

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

UPDATE

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

February 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 late September 2009 to mid-February 2010. To complement the news given here, more information can be found on our website, http://bic.org/areas-of-work/persecution_bahai_community, as well as at <http://news.bahai.org/human-rights/iran/iran-update/>.

The attached *Background* document briefly reviews the historical and legal context, as well as re-examining the major upsurge in human rights violations against Iranian Bahá'ís since 2005. For more in-depth background together with photos and copies of supporting documentation, the 2008 edition of *The Bahá'í Question – Cultural Cleansing in Iran* 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

- Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi
- Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani
- Mr. Afif Naeimi
- Mr. Saeid Rezaie
- Mrs. Mahvash Sabet
- Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli
- Mr. Vahid Tizfahm

These are the seven Bahá'ís who formerly constituted the ad hoc leadership group serving the community in Iran at national level. As previously reported, they have been detained in section 209 of Evin prison in Tehran for nearly two years, with very limited access to their lawyers.¹ Mrs. Shirin Ebadi and Mr. Abdolfattah Soltani – founding members of the Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran – were the lead lawyers registered with the court to represent the Bahá'ís. They have been prevented from pleading the case themselves, but two other lawyers from the Center have been handling the defence: Ms. Mahnaz Parakand and Mr. Hadi Esmailzadeh.

After having been scheduled on 18 August 2009, the trial of the seven Bahá'ís was postponed to 18 October. According to normal procedure, the lawyers should have received a writ of notification indicating that the trial would go forward. They did not receive this writ but nevertheless went to court on 18 October, where they were informed that the trial would not be held that day and that no other date had been assigned.

For months, assiduous efforts were made to obtain release on bail for the detainees, pending trial. Although the investigation was concluded and charges announced in official Iranian media in February/March 2009, release on bail has not been granted.

Statements published by Iranian State-sanctioned media strongly suggested that the outcome of the judicial process had been predetermined. Articles issued through the government-affiliated Fars News Agency, Javan News, Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), and Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA) contained allegations that the Bahá'ís were involved in fomenting civil unrest throughout the country. Fars News, for example, reported that Ne'mattollah Bavand, described as an “expert” in political affairs, had said “Baháism under the leadership of Zionism is behind the latest crisis and unrest.” Having initially blamed foreign powers, Iranian officials began to include the Bahá'ís among those they held responsible for the turmoil. This was a matter of great concern, as the government could use such accusations to justify taking extreme measures against the Bahá'í leaders.

It would not be the first time that Bahá'ís have been falsely accused of sedition, but the context was particularly grave because of the civil strife, in particular the violence on the religious Holy Day of Ashura (on 27 December 2009). The Bahá'í International Community called on the international community to impress upon the Iranian government that its actions were being watched, that the trial must be conducted in public, and that the safety of the accused must be secured.

¹ Six members of the former leadership group were arrested on 14 May 2008 at their homes in Tehran. Mrs. Sabet was arrested earlier, on 5 March 2008 while in Mashhad, and later transferred to Evin prison. They were subjected to intensive interrogation and ill-treatment while in solitary confinement in 2008.

On 8 December 2009, the lawyers received written notification that the trial would be held on 12 January 2010, and a first session was indeed held that day. Initial reports indicated violations of due process. The evening before the trial, an Iranian website linked to State-run television erroneously stated that the trial had already begun and announced the full set of charges. No observers were allowed inside the court on 12 January, but the two defence lawyers mentioned above were present.

This first session consisted of a formal arraignment of the seven Bahá'ís, at which their legal counsel denied all the charges levelled against them. The charges in the bill of indictment were: espionage for the benefit of foreigners, spreading anti-government propaganda, organizing and propagating an illegal administration, collaboration with Israel, collecting classified documents and providing them to foreigners with the intention of disturbing the country's security, conspiracy to undermine the internal and external security of Iran and to tarnish its reputation in the international arena, and spreading corruption on earth. The session lasted an hour and 45 minutes.

