

**The Bahá'í International Community's
United Nations Office**

UPDATE

Situation of the Bahá'ís in the Islamic Republic of Iran

September 2010

This *Update* document presents only the latest developments in the ongoing oppression that targets Bahá'í citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It covers the months from February to the end of August 2010, but also includes recently received information about earlier events. To complement the news given here, more details can be found at: http://bic.org/areas-of-work/persecution_bahai_community and <http://news.bahai.org/human-rights/iran/iran-update/>.

Our *Background* document (available on this website) briefly reviews the historical and legal context of the persecution, and re-examines in some detail the major upsurge in human rights violations against Iranian Bahá'ís since 2005.

Photos, illustrative cases, and copies of supporting documentation are given in the 2008 edition of *The Bahá'í Question – Cultural Cleansing in Iran*, which can be downloaded in electronic form at <http://news.bahai.org/documentlibrary/TheBahaiQuestion.pdf> or obtained in a bound edition from Bahá'í International Community representatives.

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1. The trial of the former leadership group

1. Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi
2. Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani
3. Mr. Afif Naeimi
4. Mr. Saeid Rezaie
5. Mrs. Mahvash Sabet
6. Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli
7. Mr. Vahid Tizfahm

These are the seven Bahá'ís who constituted the former leadership group serving the community in Iran. They were detained in section 209 of Evin prison in Tehran, reportedly run by the Ministry of Information (i.e. Iran's intelligence services, hereinafter referred to as the Intelligence Ministry), for well over two years.

All seven were taken to court on 12 April for the third session of their trial. Lawyers were permitted to enter but not family members. A film crew and numerous intelligence officers were in the courtroom, however, and the hearing was adjourned after the Bahá'ís declined to participate under these conditions. The fourth, fifth and sixth sessions took place during the mornings of three successive days: 12, 13 and 14 June; and the trial concluded at the end of the sixth session.

The lawyers later received information about the sentences, but only orally. First, the judge informed one member of the legal team that each of the defendants had been sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment. On 15 September, a court clerk said that these sentences had been reduced to ten years. By then, the attorneys had launched an appeal.

Meanwhile the prison authorities imposed further restrictions. After their initial four to six months in solitary confinement in 2008, the Bahá'ís had been granted ten-minute family visits almost every week. After the end of their trial in June 2010, a prison officer informed them that male and female visitors would henceforth have to come on alternate weeks – i.e. each prisoner could see his or her male relatives one week and female relatives the following week – and a maximum of three members from each family would be permitted each time. In addition, for most of 2010, all visits have been conducted behind glass. According to regulations, each individual behind bars should be allowed an open visit once a month with his/her spouse, or mother, or one child. But the prison guards refused to abide by the order of the Public Prosecutor allowing the families to have open visits with the Bahá'í leaders.

Moreover, after having suffered ill-treatment while in solitary confinement, they were forced to live under intolerable conditions. The two women were held in one cell, the five men in another – cells so small, it was difficult to move around. They did not have bedding and had to sleep on the floor. There were no openings to allow for fresh air or natural light. Of course, these conditions had a detrimental effect on their health. They appealed to the authorities for modest improvements, but their request was never answered. Their families tried many times to obtain their release on bail. This was never permitted.

On 9 August 2010, it was reported that all seven prisoners had been transferred to Gohardasht Prison – also known as Rajaishahr Prison – in Karaj. The reason for the transfer is not yet known, and it is too early to assess its implications for the prisoners. However, it clearly imposes an added burden on their families, who now have to travel outside Tehran to visit their loved ones.

The seven cases are the object of Opinion No. 34/2008 issued by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

2. *Arbitrary arrests and detention*

As previously reported, five Bahá'ís were in Iranian prisons in 2001, four in 2002-2003, and only two were arrested in 2004. Then the persecution began to intensify again. Since late 2004, there have been over 300 arrests (see table below). In addition, hundreds of others have been summoned and interrogated without being officially arrested.

Cumulative figures:

Bahá'ís arrested from mid-August 2004 to 22 August 2010

320	Bahá'ís have been arrested during the past six years
48	are currently in prison
121	have been released on bail and are awaiting trial
16	have been released without having to post bail
94	have been tried and sentenced and are free pending appeal or official summons to begin serving their sentences
22	have been tried, sentenced, and have completed their prison terms
14	have had their charges cleared or verdicts overturned on appeal
5	have served out their prison sentences and begun additional terms of exile

In addition to the seven Bahá'í leaders whose cases have already been updated in section 1, we provide below the latest information concerning 116 active cases, by location (starting with the capital, then proceeding in alphabetical order).

Tehran

8. Mr. Pouriya Habibi

This is a particularly grievous case of arbitrary detention, as Mr. Habibi has been **arbitrarily detained without charge for over two and a half years**, since his arrest on 27 January 2008. It has not been possible for us to obtain any additional information about Mr. Habibi, who was taken to Evin prison after his arrest.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention included his case (among others) in its Opinion No. 39/2008.

9. Ms. Simin Mokhtari

arrested in a public park and taken to a police station on 27 January 2008

Ms. Mokhtari was arbitrarily detained without charge for over two years. She was finally released on 9 March 2010 without having had to post bail. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had also included her case in Opinion No. 39/2008.

The following Bahá'ís, arrested in Tehran on 3 January 2010, were released on bail:

10. Mr. Nikav Hoveidaie, *on 27 February 2010*
11. Mr. Farid Rouhani, *on 28 February 2010*
12. Mr. Ebrahim Shadmehr, *on 28 February 2010*
13. Mr. Zavosh Shadmehr, *on 28 February 2010*

14. Mrs. Leva Khanjani (Mobasher), on 1 March 2010
15. Mrs. Mona Misaghi (Hoveidaie), on 1 March 2010
16. Mrs. Jinous Sobhani, on 2 March 2010
17. Mr. Babak Mobasher, on 13 March 2010
18. Mr. Mehran (Ahmad) Rouhani, on 13 March 2010
19. Mr. Alaeddin (“Niki”) Khanjani, on 16 March 2010

Mr. Alaeddin Khanjani, the son of one of the imprisoned Bahá’í leaders, had to post an excessively high amount for bail: collateral valued at 100 million tuman (±US\$101,000).

