá'ís are frequently searched and raided, and their owners summoned and interrogated. The following represent only the most recent cases:

- As a result of Bahá'í shops not opening for business on 23 May 2016, a Bahá'í holy day, a new wave of warnings and shop closures has been reported, as follows:
 1. 15 shops in Ghaemshahr were closed.
 2. 2 shops in Kashan were closed.
 3. 28 shops in Oroumīyeh were warned and then closed.
 4. A shop in Boroujerd was warned that it would be closed. In addition, a window of a car belonging to a Bahá'í was smashed.
 5. 8 shops in Isfahan were warned that they would be closed.
- It was reported in June 2016 that the Bahá'í owner of an automobile repair shop was visited by an agent of the Amaken, the Public Places Supervision Office, and two agents from the Ministry of Intelligence Office in Isfahan. They asked to see the owner's business license. The agents also asked him questions about the kind of Bahá'í activities he carries out and the Bahá'í meetings in which he participates. They further enquired about his monthly-earnings and for his bank account number. When the Bahá'í asked their reasons for collecting such information, the agents responded that the instructions to do so had come from the top.
- We have been informed that in June 2016 that a Bahá'í business owner in Isfahan attempted to obtain a business permit in January–February of 2016. The forms she had to fill out had a column for religion. The officials had already recorded her religion as

“Shia” in their computer system. After she protested and went to the deputy director of the union it was corrected to “other religions”.

In the next stage of the application process, the Bahá'í had to go to the police station to fill out forms for the Amaken. When she mentioned she is a Bahá'í, the system automatically recorded it as “Perverse Bahaism Sect”. The Bahá'í protested and said that they were insulting her beliefs, that everyone’s beliefs are sacred to them and that officials are not allowed to insult anyone's beliefs. The officer at the police station said that this is what the system showed and she could not do anything about it. Subsequently, the Bahá'í's file was transferred to the Amaken where she was told, “You must have a supervisor and that person has to be your mahram”.⁶ The Bahá'í introduced her husband as her supervisor. The couple then went to the Intelligence Office where her husband underwent a drug test and his identity was checked and confirmed. The intelligence agent then accused him of being a Bahá'í (something that was clearly stated in the identity form) and said that he would have to go to court in order to pursue the application. Having consulted with friends they have not yet taken any action in this regard.

- A Bahá'í-owned oil-change business in Hamadan has been sealed since 2012. It was reported in June 2016 that despite a May 2014 court decision ordering the reopening of the shop, the Hamadan’s Intelligence Office continues to use its influence to prevent the court order from being enforced. In order to earn his living, the Bahá'í owner has been forced to conduct his business activities on the sidewalk in front of his shop.
- Since 2014, incidents occurring in the Mazandaran and Kerman Provinces, are an indication of systematic and coordinated plans to impose further economic restrictions on the Bahá'ís:

In November 2014, agents of the Amaken in Kerman sealed 80 shops of the Bahá'ís in Kerman, Rafsanjan and Jiroft, under the pretext that the shops had been closed during the Bahá'í holy days. On 1 January 2015, after 67 days of extensive follow-up activities and the filing of complaints by the Bahá'ís, the shops began to be gradually reopened. Unfortunately, on 21 April 2015, a Bahá'í holy day, the Office of Amaken again sealed a number of shops in Rafsanjan and Sari. A further eleven shops in Rafsanjan, seven shops in Kerman and six shops in Sari were sealed on 29 April 2015 — another Bahá'í holy day. The shop closures continued on 24 May 2015, when agents of the Amaken sealed 12 shops of the Bahá'ís in Sari because they were closed for a holy day. The Ministry of Intelligence Office in Kerman summoned some of the shop-owners and asked them to sign undertakings to not close their shops on Bahá'í holy days, which they refused. Since May 2015 the shop owners have persisted in their follow-up activities regarding the closure of their shops with no avail, and met with or wrote to many authorities. On 6 August 2015, three more Bahá'í-owned shops in Kerman were sealed by order of the Amaken, while many of the shops have been closed since 2014.

⁶ Mahram: Intimate, a spouse or family member sufficiently closely-related to be able to freely associate with the individual without the Islamic proprieties being compromised.

