

**BAHÁ'Í
INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY**

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PRESS RELEASE

Baha'i International Community

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Statement of the Bahá'í International Community in response to the trial of 16 individuals on 30 January 2010

The trial yesterday of 16 individuals in Iran, apparently accused of participating in the Ashura demonstrations on 27 December, stands in violation of all internationally accepted standards of legal due process.

While facts are unavailable to the Bahá'í International Community concerning 15 of the defendants in the court proceedings, it can confirm that one individual — identified only as “P.F.” in government reports — is a Bahá'í.

The show trials in the aftermath of the June 2009 presidential election, at which defendants have been forced to read statements incriminating themselves, have completely discredited “confessions,” such as the one purportedly made by “P.F.,” both inside and outside of Iran. It is well known that such confessions are obtained while prisoners are under extreme duress, often after being exposed to such appalling tactics as food and sleep deprivation, fake executions, threats against their families, and worse. Rather than accepting responsibility for the turmoil in the country, the Iranian government organizes such show trials in order to lay the blame on innocent citizens and others.

While it is claimed that the court proceedings are open, not even the families of the defendants are notified of the trial of their loved ones.

The person identified as P.F., along with nine other Bahá'ís who were arrested on 3 January in Tehran, has not been able to contact his family, has been denied access to a lawyer, and was not allowed to choose his own legal representation. The government-appointed lawyer who acted on behalf of P.F. did nothing more than to accept the “confession” of his client and make a pro forma request for leniency.

The Iranian government is well aware that it is a fundamental principle of the Bahá'í Faith that its followers strictly refrain from involvement in any partisan political activity, whether local, national, or international. Consequently, the arrest of ten Bahá'ís on 3 January, a full week after the Ashura demonstrations, and the claims that Bahá'ís

were behind the recent anti-government turmoil have come as a complete surprise to the Bahá'í community. These fabricated accusations clearly appear to be not so much about some Bahá'ís participating in the Ashura demonstrations. They point instead to a scenario which has been concocted by the authorities to justify placing further restrictions on the activities of the Bahá'í community. This is but the most recent tactic in the ongoing systematic campaign of persecution that seeks to eliminate the Bahá'í community as a viable entity in that country.

We call on governments and fair-minded people throughout the world to join us and raise their voice to protest against the blatant violations of human rights in Iran, of which yesterday's trial is only the most recent example.

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