

Bahá'í International Community

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PRESS RELEASE

Baha'í International Community

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UN vote highlights human rights violations in Iran

GENEVA – The UN Human Rights Council's overwhelming vote today to extend the mandate of its special investigator on Iran shows that the international community is pleased with Ahmed Shaheed's excellent work and it expects Iran to make good on its promises to improve human rights, said the Baha'i International Community.

"The vote today to extend the mandate of Ahmed Shaheed is a powerful signal that the world expects action – not just words – from President Rouhani and his government on human rights," said Diane Ala'í, Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations in Geneva.

The vote, 21 to 9 with 16 abstentions, came after new reports by Dr. Shaheed, the Council's Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Both said Iran has generally failed over the last year to address its persistent human rights problems.

While Dr. Shaheed and Mr. Ban took note of small improvements, by and large they said that Iran continues to make numerous and serious human rights violations. These include high rates of improperly adjudicated executions, the ongoing oppression of women, the use of torture, and the wrongful imprisonment of journalists, human rights defenders and minorities, including members of the Baha'i Faith.

"Hundreds of individuals reportedly remain in some form of confinement for exercising their fundamental rights, including some 39 journalists and bloggers, 92 human rights defenders, 136 Baha'is, 90 Sunni Muslims, 50 Christians, and 19 Dervish Muslims," said Dr. Shaheed during the presentation of his report to the Council last week.

Ms. Ala'í said the path forward for Iran is quite clear.

"Iran can begin by releasing, among others, the 136 Baha'is who are in prison solely for their religious beliefs," said Ms. Ala'í. "The government can also easily allow Baha'i youth to

attend university. And the practice of raiding Baha'i homes and arbitrarily arresting occupants can be halted with the stroke of a pen in Tehran.

"Given that Baha'is are committed to non-violence and obedience to legal authorities, these measures would pose no threat to the government and could be rapidly instituted," said Ms. Ala'i.

"Iran must also address the concerns of the international community by allowing Mr. Shaheed to visit the country," said Ms. Ala'i. "The fact that Mr. Shaheed has never been invited to visit Iran is merely more evidence of the Iranian government's disregard for international human rights mechanisms."

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