Since January 2016, the Bahá'ís in Kerman and Rafsanjan whose shops have been closed have continued to make efforts to seek justice in regard to the reopening of their businesses. Representatives of the business owners have gone to government departments and agencies, visited the trade officials, met with lawyers and with officials in the parliamentary and judicial offices in Tehran. They were met with an unsupportive attitude and were encouraged to sign an undertaking form if they wished to reopen their businesses. Fourteen non-Bahá'í business owners in Kerman drafted an affidavit addressed to the Amaken of Kerman in support of a Bahá'í, whose store had been sealed in October 2014. The Bahá'í shop owners have been continuing to attempt to persuade the authorities to permit their shops to be reopened.

In June 2016, we were informed that the Bahá'ís in Kerman whose businesses were sealed more than a year ago have been subject to unkindness and insult and have also been rebuffed by the Governor General, who has refused to meet them. These Bahá'ís have persistently visited the offices of various authorities, but have been unsuccessful in obtaining any positive responses. It appears that the authorities avoid meeting them, and they have been bluntly told that there is nothing that these authorities can do—the Bahá'ís must give undertakings not to close their shops during Bahá'í holy days. An official in the office of the Governor General, Mr. Farshid Fallah, acknowledged that this attitude on the part of the authorities was not in the best interest of the regime and was a mistake, but that it was out of their power to resolve this situation. The matter has now been reported to the Ministry of the Interior and the authorities are waiting for a response.

Moreover, following the sealing of all the business premises owned by Bahá'ís in Rafsanjan in 2015, a number of Bahá'ís who repair appliances for a living, took on a limited number of repair jobs for some of the customers in the backyard or garage of their homes. Recently, two Bahá'ís received a written notice from the Trade Union that they are not permitted to work in the garage of their home. Therefore, the two Bahá'ís decided not open their garage door for business in order not to attract attention and did not go to the Trade Union. Notwithstanding this, on 26 June 2016, the garage door of the home of the above-mentioned individuals was sealed by the Trade Union.

Bahá'ís are being prevented from being promoted in certain types of professions and have been denied membership or presidency in their related trade, membership in syndicates and trade unions, participation in exhibitions, becoming well-known exporters or importers, or major distributors of any goods. The following represents only the most recent case:

- A Bahá'í has been a member of the Photographers' Union of Isfahan for the last five to six years and was appointed to serve in a position of some importance. It was reported in March 2016 that the chairman of the board of directors of the Photographers' Union gave him the task of taking the photographs at the "International Conference of Abrahamic Religions" in Isfahan. This conference was attended by Ministers and Advisors to President Rouhani. A few days after the event, the Bahá'í was summoned to

the Ministry of Intelligence Office, interrogated, and forced to resign both his position in and membership of the Union. We were informed that in July 2015 that the Bahá'í photographer followed up with his expulsion from his position with the Photographers' Union of Isfahan by meeting with the Deputy of the Sinemayeh Javan Centre and asking whether he might attend a workshop as an individual. He was told he could attend but if any questions were raised about his presence there, the Centre would deny any involvement and he would be on his own. A representative of the Sinemayeh Javan Centre told the Bahá'í that he was very sorry for the action that was taken against him, but neither the Centre nor the Ministry of Guidance could do anything about it because the order was issued by the Ministry of Intelligence Office.

Denial of access to higher education, including vocational training

As mentioned earlier, adherents of the Bahá'í Faith have long been denied access to higher education. Every year, hundreds of qualified young Bahá'ís are prevented from entering public and private universities and vocational training institutes in Iran.

- In 2004–2005, the government responded to international pressure by re-interpreting an entry on an official form so as to allow Bahá'ís to take the national university entrance exam without declaring their religion. But nearly all those who passed the entrance exams were blocked during the enrolment phase or expelled later, when it became known that they are members of the Bahá'í community. All the expelled students who appealed to relevant authorities, and/or through the courts, had their cases rejected.
- In 2006–2007, over 800 Bahá'ís took the university entrance exam and 480 passed; 289 were admitted. Those admitted have since been identified as Bahá'ís and expelled, some during their final semester, just before graduation.
- In 2007–2008, more than 1,000 Bahá'ís took the exam, approximately 800 were informed that their papers would not be graded because their file was considered an “incomplete file”. None who followed up on this false classification obtained recourse. 121 were admitted; however, they have since been identified as Bahá'ís and expelled.
- In 2008–2009, entrance exam results were available on only one website, where all those previously identified as Bahá'ís (at school or elsewhere) were transferred to a page containing the message: “Error: ‘Incomplete File...’”. None of them were able to enrol.