20. Mr. Artin Ghazanfari (*also arrested on 3 January*)

The family of Mr. Ghazanfari promptly provided the collateral demanded for his release, but his interrogators repeatedly delayed the procedure and kept him in prison. It seems that he was released on bail and then detained again in April. Finally, on 20 June, he was summoned to court to receive his verdict. He has been sentenced to one year of imprisonment and has appealed this judgement.

21. Mr. Payam Fanaiyan (*also arrested on 3 January*)

Mr. Fanaiyan was released from Evin prison on 2 June 2010. He was among a group of 16 individuals subjected to a show trial on 30 January 2010; his so-called “confession” at that trial was widely publicized in Iran’s State-sanctioned media. He was sentenced to six years of imprisonment, but this sentence was reduced to one year on appeal, and he was released after having served out half of the reduced sentence.

The following Bahá’ís, arrested on 10 February 2010, were released on 9/10 March 2010, but we have not received details about the bail demands:

22. Ms. Maria Jafari (Ehsani)
23. Mr. Bashir Ehsani
24. Mr. Houtan Sistani
25. Mr. Pedram Sanaie
26. Ms. Romina Zabihyan

27. Mr. Ashkan Bassari – also released on 10 March, but the bail demand is known and was excessively high: he had to post collateral valued at 100 million tuman (±US\$101,000).

28. Ms. Naghmeh Ghanouni
29. Ms. Taraneh Ghanouni

Arrested on 11 February, these two sisters were released on bail on 25 February 2010.

30. Mr. Foad Khanjani

Having obeyed a summons to appear at the Intelligence Ministry on 27 April 2010, Mr. Foad Khanjani was arrested, transferred to Evin prison, then released on 8 May after posting bail. He is the son of Mr. Alaeddin Khanjani and the brother of Ms. Leva Khanjani (both detained recently) and the grandson of Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani (one of the seven Bahá’í leaders). He had already undergone interrogation at the Ministry on 2 March 2010.

31. Mr. Peyman Kashfi
arrested 19 October 2009, released on bail 30 November 2009

On 15 June 2010, Mr. Kashfi was summoned to court, convicted of “membership in groups hostile towards the regime” and sentenced to four years of imprisonment. He has filed an appeal against the judgment.

Elsewhere in Iran:

Abadan (Khouzestan province, south-western Iran)

Mr. Hedayatollah Rezaie

On 17 July 2010, Intelligence Ministry officials arrested Mr. Rezaie following a search of his home. On 7 August, he was released on bail after submitting collateral valued at 25 million tuman (±US\$24,000).

Babol (Mazandaran province, northern Iran)

32. Mr. Moshfegh Samandari
arrested 14 April 2009, released on bail 28 June 2009

Mr. Samandari faced trial (date not known) and was sentenced to six months of imprisonment. On 1 May 2010, he was taken into custody and transferred to Babol prison. He was released on 15 August 2010, having served out his sentence.

There is no recent information about his brother:

33. Mr. Moshtagh Samandari

Summoned to the local Intelligence Ministry office on 8 June 2010, Mr. Moshtagh Samandari was arrested upon arrival and is still (to date) arbitrarily detained without charge.

Babolsar (Mazandaran province)

34. Mr. Shahram Mavaddat
arrested on 19 January 2010

On 6 March 2010, Mr. Mavaddat was released on bail, after having provided a business license as collateral. He was summoned to court on 1 June 2010, but this turned out to be only a first session; the trial will reconvene at a later date.

Ghaemshahr (Mazandaran province)

35. Mr. Masoud Ataiyan
arrested 18 November 2008, released on bail 15 February 2009

Mr. Ataiyan was sentenced to ten months of imprisonment and has launched an appeal.

36. Mr. Changiz Owladi

37. Mr. Parviz Owladi

38. Mrs. Shahnaz Ranjbar (Owladi)

On 11 May 2010, Intelligence Ministry officers searched their homes and confiscated belongings related to the Bahá'í Faith. All three were told to go to the local Ministry office the following day. No other information has been received about the two men. Mrs. Ranjbar was summoned to the Ministry again on 7 June 2010 and arrested; the reason given was

membership in the Institute for Mothers of Today, a registered NGO that aims at empowering families to improve family relations. On 27 June 2010, she was released on bail.

39. Mr. Fakhroddin Samimi

Intelligence Ministry officers raided Mr. Samimi's home on 31 May 2010. After having searched his house and confiscated personal belongings, including his computer and material related to his religious beliefs, the officers arrested him. He was transferred to the prison in Sari the same day, and finally released on bail a month later (on 25 June).

40. Mr. Saman Sabeti

arrested 4 February 2009, tried and sentenced later the same year

It seems that Mr. Sabeti has lost his appeal against the sentence of six months imprisonment handed down at his trial (dates not known).

41. Mrs. Simin Gorji

arrested and detained for six weeks in 2005 and for a total of eight months related to two arrests in 2008, sentenced to one year of imprisonment in April 2009

Having confirmed Mrs. Gorji's sentence, the appeals court considered that she had served half of it in 2008. On 5 May 2010, she was re-imprisoned to serve the remaining six months.

Hamadan (western Iran)

42. Mr. Azizollah Pourhamzeh

43. and his wife, Mrs. Hamideh Ayyoubi

44. Mr. Azizollah Pejman

45. Mr. Fariborz Pourhamzeh

46. Ms. Farideh Ayyoubi

On 27 April 2010, Intelligence Ministry agents went to the homes where these Bahá'í families live. They searched each household and confiscated materials linked to their religious beliefs along with other belongings such as cell phones and computers. All five were arrested and taken to the local Ministry office for interrogation. Ms. Farideh Ayyoubi was released on 28 April, the others two days later. Mr. Azizollah Pourhamzeh had already been arrested and tried in 2008, but the charges against him were overturned on that occasion.

47. Ms. Sahba Khademideljoo

48. Ms. Sorour Sorourian

arrested and released on bail in April 2009, tried in December 2009, sentenced to one year of imprisonment

The appeal lodged by these two Bahá'í women has been denied. On 23 May 2010, both of them were re-imprisoned to begin serving their sentences.

Hasanabad (near Tehran)

49. Mr. Shahram Chiniyan (Miandoab)

detained in Evin prison since his arrest in March 2009

Mr. Chiniyan was finally released on bail on 3 March 2010, after having provided a business license as collateral.