The decision to begin the trial triggered a strong international reaction, including a public statement by Mrs. Shirin Ebadi. In her position as legal counsel, Mrs. Ebadi said she had carefully read the dossier of charges against them and "found in it no cause or evidence to sustain the criminal charges upheld by the prosecutor." Others also expressed concerns about the fairness of the trial, calling for it to be held in open court and in accordance with international legal standards. Governments and prominent individuals in the European Union, the United States, Brazil, India, and Canada issued strong statements of concern.

The lawyers later received written notification that the next session would be held on 7 February 2010. The session that day was again closed; the families were not allowed into the courtroom. Apparently the proceedings, which lasted just over an hour, did not go beyond procedural issues. No date has yet been fixed for the next session of the trial.

The seven Bahá'ís remain incarcerated under harsh conditions in section 209 of Evin prison, reportedly run by the Ministry of Information (i.e. Iran's intelligence services, hereinafter referred to as the Intelligence Ministry). During the period under review, the seven detainees continued to receive weekly visits from their families, with only a few exceptions.²

2. Arbitrary arrests and detention: 47 new cases

As previously reported, five Bahá'ís were in Iranian prisons in 2001, a total that went down to four in 2002-2003, and only two were arrested in 2004. Then the persecution began to intensify again. Since late 2004, there have been 286 arrests. Moreover, the number of arbitrary detentions continues to rise: there were 47 new cases from October 2009 to mid-February 2010, as detailed below. In addition, hundreds of others have been summoned and interrogated without being officially arrested.

As of mid-February 2010, **60 Bahá'ís were in prison**; 90 had been released but were awaiting trial (80 of them had to post bail for release); an additional 99 had been tried and sentenced but remained free pending appeal; 11 had been cleared or won their appeals; the remainder had lost their appeals and served out their prison terms (five were still serving additional terms of internal exile).

² Family visits took place every week, with the exception of national holidays, when phone calls were permitted instead. Only once was contact completely denied, on 23 November 2009, when everyone in section 209 of Evin prison was deprived of family visits.

We report the latest arrests in this section, by location (starting with the capital, Tehran, and then proceeding in alphabetical order). Follow up on previously reported cases is given in section 4, below.

Tehran

In the early hours of 3 January 2010, officials rounded up a total of 13 Baha'is in Iran's capital city. It seems that the officials had with them a general warrant for the detention of individuals who had participated in the recent demonstrations, but the document did not specify anyone by name. At first, the 13 arrested were held in a detention centre run by the Intelligence Ministry.

Among those detained were relatives of two of the Bahá'í leaders mentioned above, as well as the former secretary of Mrs. Shirin Ebadi:

1. Mr. (Ahmad) Mehran Rowhani, and
2. Mr. Farid Rowhani, who are brothers
3. Mr. Babak Mobasher
4. Mrs. Leva Mobasher Khanjani, Mr. Mobasher's wife, who is also the granddaughter of Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, one of the members of the former leadership group
5. Mr. Payam Fanaian
6. Mrs. Jinous Ghazanfari Sobhani, who had previously served as Mrs. Shirin Ebadi's secretary at the Defenders of Human Rights Centre and was already arbitrarily detained for nearly two months last year
7. Mr. Artin Ghazanfari, Mrs. Sobhani's husband
8. Mr. Nikav Hoveydaie, whose wife was also arrested, released the same day, and later re-arrested (see below)
9. Mr. Ebrahim Shadmehr, and his son:
10. Mr. Zavosh Shadmehr.

They were all arrested at their homes, with the exception of Mrs. Mobasher Khanjani, who was not taken into custody at the same time as her husband. When agents from the Intelligence Ministry arrested him on 3 January, they did so under the pretext that he was "suspected of drug dealing", a totally false accusation. Later that same morning, the officials ordered Mrs. Mobasher to take her husband's laptop to the Ministry's local office. When she obeyed the order and arrived with the laptop, she was arrested, as well.