The government has done nothing to negate these instructions, which have been implemented throughout the country. University enrolment forms include declarations of religion, and many officials do not allow these to be left blank. Even during the academic year, university authorities have summoned students and demanded that they identify their religion. Whenever a student was identified as a Bahá'í, he or she was expelled. The few students admitted without their religious affiliation being identified at the outset were later expelled from university when it was discovered that they were Bahá'ís. Many have appealed such cases—an approach that, to date, has proved unavailing.

Several official documents provide evidence that the expulsion of Bahá'í students constitutes formal government policy. Chief among these is a communication sent in 2006 by the Central Security Office of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. Addressed to 81 Iranian universities (the names of which were listed), it instructed them to expel any student discovered to be a Bahá'í at the time of enrolment or during his/her studies.⁷ The communication also indicated that these instructions were being promulgated under "decree number 1327/M/S, dated 6/12/69 [25 February 1991]". This referenced decree is the 1991 memorandum from the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, which was discussed above. The 1991 memorandum was also cited in an implementation letter from the Central Security Office of Payame Noor University to its regional branches in November 2006. A related letter in March 2007 mandated instructions "to prevent the enrolment of the Bahá'í applicants."⁸ To this day, the 1991 memorandum is referred to as a justification of dismissal of Bahá'í students from university.

Furthermore, the government's denial of higher education to Bahá'ís is officially recorded in a publication issued by Sanjesh, the national academic evaluation and measurement organization of Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. Entitled, "*A guide to enrolling and participating in the national entrance examination for academic year 1394 [2015–2016]*", this 50-page publication presents detailed guidelines on the application process for students wishing to enter university in Iran, including criteria for admission. The first admission criterion of the publication by Sanjesh states as follows on page 4 under the heading 'General Requirements':

"A belief in Islam or in one of the recognized religions (Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian) in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

This requirement of Iran's own official admission document clearly states that access to higher education in Iran is restricted only to those who believe in Islam or in one of the three other recognized religions specified in Iran's Constitution – thus excluding those who believe in the Bahá'í Faith.

Although Islamic teachings and Article 23 of the Iranian Constitution strongly forbid the investigation of individuals' beliefs, it is clear that Bahá'ís are denied their fundamental rights solely because they are identified as such. Most Bahá'ís are identified early in the university application process and are not even permitted to complete the procedure.

In the previous years, for example, Bahá'ís were told that their files were "incomplete" when they tried to get university entrance examinations results. When Bahá'í students sought their exam results online, many found the following written in front of their names:

⁷ The 2006 letter to universities can be accessed at:

Persian: http://news.bahai.org/documentlibrary/575/1_LetterFromMinistriesToUniversities.pdf

English: http://news.bahai.org/documentlibrary/575/1_LetterFromMinistriesToUniversities_en.pdf.

⁸ For the March 2007 letter, see:

Persian: http://news.bahai.org/documentlibrary/575/2_LetterToPayam-i-NurUniversity.pdf

English: http://news.bahai.org/documentlibrary/575/2_LetterToPayam-i-NurUniversity_en.pdf.

“Please write to Post Office Box 3166-31635 Karaj, or go to the National Education Measurement and Evaluation Organization, Inquiries Unit.”

Several of them visited the above-referenced office in Karaj and made inquiries; they were all shown the Sanjesh publication.

