

Bahá'í International Community

United Nations Office | GENEVA

Route des Morillons 15, CH-1218 Grand-Saconnex / Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41 (0)22 798 5400 Fax: +41 (0)22 798 6577 E-mail: geneva@bic.org

PRESS RELEASE

Baha'í International Community

11 November 2013

For Immediate Release

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

Baha'is in Iran told to leave town or face knife attacks after raids on 14 homes

GENEVA — Following raids on 14 Baha'i homes in the Iranian city of Abadeh last month, government agents summoned the occupants for questioning and urged them to leave town or face possible deadly attacks from city residents.

“The clear aim of the raids and questioning was to create an atmosphere of intimidation and fear, so that the Baha'is of Abadeh would be encouraged to leave the city,” said Diane Ala'i, a representative of the Baha'í International Community to the United Nations.

According to Ms. Ala'i, agents from the Shiraz office of the Ministry of Intelligence, with agents from Abadeh, launched the raids at about 8 a.m. on 13 October 2013. The homes were searched, and Baha'i books, CDs, computers, and other items, including photographs, were confiscated.

During questioning, several Baha'is were told that local residents “don't like you” and that “when you are on the street, they might attack you and your children with knives.”

Ms. Ala'i said, however, that not only is there no evidence that the people of Abadeh themselves are against the Baha'is but that the experience of the Baha'is says the opposite is true.

“The real story is that the government is the culprit behind such threats and attacks,” said Ms. Ala'i. “The people of Abadeh have nothing against Baha'is and many love to associate with them freely.

“In at least 52 cases since 2005 around the country, Iranian Baha'is have been physically assaulted -- and these have almost always come after the clear instigation of plainclothes agents, the clergy, or the government-controlled media, which has waged a campaign to incite hatred against Baha'is,” said Ms. Ala'i.

In the recent raids on Abadeh, she said, at least one resident from each home was summoned to the local office of the Ministry of Intelligence for questioning. Among those summoned were several young people, including two who were visiting relatives.

The agents urged the Baha'is to leave the city. "If you get attacked by people on the street, we cannot guarantee your safety," one Baha'i was told.

"Of special concern is that some of those who were summoned for interrogation were youth, who were asked about their activities, said Ms. Ala'i. "Others were asked to sign 'contracts' promising not to communicate with other Baha'is or to hold meetings other than a customary, monthly meeting for worship."

Agents also closed down a shop that had been owned by a Baha'i, sealing its doors with official notice that said: "This shop has been shut down by warrant of the general and revolutionary prosecutor of the city."

"Regrettably," said Ms. Ala'i, "the situation in Abadeh marks yet another incident showing that despite promises by Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani, the situation for Baha'is has not improved. If anything, it has worsened."

Ms. Ala'i noted, for example, that the government has taken no action to bring to justice the killers of Ataollah Rezvani, a Baha'i whose killing in August was religiously motivated. Nor, she said, have any of the more than 100 Baha'i prisoners been released, despite their complete innocence.

Abadeh is a small city of about 60,000 people midway between Shiraz and Isfahan in central Iran. It has a sizable Baha'i population, and has been the site of other anti-Baha'i activities in recent years.

In the past, for example, a number of Baha'is found anti-Baha'i graffiti written on the walls and doors of their houses and shops. Among other things, the graffiti said: "Death to Baha'is-spies of America and Israel" and "Baha'is are unclean."

For more information, go to www.bic.org