These ten Bahá'ís were later taken to Evin prison in Tehran, where they are being arbitrarily detained. Their families were not initially allowed any contact with them. Officials reportedly stated that the case files had not been assigned numbers yet, but that the process should be completed within three days or so, after which the families would be able to request contact with their imprisoned relatives.

Three more Bahá'ís were also arrested on 3 January 2010 but released the same day:

11. Ms. Negar Sabet, the daughter of Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, another member of the former leadership group
12. Mrs. Mona Hoveydaie Misaghi (the wife of Mr. Hoveydaie, also arrested on 3 January, as mentioned above)
13. Ms. Nasim Beiglari, who is a human rights activist

While in custody at the Intelligence Ministry centre, the 13 Bahá'ís were interrogated, and efforts were made to force them to sign an undertaking stating that they would not participate in any demonstrations in future. Ms. Sabet was released after having signed the undertaking. Ms. Beiglari's father signed the undertaking on behalf of his daughter, who was

then released, as well. Mrs. Hoveydaie Misaghi was also released that day, even though she did not sign the undertaking.

On 17 January, the ten remaining detainees were transferred to Gohardasht Prison of Karaj (in Tehran province). They had still not been granted a visit with their families, over two weeks after the arrests. Only the two brothers, Mr. Mehran (Ahmad) Rouhani and Mr. Farid Rouhani, were able to contact their family briefly by telephone. Some family members took money and clothes to the prison in Karaj for the detainees; the authorities accepted the money but not the clothing. On 5 February 2010, Mr. Ghazanfari was finally able to contact his family by phone. The same week, relatives again took clothing to the prison; this time it was accepted, but they were told that no family visits were being allowed for the moment. The most recent report indicated that Mr. Farid Rouhani was granted a visit with his family on 14 February 2010.

Iranian State-sanctioned media widely published the following allegations: that these ten Bahá'ís were among those involved in organizing the protests that took place on the Islamic Holy Day of Ashura; that they possessed arms to be used against the government; and that they were acting under orders from Bahá'í institutions. All of these claims are totally false.

The long delay in allowing visitors and the false press reports were matters of concern because it was feared that, in the absence of any evidence against the seven Bahá'í leaders, the authorities might try to force these ten Bahá'ís to “confess” to “crimes” committed under orders from Bahá'í institutions, implicating the former members of the leadership group.

It should be recalled that aspects of the trials of those arrested following the Presidential election have been denounced by fair-minded observers as “show trial” proceedings. Prominent individuals with first-hand experience of Iran's prisons and courts have stated that the widely broadcast “confessions” had certainly been extracted through torture.

Mrs. Hoveydaie Misaghi (arrested and released on 3 January) was summoned to the Intelligence Ministry on 10 February 2010, where she was re-arrested. She remains in custody to date.

14. Mr. Alaeddin Khanjani
15. Mr. Ashkan Bassari
16. Ms. Maria Ehsani Jafari
17. Mr. Bashir Ehsani (Ms. Ehsani Jafari's son)
18. Ms. Romina Zabihyan
19. Mr. Houtan Sistani
20. Ms. Simin Ghaffari
21. Mr. Pedram Sanaie

On 10 February 2010 at 2:30 a.m., Intelligence Ministry agents entered the home of Mr. Alaeddin (“Niki”) Khanjani, who is the son of Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani (one of the Bahá'í leaders currently on trial) and also the father of Mrs. Leva Mobasher Khanjani (arrested 3 January, as reported above). The Ministry agents confiscated his computer and all material related to the Bahá'í Faith, and then arrested and detained him. We have just heard that he was able to contact his family by telephone on 13 February.

The seven other Bahá'ís – Mr. Bassari, Ms. Jafari, Mr. Ehsani, Ms. Zabihyan, Mr. Sistani, Ms. Ghaffari and Mr. Sanaie – were taken into custody later the same day. All of them were told that they were being arrested because of their alleged involvement with recent public

demonstrations. Ms. Ehsani Jafari is a cousin of Mr. Fanaian, who was arrested on 3 January.