Isfahan (central Iran)

50. Mr. Navid Khanjani

After having been arrested on 2 March 2010 at his home by Intelligence Ministry agents, Mr. Khanjani was transferred by air from Isfahan to Tehran and taken to Evin prison. His family was finally allowed to visit him there three weeks later, on 24 March.

Mr. Khanjani was released on bail on 3 May 2010, after having provided collateral valued at 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000). On 20 June, he had his last session with the examining magistrate in Evin prison. The charges against him are: “activity against national security”, “propaganda against the regime”, “disturbing public opinion”, “spreading lies”, “formation of the committee on the right of the Bahá’ís to education”, “membership in the Committee of Reporters of Human Rights and the Committee of Human Rights Activists”. He rejected all the charges, stating that he had merely (and lawfully) worked to defend the rights of those who were deprived of higher education in Iran. His bail was then increased from 50 million to 100 million tuman (±US\$100,000).

As reported above, several members of the Khanjani family have been arrested in recent months. Mr. Navid Khanjani’s grandmother is a sister of one of the imprisoned Bahá’í leaders (see section 1, above).

Karaj (near Tehran)

51. Mr. Payam Valy

arrested on 1 February 2010

On 8 April 2010, Mr. Valy was released on bail, after having provided collateral equivalent to 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000).

52. Mr. Riaz Pirouzmandi

arrested on 11 February 2010

Mr. Pirouzmandi was released on bail on 17 February and told to appear at the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Justice on 20 February 2010. He came to the court at the appointed time, was interrogated and then released again. No further details are available.

53. Mr. Shahram Safajou

arrested 26 April 2009, released on bail 18 May 2009, summoned to court 7 February 2010

On 18 May 2010, the case against Mr. Safajou was dropped and the bail he had posted was returned to him.

Kermanshah (western Iran)

54. Mr. Ighan Shahidi

Mr. Shahidi was arrested on 3 March 2010, following a search of his home, transferred by air to Tehran on the same day, and taken to Evin prison. His family was permitted to visit him at the prison on 21 March. He was released on bail on 11 May 2010, after having provided collateral valued at 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000).

Marvdasht (Fars province, southern Iran)

- 55. Mr. Hasan Bazrafkan
- 56. Mr. Jahanbakhsh Bazrafkan
- 57. Ms. Tayyebah Fallah
- 58. Mr. Nozar Fallah
- 59. Ms. Farahnaz Ashnaie

Intelligence Ministry agents came to search the homes of these Bahá'ís on 1 March 2010 and confiscated belongings such as books and computers. All five were arrested the same evening. They were arbitrarily detained for over a month before being released on bail, on 6 April 2010, after each had provided collateral worth 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000).

Mashhad (north-eastern Iran)

Originally arrested in 2005, nine Bahá'ís of Mashhad had been tried in October 2009 and sentenced to five years of imprisonment. They had all appealed this verdict. At a recent appeals court hearing (date not known), sentences were issued as follows:

- 60. Mr. Hooman Bakhtavar
- 61. Ms. Nasrin Ghadiri
- 62. Mr. Kaviz Noozdahi
- 63. Ms. Sima Rajabian

For these four Bahá'ís, the original sentence was reduced to two years of imprisonment. Ms. Ghadiri and Ms. Rajabian were taken back into custody on 15 July 2010 to begin serving their sentences. Mr. Noozdahi and Mr. Bakhtavar were summoned to appear at the Enforcement Office of the Mashhad Court by 22 July 2010. Obeying the summons, Mr. Noozdahi went back to prison on 22 July to start serving his two-year term. Mr. Bakhtavar began serving his prison term on 3 August 2010.

- 64. Mr. Davar Nabilzadeh
- 65. Mr. Jalayer Vahdat
- 66. Ms. Nahid Ghadiri
- 67. Ms. Rozita Vaseghi
- 68. Ms. Sima Eshraghi (Aghdas Zadeh)

For these five, the appeals court confirmed the original sentence of five years of imprisonment.

Mr. Nabilzadeh was summoned to the Enforcement Office of the Mashhad Court by 22 July 2010. He went in earlier and thus began serving his five-year prison term on 13 July.

No information has been received about Mr. Vahdat and Ms. Eshraghi.

Ms. Nahid Ghadiri had already been taken back into custody on 16 March 2010. Instead of being incarcerated in a facility fit for long-term imprisonment, however, she was held in solitary confinement in the local detention centre of the Intelligence Ministry and interrogated for about four months. Once she had finally been transferred to the public section of Mashhad prison, it became clear that she had serious health problems. The authorities agreed to grant her a temporary release on 13 July 2010, after requiring her to provide collateral for bail valued at 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000).

Also re-arrested on 16 March 2010, **Ms. Rozita Vaseghi has been held in solitary confinement** in the local Intelligence Ministry detention centre ever since. She has been repeatedly interrogated and threatened because she is not willing to cooperate. The detaining officials have even declared that, if she does not cooperate, she will be held in

solitary confinement for the entire length of her sentence. Her prison conditions are so appalling that her health has suffered and she is in an extremely weakened state.

- 69. Mr. Afshin Nikayin
- 70. Mr. Shahab Taefi

On 15 March 2010, these members of the community were arrested at their homes and taken into custody. They were released on bail five days later (20 March; no other details are available)

- 71. Ms. Noura Nabilzadeh

On 22 June 2010, officers from the Intelligence Ministry arrested Ms. Nabilzadeh in an orphanage in Mashhad, while she was playing music for the children there. The officers took her to her home, searched the house and confiscated all materials related to her religion along with other personal belongings, including the computers and cell phones of all family members. On 5 July 2010, Ms. Nabilzadeh was permitted to have a phone conversation with her family. She is being detained at the local detention centre of the Intelligence Ministry, and it seems that the charges have been communicated to her.

As mentioned above, her father, Mr. Davar Nabilzadeh, lost his appeal against a sentence of five years' imprisonment and began serving his prison term in July.

Najafabad (near Isfahan, central Iran)

- 72. Ms. Nasim Rouhi
- 73. Mr. Faraz Rouhi
- 74. Ms. Jinous Joshaniyan
- 75. Ms. Afroz Rouhi

On 5 August 2010, Intelligence Ministry officers arrested the first three Bahá'ís whose names are given above. The Ministry subsequently summoned Mr. Faraz Rouhi's sister, Afroz, and arrested her, as well. They are being detained in Dastgird Prison in Isfahan. The three women have been able to phone family members, but no communication has been possible (to date) with Mr. Rouhi.

