



Inter-Religious Council of Uganda
Religions for Peace

INJUSTICES INFLICTED BY THE IRANIAN REGIME TO THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY

Joint Statement on the Prevailing Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Iran

Issued this 16th Day of May, 2013

Venue: Metropole Hotel, Kampala

We greet you in the name of the Lord!

The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, and indeed the religious fraternity joins the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i's in Uganda to commemorate the fifth year of the arrest and imprisonment of seven Baha'i leaders in Iran, whose only crime was to redress the injustices that were inflicted by the Iranian regime to the Bahá'í Community in that country.

We recognize the challenges that the Baha'i community are faced with in Iran, and extend our solidarity, prayers and love to them. We are praying that the Iranian Government will provide a conducive environment that provides for protection and promotion of fundamental and other human rights and freedoms as enshrined in the UN Charter on Human Rights, as well as provide an environment for peaceful co-existence for people of different identities and faiths.

The Bahá'ís of Iran like other religious minorities, undergo persistent harsh persecutions in that country. A recently released report on freedom of religion presented to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom by the former Secretary of State of the United States, Mrs. Hillary Clinton identified "Sufi Muslims, evangelical Christians and Jews" – in fact, "all religious minorities". The report states further that each and every one of these communities suffers in varying degrees from periodic harassment, repression and imprisonment. Reports recently received state that some 6,500 bibles were confiscated last year by the Iranian authorities.

As to the Baha'ís of Iran, and especially during the years that followed the rise of the country's Islamic regime in 1979, there has been a systematic state-instigated ploy to uproot the Baha'ís in that land. Under such a relentless campaign, scores of Iranian Baha'ís were unjustly executed and others imprisoned, and those who were spared death or imprisonment were deprived of all means of livelihood – old and young alike. Property and businesses were confiscated, civil servants dismissed without indemnity or pensions, young Baha'ís barred from higher education, business licenses revoked, to mention but a few.

Faced with such inhumane and intolerable conditions, a group of seven Iranian Baha'ís (*2 of them are women in their 50's*) formed a committee that attempted to intervene in the dire needs of their afflicted Community. Working through utilizing modest local means, the committee, which they named "Yaran" or the friends, attempted to help the poor and secure home-tutoring to youths deprived of formal education. Outraged at any attempt to redress the injustices suffered by the Bahá'í religious minority, the Iranian regime cracked down on this group by arresting them in May 2008. After a long detainment, these seven Baha'í leaders were put to a trial that was clipped of any due course of justice. A kangaroo court sentenced them primarily to 10 years of harsh imprisonment, an unimaginable long period that was later doubled to 20 years when the defendants dared to take the case to another kangaroo court of appeal.

Following their arrest, the Iranian authorities pursued this harsh intimidation campaign further by arrest, trial and imprisonment of those Baha'is who volunteered to offer home-tutoring to multitudes of Bahá'í youths that have no other source of education.

These sheer violations of basic human rights of Iran's religious minorities by the regime of that country gave rise to international outrage from governments and civil society organizations and all freedom-loving people worldwide. Many parliaments passed resolutions of condemnations, and many governments voiced their protest at such abhorrent actions of the Iranian governments. Various resolutions were adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights to the same effect, and scores of Nobel laureates and leaders of thought followed suit.

With May of 2013 marking the fifth year for the seven "Yaran", an international campaign is now launched to continue to exercise this worldwide pressure on the regime of Iran in the hope that, eventually, it will come to its senses and redress the injustices it has so far inflicted to the country's religious minorities.

Once again, we appeal to the United Nations and other international agencies to prevail over the Iranian government to put in place a conducive environment that provides for protection and promotion of fundamental and other human rights and freedoms for all Iranians, particularly freedom of worship.

Yours in Service,

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