

PRESS RELEASE

Baha'i International Community
12 January 2010

For Immediate Release

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Trial of seven Baha'i leaders underway in Tehran

GENEVA – The trial of seven imprisoned Baha'i leaders began today in Iran. Initial reports indicate that the trial is being held and is marked by numerous violations of legal due process.

“We understand that no observers were allowed in the court,” said Diane Ala'i, the Baha'i International Community's representative to the United Nations in Geneva. “We find this completely outrageous, given that these seven have been held purely because of their religious beliefs, in total contradiction to any human rights standards.

“We understand that even the lawyers had to argue their way inside the court – lawyers who in any case had virtually no access to the accused for nearly two years.

“At the same time, the prisoners' interrogators from the Ministry of Intelligence and a film crew were seen going in, raising questions about the nature of the trial,” she said.

Ms. Ala'i also noted that an Iranian Web site linked to state-run television posted a story Monday evening announcing that the trial had already begun and listing the same baseless accusations made in the past against the seven.

“In any event, all of these accounts point to a trial that is highly irregular, very similar to the show trials that have been held in Iran in recent months,” she said.

The seven are Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm.

All but one of the group were arrested on 14 May 2008 at their homes in Tehran. Mrs. Sabet was arrested on 5 March 2008 while in Mashhad. They have been held in Tehran's Evin prison ever since, spending their first year there without formal charges or any

access to lawyers.

“Whatever happens, it is clear that the trial of these seven innocent people represents the trial of an entire religious community, and is an attempt to further intimidate and ostracize all Iranian Baha'is simply because they hold a different religious viewpoint from those in power.”

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