Nashtaroud (Mazandaran province, northern Iran)

- 76. Mr. Moein Ismailpour
- 77. his wife, Mrs. Ismailpour (first name not given)
- 78. and his son, Armin Ismailpour

On 1 May 2010, these three Bahá'ís were summoned to the Intelligence Ministry office. Mrs. Ismailpour was released after three hours; Mr. Moein Ismailpour and his son were released the next day. On 11 April, their home had been searched and various possessions such as books and computers had been confiscated.

Parsabad (Ardabil Province, north-western Iran)

- 79. Mr. Ramin Eidelkhani
- 80. and his wife, Mrs. Ahdieh Rashedirad

On 5 May 2010, Mr. Eidelkhani was summoned to the local office of the Intelligence Ministry and arrested upon arrival. When his wife went to enquire about her husband, she was also arrested. They have two small children who have been placed in the care of relatives.

Sari (Mazandaran province, northern Iran)

81. Ms. Dorsa Sobhani

On 3 March 2010, Intelligence Ministry agents searched the home of Ms. Sobhani and confiscated some materials related to the Bahá'í Faith. She was not home at the time. The next day, her father, Mr. Shahram Sobhani, was arrested, interrogated and then released. He was asked to inform his daughter that she should report to the Intelligence Ministry office. It is not known whether she responded to this instruction, but Ministry agents came to her home again and arrested her on 6 March. Two days later, she contacted her family by phone and informed them that she had been transferred to Evin prison in Tehran. Her family was granted a visit with her there on 21 March, and again on 15 April. She was released on bail on 21 April, after having posted collateral worth 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000).

82. Mr. Foad Naeimi

completed his prison sentence, currently serving an additional term of exile in the city of Eghlid (Fars province in southern Iran – very far from his home and family)

Mr. Naeimi was recently summoned to appear at the local office of the Intelligence Ministry, where officials told him that:

- he cannot leave the city of the Eghlid under any circumstances;
- no Bahá'í is permitted to visit him there;
- when close family members or other relatives want to visit him, they must coordinate the visit in advance with the Intelligence Ministry office in Eghlid;
- he is not allowed to interact with the local people (the officials added that the citizens of Eghlid are very conservative and prejudiced against the Faith, and it is therefore not in his own interest to be known as a Bahá'í);
- the Intelligence Ministry office in Eghlid must be fully informed of any economic activity he undertakes – but, they said, the chance of receiving a work license is very low, and the religious, prejudiced people of Eghlid would likely set on fire any business he sets up;
- finally, if he transgresses any of these orders, they will refer his case to the Intelligence Ministry in Shiraz with a recommendation that he be exiled to a place further away and with a harsher climate.

83. Mr. Pejman Rowshankouhi

On 25 May 2010, Mr. Rowshankouhi was arrested in his home. (He had previously been summoned to the local Intelligence Ministry office and interrogated.) On 22 June, he was released on bail after having submitted collateral valued at 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000).

84. Ms. Sara Mahboubi

On 20 June 2010, Intelligence Ministry officials searched Ms. Mahboubi's home and confiscated computers and all personal belongings linked to the Bahá'í Faith: books, CDs, photos, etc. She was not home at the time, and the officials told her parents that she must go to the local office of the Ministry upon her return. Ms. Mahboubi did so on 24 June 2010 and was arrested. On 5 July 2010, she was permitted to have a face to face visit with her family. Two weeks later, on 18 July, she was released on bail after having posted collateral worth 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000).

85. Mr. Ghavamoddin Sabetian

On 18 July 2010, Mr. Sabetian was arrested by Intelligence Ministry agents who came to his home. Ministry officers had searched the home on 9 June 2010 and confiscated personal

belongings including all material related in any way to his religious beliefs. He was released on 10 August, but it is not known whether he was required to post bail.

86. Mr. Houman Hourbod

Mr. Hourbod was summoned to the local Intelligence Ministry office on 14 July 2010 and arrested upon arrival. He is only 18 years old, and (to date) his family has not been able to obtain information or news of him. On 30 June 2010, Intelligence Ministry officers had come to search his family's home, summoning his father, Mr. Ehsanollah Hourbod, for interrogation the next day and then releasing him.

In addition, trials were recently held in Sari (date unknown), with sentences handed down:

87. Ms. Sepideh Masoumi

88. Ms. Sepideh Zamani

arrested 19 December 2009, released on bail 12 January 2010

These Bahá'í women have each been sentenced to six months of imprisonment and a fine of five million rials (±US\$540). They have appealed against the judgment.

89. Ms. Soha Zamani

arrested 19 December 2009, released on bail 28 December 2009

The charges in this case were dropped.

90. Mrs. Samira Samiei

arrested 15 December 2009, released on bail 28 December 2009

Mrs. Samiei has been sentenced to one year of imprisonment. She has lodged an appeal.

91. Mrs. Torreh Taghizade (Sanaei)

arrested 15 February 2009, released on bail 28 February 2009

In this final case, the court pronounced a sentence of 22 months of imprisonment.

Mrs. Taghizade has also appealed against the judgment.

Semnan (northern Iran)

92. Ms. Sabha Fanaian (Rezvani)

arrested 15 December 2008, tried, sentenced, appeals court hearing in April 2009

As previously reported, Ms. Fanaian was transferred to Evin prison in May 2009; she is still serving her sentence there. In this and at least five other cases (including those of Ms. Nasrollahi, Ms. Taef and Ms. Tebyanian, also of Semnan, below) the authorities are putting an extra burden on Bahá'í families by forcing them to travel long distances in order to visit their loved ones in prison.

93. Mr. Goudarz Beidaghi

Mr. Beidaghi was arrested on 1 March and released on 26 April 2010, after having been required to post an excessive amount for bail: collateral valued at 100 million tuman (±US\$100,000). He had already been arrested, tried and sentenced to a fine in 2007.