22. Ms. Taraneh Ghanouni
23. Ms. Naghmeh Ghanouni
24. Ms. Shaida Yousefi
25. Mr. Aria Shadmehr
26. Mr. Riaz Firouzmandi

These five Bahá'ís were arrested at their homes on 11 February 2010 (the first four in Tehran, Mr. Firouzmandi in nearby Karaj). Ms. Taraneh Ghanouni and Ms. Naghmeh Ghanouni are sisters. Ms. Shaida Yousefi is the sister-in-law of Mr. Mehran (Ahmad) Rouhani, who was arrested on 3 January. Mr. Aria Shadmehr's older brother, Zavosh, and father, Ebrahim Shadmehr, were also arrested on 3 January (see above). No further details are available to date.

There were two additional separate cases, also in Tehran:

27. Ms. Farideh Rezaie

Ms. Rezaie is a cousin of Mr. Saeid Rezaie, another one of the seven former leaders. She was arrested on 16 January 2010 along with some of her friends, while they were walking in a park. They were immediately transferred to a detention centre. Ms. Rezaie's friends had all been released by 20 January, but she was transferred to Evin prison on that day. It seems that she has since been released on bail, but the precise date and conditions are not known at this time.

28. Mr. Peyman Kashfi

On 18 October, Mr. Kashfi received a summons to appear before the Revolutionary Court the next day. He did so and did not return home that night (19 October 2009). The following day, his family went to the court to inquire about him. They were told that he was being held in section 209 of Evin prison, was "aware of his offense", and would not be permitted to have any visitors for the next two months. The prison officials refused to give Mr. Kashfi the clothing and personal items that his family wished to provide for him.

Prior to the arrest, his employer had been asked to dismiss Mr. Kashfi because it had been alleged that: "He is inviting Muslims to the Bahá'í meetings to become Bahá'í, and he is insulting Islamic sanctities, and also because he has a programme to teach his Faith in your company". The employer did not comply with the request for dismissal, stating that he might do so if given an official warrant but that he was sure Mr. Kashfi's Muslim co-workers would object to his being dismissed.

A very recent report indicates that Mr. Kashfi has been released on bail, as well, but the date and circumstances are not yet known.

Elsewhere in Iran:

Babolsar (Mazandaran province)

29. Mr. Shahram Mavaddat
30. Ms. Hoda Fallah

On 19 January 2010, officials arrested these two Bahá'ís. Mr. Mavaddat was taken into custody after agents had searched his home and confiscated a computer, books and various materials connected with the Bahá'í Faith. Ms. Fallah was arrested on the same day. No other information has been received for the moment.

Mashhad

- 31. Mr. Bahman Yazdani
- 32. Mr. Vesal Mohammadi

These two Bahá'ís were both arrested on 25 January 2010. Mr. Yazdani was taken into custody after Intelligence Ministry agents had searched his home and confiscated material related to his religion. On the same day, Mr. Mohammadi was arrested at his work place. They were both released two weeks later, on 10 February 2010, having been required to post bail equivalent to the excessive amount of 150 million tuman (± US\$152,000).

- 33. Mr. Ghanavati (first name not known)
- 34. Ms. Sonia Ahmadi

On 2 November 2009, Intelligence Ministry agents entered a venue in Mashhad where a Bahá'í gathering was being held. They filmed the event and distributed forms to sign, committing each person to appear at the local office of the Ministry if summoned. Mr. Ghanavati was arrested at this gathering. The officials asked the participants if anyone was absent, and Ms. Ahmadi's name was mentioned. The Ministry agents went to her house, searched it, and arrested her. Later they went to the home of Mr. Zabihi (first name not known) and searched it, as well, but Mr. Zabihi was not arrested.

Mrs. Ahmadi was permitted a first phone call with her family 45 days after her arrest and a second call some weeks later. After 75 days of detention, she was granted a family visit, which took place at Vakilabad prison in Mashhad. Her family was concerned because she was not being held in that prison but brought there only for the visit. After two months of arbitrary detention in an unknown location, she was released on bail on 2 February 2010.

