

**BAHÁ'Í
INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY**

United Nations Office

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

Telephone: [1-212-803-2500](tel:1-212-803-2500), Fax: [1-212-803-2566](tel:1-212-803-2566), Email: uno-nyc@bic.org,

Web: <http://bic.org>

PRESS RELEASE

Baha'i International Community

23 May 2013

For Immediate Release

For more information, contact Diane Ala'i in Geneva at (office) +41 (-22) -798-5400 or (mobile) [+41 \(-78\) -60-40-100](tel:+41786040100) or Bani Dugal in New York at (office) [212-803-2500](tel:2128032500) or (mobile) [914-329-3020](tel:9143293020)

Iranian Baha'is face "widespread and entrenched" discrimination says UN Committee

GENEVA –Yesterday the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights issued a series of pointed recommendations to the Iranian government – recommendations that included a plea for Iran to ensure that all citizens, regardless of religious belief, enjoy full rights without any discrimination.

The Committee specifically referred to the Baha'i community, expressing its concern that Iranian Baha'is face "widespread and entrenched discrimination, including denial of access to employment in the public sector, institutions of higher education, as well as to benefits of the pension system."

It recommended that Iran "take steps to ensure that members of the Baha'i community are protected against discrimination and exclusion in every field."

Diane Alai, the representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations in Geneva, welcomed the Committee's findings, known as "concluding observations." She said: "The Committee's report highlights the extent of the persecution of Baha'is in Iran, which includes employment, education, and cultural issues."

She noted that Committee members questioned Iranian officials during a day-long session earlier in the month, asking, among other things, why the government feels it has to recognize a particular religion at all in order to grant individuals certain rights, and why discrimination against Baha'is appears to be so pervasive.

"People are the holders of their freedom of religion, and that is not the public power of states," said Nicolaas Schrijver, a Committee member from The Netherlands, during the 1 May session with Iranian officials.

In its report, the Committee also recommended that Iran take steps to guarantee "the unhindered access of Baha'i students to universities and vocational training institutions."

The report also covered a wide range of other human rights violations in Iran, from concern over discrimination against women and ethnic minorities in education and employment to the lack of protection for independent trade unions.