94. Ms. Manijeh Nasrollahi (Monzavian)
arrested 17 June 2009, released on bail 30 June 2009

Ms. Nasrollahi recently lost her appeal in court; her initial sentence of three and a half years of imprisonment was confirmed. She began serving out this sentence on 27 February 2010. That same day, she was transferred to Evin prison in Tehran.

95. Mr. Behfar Khanjani
arrested on 5 January 2010

Mr. Khanjani was released on bail on 2 March 2010, and the bail amount set in this case was even more excessive than in other cases already mentioned above: 300 million tuman (±US\$304,000).

Mr. Behfar Khanjani is a nephew of Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, a member of the former leadership group (see section 1).

96. Ms. Sholeh Taef
arrested 19 December 2009, released on bail 6 January 2010

At her trial, Ms. Taef was charged with “engagement in propaganda in support of anti-regime groups”, convicted and sentenced to one year of imprisonment and the confiscation of all “criminal” materials found in her home that were related to “teaching” the Bahá’í Faith.

The verdict also stated that because there was no appropriate place for her in Semnan prison, she would be transferred to a prison in Tehran. In addition, after having served out her sentence, she will be banned from living in Semnan for two years; if she returns, she could be fined or re-imprisoned.

97. Mr. Ali Ehsani
arrested 6 April 2009, released on bail 2 May 2009

At Mr. Ehsani’s appeals court hearing, the sentence handed down by the lower court was confirmed. He will therefore have to serve two years of imprisonment followed by two additional years of internal exile.

98. Mr. Siamak Ighani
arrested 27 April 2009, released on bail 2 May 2009

At his trial, Mr. Siamak Ighani was sentenced to three years of imprisonment. He has appealed against the judgement.

99. Mr. Afshin Ighani
arrested 5 January 2010

On 28 February 2010, Mr. Afshin Ighani was released on bail, and the bail demand was excessively high, as he had to submit collateral valued at 150 million tuman (±US\$152,000). On 7 June, he was sentenced to four years, three months, and one day of imprisonment: four years for “formation of groups for the purpose of disruption to national security”, and an additional three months and one day for “propaganda against the regime and in support of anti-regime groups, i.e. Baháism and teaching Baháism”.

It should be noted that this verdict asserts that any activity related to the Bahá’í Faith is illegal and therefore “has no purpose except to disrupt national security”. In addition, the sentence includes the following: “at the discretion of the officers of the [Intelligence Ministry],” all possessions related to the charges will be confiscated from Mr. Ighani. Because the prison in Semnan “lacks suitable conditions for such prisoners”, he will be

transferred to a prison in Tehran province. Time already served in detention will be deducted from the sentence.

100. Mr. Behnam Motearefi
arrested 17 May 2009, released on bail 20 May, tried and sentenced 21 July 2009

The appeals hearing was heard in this case (date not known), and the sentence handed down by the lower court was confirmed. After having been summoned to the Enforcement Office of Revolutionary Court of Semnan, Mr. Motearefi was re-imprisoned on 31 July 2010 to begin serving his sentence of one and a half years of imprisonment.

101. Mr. Pooya Tebyanian
arrested 8 March 2010

Mr. Tebyanian was released on bail on 29 April 2010. It seems that he has been sentenced to two years of imprisonment and is free pending appeal, but no other details are known.

102. Ms. Sousan Tebyanian
arrested 27 April 2009, released on bail 1 May 2009, tried and sentenced

At Ms. Tebyanian's appeals hearing, the court confirmed the sentence previously handed down by a lower court, and she will therefore have to serve one and a half years of imprisonment. She was taken back into custody on 30 June 2010. As soon as she arrived at the Semnan Court Enforcement Office, she was immediately transferred to Evin prison in Tehran. The situation is particularly hard for this family because Ms. Tebyanian is the mother of two young children.

Shahrekord (Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, western Iran)

- 103. Mr. Nabiollah Moughen
- 104. Mrs. Mahsa Golzar (his wife)
- 105. their young child (name not known)
- 106. Mr. Navid Sadeghi

On 17 February 2010, Intelligence Ministry officers came to search the home where these Bahá'ís live. After confiscating some personal belongings, including Mr. Moughen's computer and books, they took all four into custody, including the couple's young child.

After about an hour, the Ministry officials released the child into the care of other members of the family, and returned some personal belongings, including a mobile phone. On 20 February, Mr. Moughen, Mrs. Golzar and Mr. Sadeghi were all released on bail. We do not yet have any other details.

Shiraz (Fars province, southern Iran)

- 107. Ms. Haleh Ruhi
 - 108. Ms. Raha Sabet
 - 109. Mr. Sasan Taqva
- Tried and sentenced (based on false accusations), then re-imprisoned in November 2007, they are currently still serving four-year prison sentences.*

As you will recall, these three young Bahá'ís were among the 53 from Shiraz arrested in 2006 while tutoring underprivileged children. They are still serving out their sentences, not in a prison designed for this purpose, but under very harsh conditions in the local detention centre of the Intelligence Ministry. All three have been granted temporary releases during

the past year, but they have always been required to return to the centre and its cells, which are not at all suitable for long-term imprisonment. They are being held there despite the fact that the Ministry does not have the right under Iranian law to imprison citizens but only to detain individuals for the purpose of interrogation.

There is no furniture in the cells. The prisoners must sleep on the floor and, until very recently, had not even been given mattresses. They have all developed chronic back pain as a result. Moreover, Mr. Taqva has severe pain in his leg as a result of surgery in July 2008 (for an injury that had occurred prior to his imprisonment) as well as sciatic and muscle weakness caused by lack of all basic facilities in his cell. In August last year, surgery was again done on his leg, but then he had to go back to the detention centre. The two young women are being held together, but Mr. Taqva suffers, in addition, from being imprisoned alone, in violation of international standards and legal norms. Daily exercise and access to fresh air is limited to a half-hour each day, when he is taken not outside but only to a room that has no roof. Every time he leaves his cell, he is blindfolded.

The families have repeatedly tried to obtain early release, but this has not been permitted.

The 50 other Bahá'ís involved in the tutoring project recently discovered that their names had been placed on Iran's "no exit" list. They took legal action to appeal. The ruling has since been modified, according to the Prosecutor of Shiraz: if any of these 50 Bahá'ís wants to leave the country, he or she must post collateral equivalent to 50 million tuman (±US\$50,000). This ruling is valid for six months and will be renewed if deemed necessary.

