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**PRESS RELEASE**

Baha'i International Community

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**Open letter to Larijani speaks out for the rights of all Iranians**

NEW YORK – In an open letter to the head of Iran's Judiciary, the Baha'i International Community today contrasted the country's persecution of Baha'is with Iran's own call for Muslim minorities to be treated fairly in other countries.

“We...request that the Baha'is in that country be granted their full rights of citizenship, in order that they may be able to fulfill their heartfelt aspiration to contribute, alongside their fellow citizens, to the advancement of their nation,” says the letter.

“This, indeed, is no more than what you rightfully ask for Muslim minorities who reside in other lands. Baha'is merely seek the same treatment from you,” the Baha'i International Community states.

Respecting the rights of Iranian Baha'is now would “signal a willingness to respect the rights of all the citizens of your country,” the letter says.

The document, dated 7 December and addressed to Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq Larijani, states that the injustices meted out on Iran's Baha'i citizens are a “reflection of the terrible oppression that has engulfed the nation.” Redressing the wrongs suffered by the Baha'is would “bring hope to the hearts of all Iranians that you are ready to ensure justice for everyone.”

“Our call then, is in reality a call for respect of the rights of all the Iranian people,” the Baha'i International Community says.

“How can a just society, or a just world, be built on a foundation of irrational oppression and the systematic denial of basic human rights to any minority? Everything your country overtly professes to seek on the world stage is contradicted by your treatment of your own people at home.”

The letter catalogues in detail the “many reprehensible measures” resorted to by officials during the detention, trial, sentencing and appeal, of the seven Baha’i leaders, who formerly served as the members of a national-level group that – with the Iranian government’s knowledge – helped see to the minimum spiritual needs of the Baha’is of Iran.

The seven were accused of propaganda activities against the Islamic order and the establishment of an illegal administration, among other allegations. All the charges were categorically denied. The seven Baha’i leaders are Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm.

Bani Dugal, the principal representative of the Bahai International Community to the United Nations says that there was never any foundation to the charges that the seven had acted against the interest of Iran.

“To add to this manifest injustice, the judiciary has not yet formalized the appeal verdict,” says Ms. Dugal, “thus depriving the prisoners of the right to seek bail or to be granted leave from prison.”

To read the full release, along with the open letter to Ayatollah Larijani, go to:  
<http://news.bahai.org>