During the 2014–2015 academic year, 300 cases of denial to higher education were reported. Bahá'í youth continue to be denied access to higher education in any form and from any source in Iran. This year, hundreds of Bahá'í students are denied enrolment to universities under the pretext of “incomplete file”. These individuals participate in the national examination and receive high scores, making them eligible for entry into university and yet they are denied the right to education only because they are Bahá'ís. A considerable number of Bahá'í youth who scored high grades in the national examination were either denied entry into university or were expelled during the academic year once it was identified that they are Bahá'ís. Below are some recent examples:

- It was reported in June 2016 that a Bahá'í accounting student at Payam-e-Nour University in Kashan was expelled for being a Bahá'í. Another young Bahá'í, who was studying medical engineering at Emam Reza University in Mashhad, was also expelled for being a Bahá'í.
- It was reported in June 2016 that Mr. Faraz Karinkani Saysan – who had been attending as an undergraduate student the Institute of Higher Education of Ghiasoddin Jamshid Kashani (a private institution) since the beginning of this academic year – was expelled. The notification letter from the head of the Institute, dated 28 May 2016, explicitly states that the cause of expulsion is Mr. Saysan's belief in the Bahá'í Faith.
- It was reported in April 2016 that three Bahá'í students, one of whom was in term five of literature and another in term five of electrical engineering, were recently expelled from Payame Noor University in Oroumiyeh.
- Two Bahá'í students of Applied Sciences at the Institute of Bisotoun in Kernmanshah, were expelled from university. Following these expulsions, their families went to the head of the university, the person in charge of university's security office and other university officials and requested clarification of the matter. The officials refused to produce any sort of written response, or to provide any document related to the expulsions. They initially refrained from even recording their receipt of the letter of complaint. However, after ceaseless efforts made, some of their letters were finally recorded at the secretariat of the university. The head of Security Office provided an opportunity for the students to say goodbye to their classmates and lecturers. In these meetings, all the students and lecturers expressed their sadness about what had occurred.
- It was reported in July 2016 that Mr. Naim Mohammadi, who was studying medical engineering at Emam Reza university in Mashhad, was expelled for being a Bahá'í.

Finally, we would add that shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, all Bahá'í students enrolled at the time were expelled from university, and Bahá'í university professors and lecturers were summarily dismissed from their positions. In the late 1980s, the Bahá'í community made informal arrangements to begin offering university-level courses and vocational training to Bahá'í students, conducted through distance learning and in the privacy of Bahá'í homes, using the volunteer services of the Bahá'í professors who had been fired from their jobs. The Iranian government made repeated attempts to stop this quiet, peaceful initiative known as the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE), most notably in 1998, 2001, 2003 and 2011.

Since May 2011, we have been documenting cases that concern educators and students arrested because of their participation in the work of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE). At the time of the concerted attack against faculty and staff in 2011, nearly 300 people were serving the Institute, including international volunteer educators who teach through the Internet. About 1,000 BIHE students were studying at home and in inconspicuous laboratories in privately owned premises. Seven individuals are currently serving prison terms ranging from four to five years, solely because they had been providing courses to young Bahá'ís with the capacity and deep desire to continue their studies beyond secondary school. Educators, administrators or collaborators, these seven individuals have volunteered their time and skills to help young Bahá'ís with the advancement of their country.

In the case of the Bahá'ís, rather than intensifying opportunities for access to higher education as was recommended, Iran has intensified its efforts to deny higher education to students and considers the act of educating young people a criminal offence.

Many of the Bahá'ís involved in the concerted attack in 2011 have been repeatedly harassed. The following represents only the most recent case:

- A Bahá'í couple was waiting to serve their respective five and four year sentences under *ta'zir* law.⁹ One of the charges against them was “activities against national security through membership in BIHE”. In April 2015 the wife was summoned by telephone to serve her sentence, and on 5 May 2015, a hearing was held for the husband in the court of appeals. On Sunday 28 February 2016, the father was arrested by the authorities when he went to Evin Prison to visit his wife and was taken into prison to start his five-year sentence. This arrest took place without any summons having been issued or warning given. By prior arrangement, the couple's only child, a six-year-old son is being cared for by a Bahá'í family in Karaj. The couple were both volunteer lecturers for the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) and their home was raided on 22 May 2011 by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence. The wife was also one of the 17 Bahá'ís who were arrested in a mass raid on the 39 residences of people associated with BIHE on 22 May 2011.

⁹ *Ta'zir* (discretionary punishment): Punishment with maximum and minimum limits determined by law and judge, respectively.