110. Mr. Sama Nourani

Intelligence Ministry officers arrested Mr. Nourani in the evening of 3 March 2010, after having searched his home and confiscated some of his belongings. He was transferred to Evin prison in Tehran. Three weeks after his arrest, his family was finally permitted to visit him (on 25 March). He was released on 27 April 2010 after posting collateral for bail, valued at 30 million tuman (±US\$30,000).

Mr. Nourani was also among the 53 Bahá'ís arrested in Shiraz in 2006, and he was expelled from Sahand University in Tabriz in March 2009, after having been identified as a Bahá'í.

- 111. Mrs. Haleh Houshmandi
- 112. Mr. Afshin Ahsanian
- 113. Mr. Farham (Hadi) Masoumi
- 114. Mr. Keyvan Karami
- 115. Mr. Vahdat Dana

trial originally scheduled on 16 December 2009 but then postponed

These five Bahá'ís recently faced trial and were informed orally that they had been sentenced to nine months of imprisonment. They intend to submit an appeal.

Tonekabon (near Sari in Mazandaran province)

- 116. Mr. Vahid Ismaelzadehgan
- 117. and his father (name not known)

On 1 May 2010, Mr. Ismaelzadehgan and his parents were summoned to the local Intelligence Ministry office. His mother was released after three hours, but he and his father are still being detained. Mr. Ismaelzadehgan had already been arrested in December last year and released on bail in February 2010.

118. Mr. Soroush Garshasbi
arrested 21 November 2010, released on bail in December 2009

Mr. Garshasbi faced trial on 8 June 2010, but no verdict has been issued to date.

Yazd (central Iran)

119. Mr. Behnam Rouhanifard
detained since 12 October 2009

120. Mr. Soheil Rouhanifard
detained since 19 October 2009

After 16 months of arbitrary detention, these two brothers were tried and sentenced to nine months of imprisonment, then finally released on bail on 17 February 2010, pending appeal. However, a new case was filed against them. On 3 March, they were both fined two million rials (±US\$200) for “possessing a satellite dish receiver”, and Mr. Soheil Rouhanifard was sentenced to an additional year in prison plus 50 lashes for allegedly having spread “lies” and “calumny” against Ms. Mahnaz Raoufi (a former member of the Bahá’í community who has been working with the Iranian authorities on a number of anti-Bahá’í activities).

Mr. Soheil Rouhanifard appealed against the additional charges and went to the court in person on 29 March to follow up on his appeal. He was told that his case must be transferred to Hamadan for further rulings and that the authorities there would have nothing to do with him for the moment. Later the same day, he was arrested at his home and taken again to prison in Yazd. Mr. Behnam Rouhanifard accompanied his brother’s family to the prison, and he was unexpectedly arrested again, as well. They are both currently detained.

121. Mr. Rostam Behifar

122. Mr. Peyman Roohi
arrested on 1 March 2009

Both were released during the month of March (date and conditions not known).

123. Mr. Mehran Bandi
arrested 28 May 2008 but never released on bail, tried and sentenced to three and a half years of imprisonment to be followed by three years of internal exile

On 28 April 2010, Mr. Bandi was transferred from Yazd prison to a prison in Khash (Sistan and Baluchestan Province) to serve out the rest of his sentence. It should be recalled that, following medical examinations in August 2009, his family had been informed that he is medically unfit to endure imprisonment, but the Prosecutor rejected this determination.

As on previous occasions, we would add that many other Bahá’ís have been summoned for interrogation without being officially arrested. There has been a significant increase in the number of house searches conducted by Intelligence Ministry agents, who have systematically confiscated books, printed material, photos and other belongings related to the Bahá’í Faith, along with computers, cell phones or other items.

3. Violent attacks, intimidation, harassment

As previously reported, recurring acts of violence and intimidation have been targeting Bahá’í families in **Semnan** for several years. Plainclothes agents have repeatedly attacked the homes, shops and cars belonging to the same local Bahá’ís, to pressure them into leaving the city. The latest incidents took place in the middle of the night on 16 February 2010, when the home of one Bahá’í and a shop belonging to another were attacked by arsonists.

Damage was done at both locations, and they are taking legal action. Unknown individuals had targeted the same families 11 times with acts of arson and/or vandalism during 2009.

Elsewhere in Iran: On 22 June 2010, homes belonging to some 50 Baha'i families were destroyed in a remote village in northern Iran. In **Ivel** (Mazandaran province), unknown individuals roused some of the residents to block normal access to the village while allowing trucks and at least four front-end loaders to demolish the houses. Amateur video, shot on mobile phones and posted by Iranian human rights activists on the Internet, showed several buildings reduced to rubble and fiercely burning fires. More information and photos can be found at: <http://news.bahai.org/story/780>

It has been impossible in recent years for Baha'is to return to, rebuild or renovate homes in Ivel without being attacked. Members of what was previously a large Bahá'í community in the village and surrounding area still own farmland and return to tend and harvest their crops. One Bahá'í family came to harvest produce the day after the destruction of the 50 homes, and the head of this household was beaten and insulted by local inhabitants. Members of the community have repeatedly sought redress with local government officials, and they lodged complaints again after this latest attack. All of the officials, including the provincial governor in Sari, have denied having any knowledge of the demolitions or the motive behind them. On previous occasions, they never took any effective action.

According to information received on 1 July 2010, all the Bahá'í homes in Ivel were eventually razed and the land cleared to erase evidence of the buildings that had been there. Some police officers from a neighbouring village were sent to Ivel to investigate, and they submitted a report to the court in the nearby city of Kiasar. On 3 July 2010, a court session was convened in Kiasar, at which both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í residents from Ivel were present. No further information is available at this time.

Most Baha'i homes in Ivel have been unoccupied since their residents fled after previous violence or as a result of official displacement. In June 2009 the Bahá'í cemetery near Ivel was sold, after having been confiscated for conversion to residential property.

The Baha'is in this province have been particularly hard-hit recently, but Bahá'ís throughout Iran are facing increased pressure. As it is explicitly forbidden for them to associate with Muslims, they cannot offer assistance to their friends and neighbours or even express good will without being accused of acting "against the regime".

