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
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