

**BAHÁ'Í
INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY**

United Nations Office

866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120, New York, NY 10017 USA

Telephone: 1-212-803-2500, Fax: 1-212-803-2566, Email: uno-nyc@bic.org

PRESS RELEASE

The Baha'i International Community

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For more information, contact Bani Dugal in New York at 212-803-2500 (mobile: 914-329-3020) or Diane Ala'i in Geneva at +41 (-22) -798-5400 (mobile: +41 (-78) -60-40-100)

UN rejection of Iranian “no-action motion” is a victory for international human rights, says Baha'i International Community

NEW YORK – The Baha'i International Community praised the United Nations General Assembly for today rejecting a so-called “no-action motion” on human rights in Iran.

Such a motion, if it had passed, would have used procedural rules to set aside a resolution that is sharply critical of the Islamic Republic of Iran over its use of torture, the high incidence of executions, the “violent repression” of women, and “increasing discrimination” against Baha'is, Christians, Jews, Sufis, and Sunni Muslims, among other minorities.

That resolution subsequently passed the Assembly's Third Committee, by a vote of 70 to 51 with 60 abstentions, in a second vote today. The resolution will now be sent for final approval by the full Assembly in mid-December.

“This motion allowed governments an easy way to evade their responsibility to protect international human rights, and by rejecting it they have cleared the way for a thorough investigation of human rights abuses in Iran,” said Bani Dugal, the principal representative of the BIC to the United Nations.

“The UN General Assembly therefore deserves praise for rejecting the motion, which was sponsored by Iran in an obvious effort to evade international condemnation for its worsening human rights record.

“Our hope is that such no-action motions, which essentially use a procedural ploy to avoid a legitimate discussion of human rights issues, will now become a thing of the past. If so, this represents a victory for the rights of people everywhere,” said Ms. Dugal.

A no-action motion is a procedure that prevents member states at the UN from even debating a particular resolution. It is being increasingly used to allow countries to avoid having to take a position on politically sensitive issues, such as human rights, and so to escape scrutiny, Ms. Dugal said.

“Using procedural motions in this way gives unscrupulous countries the chance to turn a blind eye to the oppressive actions of a member state, all the while pretending that they care about human rights. The international community should no longer stand for this.

“If it had passed, it would have been an affront to those Iranians, particularly inside their homeland, who have so bravely spoken out against the abuses of their government. Increasingly, Iranian lawyers and human rights activists have sought to uphold due process and defend the rights of their fellow citizens, often at considerable risk,” said Ms. Dugal.

Failure of the motion, by a vote of 81 to 71 with 28 abstentions, cleared the way for the Assembly’s Third Committee, which oversees human rights issues, to consider the actual resolution on Iran’s human rights situation. That vote came minutes later.

The resolution was put forward by Canada and, before the vote, had the sponsorship of more than 40 countries. It expresses “deep concern at the ongoing systematic violation of human rights” in Iran, noting especially recent “confirmed instances” of torture, public executions, and the “violent repression” of groups such as “women exercising their right of peaceful assembly.”

The resolution also calls on the Islamic Republic of Iran to “address the substantive concerns” on human rights that were highlighted in a recent report by the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Issued in October, Mr. Ban’s report said “there are a number of serious impediments to the full protection of human rights” in Iran. It likewise expressed concerns over torture, executions, the rights of women, and discrimination against minorities. [To read the full report, go to: <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=a/63/459>]

The resolution calls on Iran to “end the harassment, intimidation and persecution of political opponents and human rights defenders, including by releasing persons imprisoned arbitrarily or on the basis of their political views” and to “uphold due process of law rights and to end impunity for human rights violations.”

The resolution takes particular note of attacks on Baha’is, noting “increasing evidence of efforts by the State to identify and monitor Baha’is, preventing members of the Baha’i Faith from attending university and from sustaining themselves economically, and the arrest and detention of seven Baha’i leaders without charge or access to legal representation.”

Ms. Dugal noted that there are at least 20 Baha'is currently in jail, including the national Baha'i leadership of seven members who were arrested last March and May and are being held in Evin prison without charges. More than 100 more have been arrested and released on bail over the last four years as part of a stepped-up government effort at persecution.

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