In addition, many Bahá'ís continue to receive threats by phone, text message or post throughout the country. Officials have persisted in efforts to obtain information about members of the community, to monitor and impede activities related to their Faith. Since February 2010, a new form has been introduced that Bahá'ís must fill in when requesting documents from passport offices and the Office of the President. The details include:

- First and last name, birth certificate with name of father, place of issue
- Names of spouse and any children, and their complete profiles
- Names of parents and spouse's parents, with complete profiles
- Names of two friends, with complete profiles
- Names of all relatives living in foreign countries, including addresses and phone numbers
- Names of any relatives who have taken asylum in another country, indicating the country and type of asylum
- Destination and reason for the planned trip
- Previous trips to foreign countries, dates, reasons for each trip and length of visits
- Convictions, if any, date, type of conviction, sentence
- Names of any relatives convicted, imprisoned, executed, or having had properties seized

In February 2010 in the province of Isfahan, a number of Bahá'ís were summoned to the Intelligence Ministry office located inside the passport office. They were told that their files were incomplete, and the officials used this as an excuse to interrogate them, threatening to put their names on the list of those who are not allowed to travel. The Ministry wanted to compile a complete profile for each individual, his/her children and all relatives – asking the questions listed above. They also demanded detailed information about Bahá'í religious activities, including the names of those organizing, hosting and attending Bahá'í religious gatherings, and the names of all of their non-Bahá'í friends.

4. Denial of access to education

4.1 Incidents targeting Bahá'í school children

We are concerned about reports that confirm a nationwide, coordinated effort to identify all Baha'i school children and closely monitor them. Officials in schools are warning Muslim children at all grade levels not to interact or socialize with Baha'is.

Secondary school students continue to face pressure and harassment, and some have been threatened with expulsion. For example, officials contacted the parents of one Bahá'í girl who will only be allowed to remain in school if her parents sign an agreement that she take part in the school's political and religious events. Moreover, the Ministry of Education has implemented a new policy that is explicitly discriminatory. In the past, Bahá'í pupils were allowed to take the entrance exam for schools for gifted students, but any known Bahá'í accepted to one of these schools was later denied admission. Now the Ministry has added a required declaration of religion to the registration form for the exams, but the only options given are Muslim, Christian, Jew, and Zoroastrian.

4.2 Denial of access to higher education

It should be recalled that for decades the government maintained, as a requirement for entrance to public and private universities in Iran, that Bahá'í students renounce their Faith. The authorities are well aware that Bahá'ís will not do so, as a matter of principle. A token number of Bahá'ís have been able to begin studies in Iranian universities over the past few years without having to declare their religious affiliation. Their status is precarious, however, because it is official government policy to expel members of the community from all institutes of higher learning if they are identified as Bahá'ís.

One member of the community, a student at a university in Tehran in the middle of her eighth semester, only required 14 more courses to graduate. Last year, she had been summoned to the security office of the university, and the fact that she is a Bahá'í had been entered into her file. In February 2010, she had to report to the Educational Measurement and Evaluation Organization (EMEO). She was asked if she is Bahá'í; when she said yes, the officials stated that she was expelled, as by law no Bahá'í student has the right to post-secondary education. Another Bahá'í student, also in his eighth semester, was expelled from the same university under the same circumstances.

In April 2010, three Bahá'ís were expelled from a university in North Khorasan province, two were in their first semester, the third in her fourth semester. Two others were expelled from universities in Sari and in Qazvin in May – June; one of them was in his final semester and needed only to take final exams to graduate.

An article that appeared in *Shargh* (a daily newspaper in Iran) on 12 June 2010 reported on a “summit of the education deputies of the universities” and quoted officials who had stated explicitly that members of “unofficial religious minorities” including “Sufism, Buddhism and

Bahatism” are not permitted to study at universities in Iran. The article indicates that this information was also issued the previous day by *Fars News* (a news agency backed by the Iranian government). A translation of the relevant extracts is given below:

Source: *Shargh*, 12 June 2010

Members of unofficial religious minorities are banned from studying at the universities

“Students who are members of fabricated religions or illegal religious minorities in the country do not have the right to study at universities”, said the director of the Secretariat of the Central Student Eligibility Evaluation Committee, also reported by *Fars News* yesterday. At the summit of the education deputies of the universities, which was held at Kurdistan University, Morteza Nurbakhsh presented further details regarding the decision made by officials at the Ministry of Sciences and explained that members of fabricated religions and unofficial minorities do not have the right to study at universities in the country and, should they be currently studying at university, their files must be submitted to the Central Student Eligibility Evaluation Committee for approval.

(...)

... in response to a question from *Shargh* regarding the conditions surrounding the decision-making process regarding fabricated religions or unofficial minorities, Nurollah Haydari Dastana'i, a member of the *Majlis* Commission for Education and Investigation, said that the recognized religions have been identified in the Constitution, and any sect or religion other than the religions recognized in the Constitution must be dealt with according to the regulations.

Students who follow sects that are not recognized in the Constitution will not be permitted to continue their education should their beliefs, teaching, and propagation activities be proven. Additionally, he said that devil-worshipping, Sufism, Buddhism and Bahatism are among those fabricated and unofficial sects. These groups, he emphasized, are not recognized by the Constitution and since we are taking steps towards creating Islamic monotheistic universities, we must confront these people through legal means, regardless of what level they may be at in their studies.

According to Haydari the religious minorities are divided into two groups: “Those who conceal their beliefs or those who belong to one of the monotheistic religious minorities can continue with their university education, on the condition that they will not teach or promote their religion, but the followers of fabricated religions will be banned from studying at the universities.” In response to a question as to how unofficial religions can be recognized, he said that this is a very delicate subject because there are also different sects in Shi'ih and Sunni Islam whose followers are living as minorities, but so far they have not been the subject of any discussion... (...)

5. Denial of access to employment

In the past, we have transmitted detailed information about the Iranian government's organized campaign to deny Bahá'ís the right to employment. All the previously reported policies and practises are still being applied throughout the country, affecting thousands of Bahá'ís. Methods include harassment and intimidation, refusal to issue or renew business licences, confiscation of property, sealing of premises, orders for the destruction of farmlands and livestock, threats against merchants and professionals to dissuade them from doing business with or awarding contracts to Baha'is, refusal of loans and other banking services. Specific efforts are underway to block access to the 25 trades from which Bahá'ís were officially banned in 2007, as specified by the Public Places Supervision Office.

