

Letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs from faith leaders in the United
Kingdom regarding the imprisonment of seven former
leaders of the Bahá'í community in Iran.

Presented to Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the
Foreign and Commonwealth Office Alistair Burt MP on 14
May 2013

The Rt Hon William Hague MP

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

King Charles Street

London SW1A 2AH

14 May 2013

Dear Foreign Secretary

Five years ago, the Iranian government imprisoned seven former leaders of the Bahá'í community for no reason but their beliefs.

Today, we – leaders of the United Kingdom's diverse faith communities – are calling on you to renew your support for these seven prisoners and all members of Iran's long-suffering and largest religious minority, the Bahá'í community.

Iran has abandoned every legal, moral, spiritual and humanitarian standard, routinely violating the human rights of its citizens. The government's shocking treatment of its religious minorities is of particular concern to us as people of faith.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Iran's human rights situation, Dr Ahmed Shaheed, recently reported that members of religious minorities have suffered arbitrary arrests, unlawful trials, imprisonment and torture. Places of worship, businesses and homes are ransacked; students are barred from university because of their faith; cemeteries are desecrated. And in addition to Bahá'ís, other persecuted minorities include the Gonabadi Dervishes, themselves Shia Muslims; the Yarsan, a Kurdish religious minority; and even Christians, despite that faith's constitutional protection.

The state-sponsored persecution that has plagued the Bahá'ís for decades is an egregious example of Iran's violence against minorities. In the case of the seven former leaders of the Bahá'í community, Iran violated its own due process; the prisoners were held without charge for over a year and then paraded before Ministry of Intelligence cameras in trials that excluded outside observers. They were finally each sentenced to 20 years in prison.

These seven Bahá'ís must now be released. On this, the fifth anniversary of their arrest, we ask you to voice again your call for their freedom and the freedom of all Bahá'ís in Iran. The Bahá'ís wish to serve their country, the land in which their faith was born, and they have the right to work for its betterment without fear of reprisal. Emancipation for the Bahá'ís is long overdue.

Yours sincerely

Bhai Sahib, Dr Bhai Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia, Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha

Venerable Ajahn Amaro, Abbot, Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, Hertfordshire

His Grace Bishop Angaelos, The Coptic Orthodox Church Centre

Imam Sohail Ashfaque, Blackhall Mosque, Edinburgh

Mr Anil Bhanot OBE, Managing Trustee, Hindu Council UK

The Right Revd Albert Bogle, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

The Most Revd David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

Mr Steve Clifford, General Director, Evangelical Alliance

Archbishop Emeritus Mario Conti of Glasgow, Chair of the Catholic Committee for Inter-religious Dialogue

The Revd Bill Darlison, President, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (Great Britain)

Acharya Modgala Duguid, Amida London Buddhist Centre

The Revd Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary, Baptist Union Great Britain

The Rt Revd Dr Peter Forster, Lord Bishop of Chester

The Rt Revd Christopher Hill, The Lord Bishop of Guildford

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church

Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Movement Rabbi for the Movement for Reform Judaism

Mr Gurmel Singh Kandola, Secretary-General, Sikh Council United Kingdom

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Langrish, Lord Bishop of Exeter

Rabbi Natan Levy, Environmental Liaison to the Chief Rabbi's Office

Ms Leonie Lewis, London Jewish Forum

The Most Revd Bernard Longley, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham

Rabbi David Mason, Muswell Hill Synagogue

The Most Revd Donal McKeown, Titular Bishop of Killossy

Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra

The Most Revd Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

Mrs Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Co-Chair of Religions for Peace European Women of Faith Network

Mrs Jasbir Kaur Panesar, Chair, Sikhs in England

The Rt Revd Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield

The Rt Revd Peter Price, The Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells

Dr Jasdev Singh Rai, Director, Sikh Human Rights Group

Maulana M Shahid Raza OBE, Chief Imam of Leicester Central Mosque, Chairman of Imams and Mosques Council

Rabbi Danny Rich, Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism

Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpochem, Abbot of Samye Ling Monastery

The Revd Roberta Rominger, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church

Lord Sacks, Chief Rabbi

Imam Mufti Dr Abduljalil Sajid, Chairman Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony UK

Rabbi Thomas Salamon, Westminster Synagogue

Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala, Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of Great Britain

Dr Natubhai Shah MBE, Founder Chair of the Jain Network

Mr Satish K Sharma, General Secretary (Acting), National Council of Hindu Temples

Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Network of Sikh Organisations

Sister Isabel Smyth OBE, Scottish Catholic Bishops Associate Secretary for Interfaith Relations

Venerable K Sri Rewatha Thero, Chief Monk for Great Britain (Theravada-Sri Lanka)

Mr Swaminathan Vaidyanathan, Acting Secretary-General, Hindu Forum of Britain

The Revd Dr Mark Wakelin, President of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain

The Venerable Canon Guy Wilkinson CBE, London Church Leaders

The Rt Revd and Rt Honourable Dr Rowan Williams

Mr Vivian Wineman, President, Board of Deputies of British Jews

Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers, West London Synagogue