The Public Places Supervision Office recently introduced a new form, 11 pages long, required for members of all minorities, including Bahá'ís. It demands detailed personal information, the names of five of the individual's close friends, complete profiles of all relatives, personal email and website addresses, and the names of satellite channels or websites that the individual consults. One section contains questions about political

activities, but Bahá'ís are asked to write “Bahá'ism” in this space, to indicate whether they attend Bahá'í religious gatherings and, if so, to write down the names of the organizers and other participants. Other questions include:

- Which group or political party do you belong to or support?
- In what kind of social activities do you participate?
- From what individual or individuals do you receive guidance?
- Are you willing to cooperate with this institution? (i.e. with the Public Places Supervision Office – they are asked to give information about other Bahá'ís and the community)

After completing the form, Bahá'ís have been told to fill out the same form for every one of their relatives. In **Shiraz**, many members of the community – including shop owners who have valid business licenses – were summoned to the Public Places Supervision Office, asked to present identification cards for themselves and all their family members, and instructed to fill out the form. The same thing happened to two Bahá'í shop owners in **Arak** (Markazi Province) and to many Bahá'ís working in various trades in **Aligudarz**.

One Bahá'í who owns an optical shop in **Khomein** (Markazi province) was informed that his shop would be closed and that this was a nationwide order, which would gradually be put into effect for all optical shops owned by Bahá'ís. The order has already been implemented in at least three other localities:

- **Nazarabad** (near Karaj), where five optical shops run by Bahá'ís have been closed;
- **Tehran**, where at least two Bahá'í opticians have not been permitted to renew their business licenses; and
- **Rafsanjan**, where optical shops belonging to two Bahá'ís had to be shut down after the authorities refused to renew licenses.

Two other businesses run by Bahá'ís in **Rafsanjan** were sealed by officials who had a government order. Another Bahá'í from Rafsanjan heard (in confidence) that the police had been officially instructed to ensure that the number of Bahá'ís who engage in any one business or trade is strictly limited, that steps be taken to restrict the amount of income they earn, and that they be prevented from purchasing real estate near one another, so they do not congregate in one place. The police were directed to request assistance from various quasi-security agencies – the Basij, the Society for the Promotion of Islam, and other organizations – to assist them in enforcing these measures.

In numerous other cases between March and July 2010, the authorities (principally from the Public Places Supervision Office or the Intelligence Ministry) have used the same or other methods to close shops, to have Bahá'í employees fired, to shut down agricultural enterprises and/or to confiscate or destroy agricultural means of livelihood belonging to Bahá'ís in the following towns: **Tonekabon**, **Birjand**, suburbs of **Tehran**, **Karaj**, **Kermanshah**, **Ghaemshahr**, **Marvdasht**, **Kerman**, **Rafsanjan**, **Isfahan**, **Kashan** and **Aran-Bidgol** (Isfahan province)

6. Attacks on and denial of access to Bahá'í cemeteries

Towards the end of April, unknown intruders using a tractor vandalized the Bahá'í cemetery of **Gilavand**, a small city near Tehran. Four Bahá'ís had been buried in this cemetery; all four graves were destroyed, and the fence around the cemetery was forcibly removed. It should be noted that the land had been purchased by Bahá'ís, and permission to fence and use it had been granted by the governor's office.

On 23 June 2010, the entrance to the Bahá'í cemetery in **Isfahan** was blocked by a few truckloads of agricultural soil. The obstruction was removed by the local Bahá'ís, who have since raised this matter with the authorities.

On 27 June 2010, some truckloads of construction refuse were dumped on graves in the Bahá'í cemetery of **Boroujerd** (Lorestan Province). Local Bahá'ís sought legal remedies, and the authorities agreed to assist with the restoration of the site. Later, the same kind of thing happened again: a few truckloads of soil were dumped on graves in the cemetery. One of the Bahá'ís who saw this happen talked to the truck driver, who said it was being done in response to “an indirect order from the Municipality of Boroujerd”. After members of the community had followed up on this matter numerous times, the Mayor expressed regret, saying that he had been unaware of the situation and had now ordered that the truck entrance to the cemetery be blocked to prevent it happening again.

On 22 July 2010, the Bahá'í cemetery of **Jiroft** (Kerman Province) was vandalized by unknown intruders using bulldozers, and the graves were destroyed.

At the end of July 2010, the Bahá'ís in **Semnan** were officially forbidden by the authorities to use their cemetery, which has belonged to the Bahá'í community for some 25 years. Instead, they were instructed to use a remote site. It should be recalled that during the past few years the Bahá'í cemetery in Semnan has been vandalized and partially destroyed several times, and authorities have required families to repeatedly request burial permits.

Bahá'ís in other cities have not been able to obtain burial permits at all, or required to pay excessively high fees in this context. For example, one family in **Mashhad** was asked to pay 360,000 tuman (±US\$350) for “services” to issue a burial permit. The Bahá'í cemetery in Mashhad had been vandalized on the night of 29 May 2010 by unknown intruders who used a front-end loader and other heavy machinery, causing severe damage to the cemetery's walls, the mortuary, and the place where prayers were recited. This family had been the first to ask for a burial permit since that attack.

7. Incitement to hatred based on religion or belief

The upsurge in persecution against the Bahá'ís during the past six years was preceded and accompanied by organized efforts to incite hatred on religious grounds. Articles, broadcasts, pamphlets, posters, public lectures and exhibitions vilify and malign the Bahá'ís, portraying their religion and its history in ways that are clearly intended to be offensive to Muslims.

This campaign continues unabated. For example, an tract entitled *Supporters of Satan* has been widely distributed in Kerman. The booklet falsely links the Bahá'í Faith to Israel and Zionists; asserts that the Faith was created by the British and is supported by the United States; includes fatwas against the Bahá'ís; and contains the same slanderous allegations commonly disseminated through State-sanctioned media, as well as through initiatives backed by clerical and other officials in Iran.

The Bahá'ís have been persecuted throughout their history in Iran, but the oppression greatly increased after the Islamic Revolution. The civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of Iranian Bahá'ís are violated throughout the country.

As mentioned in the introduction, related information is regularly posted at:
http://bic.org/areas-of-work/persecution_bahai_community
and <http://news.bahai.org/human-rights/iran/iran-update/>