It was very recently reported that Mr. Ghanavati was released some time around 9 February 2010, but we have not received any further details.

Nazarabad (near Karaj)

- 35. Mr. Payam Valy

On 6 September 2009, Mr. Payam Valy was summoned by phone to appear at the local office of the Justice Administration the following day. When he did so, he was told that the Prosecutor of Nazarabad had transmitted a letter, signed by the local Intelligence Ministry office, ordering that he be interrogated. Moreover, he was informed of a private complaint submitted against him for “teaching” his Faith, as well as four other charges unspecified in the Ministry's letter. If he did not cooperate with this interrogation, the officials said, he would be arrested. Mr. Valy did not accept any of the charges against him but agreed to answer questions. He was released after the interrogation.

It should be recalled that Mr. Valy's optical shop had been sealed on 25 December 2008, along with four other shops owned by Bahá'ís in the same town (as previously reported).

On 1 February 2010, Intelligence Ministry officers came to search his home and confiscated all belongings and material related to his religion. As he was not there at the time, they summoned him to appear at the local Ministry office the following day. He obeyed these instructions and has not returned home since then (2 February). For the moment, we do not know his whereabouts.

Sari

- 36. Ms. Sepideh Masoumi
- 37. Ms. Sepideh Zamani
- 38. Mrs. Soha Zamani

These three Bahá'í sisters were arrested late last year. On 7 November 2009, the homes of all three women were searched and items related to their faith were confiscated. Then they were summoned for interrogation at the local Ministry office on 10 November. On 15 December, Ms. Masoumi was in Tehran when Ministry agents came to her home again. They left a message instructing her to come to the local Ministry office on 19 December and to bring her two sisters with her. The three women went there on the designated date and were taken into custody.

Mrs. Soha Zamani was released on 28 December 2009, after having posted bail. Ms. Masoumi and Ms. Sepideh Zamani were finally released on 12 January 2010. As in other recent cases, the bail demands were very high – 50 million tuman, equivalent to ±US\$50,000, for each of these three Bahá'ís. Mrs. Soha Zamani had already been arrested and detained a year earlier, in December 2008, and subsequently tried, fined, and ordered to report to the local Ministry office once a week for a year.

39. Mrs. Samira Samiei

On 15 December 2009, agents from the Intelligence Ministry entered the home of a Bahá'í couple in Sari and behaved with great impertinence towards Mrs. Samiei, tearing up photos and insulting her in the rudest way. Her husband reacted to these insults, and the agents started beating him. As Mrs. Samiei moved to try to stop the beating, one of the agents pulled out pepper spray to use against her, but the second agent stopped him. They searched the home, confiscated a number of items, arrested Mrs. Samiei and took her into custody. She was released on 28 December 2009, after having posted bail (again, 50 million tuman, i.e. ±US\$50,000).

Semnan

40. Ms. Sholeh Taef

On 19 December 2009, Intelligence Ministry officers came to the home of Ms. Taef and gained entry by introducing themselves as officials from the electricity services. After having searched her house and confiscated belongings related to the Bahá'í Faith, they arrested her and told her family that they would be contacted in due course about her circumstances. Ms. Taef was arbitrarily detained without charge for nearly three weeks before being released on bail on 6 January 2010. It should be noted that she is one of the 20 Bahá'ís in Semnan whose homes had already been searched a year earlier, on 15 December 2008.

41. Mr. Afshin Ighani

42. Mr. Behfar Khanjani

These two Bahá'ís, arrested on 5 January 2010, are the brother and nephew of Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, one of the seven former leaders still imprisoned (see section 1, above). On 7 January, Mr. Ighani and Mr. Behfar Khanjani were both able to speak to their families by phone. Mr. Khanjani is suffering from severe illness that has intensified in prison, as his cell is not equipped with any heating devices and the cold is worsening his condition. He was not even permitted to receive warm clothing from his family. Mr. Ighani has not been well, either, and his family has taken medication to the prison for him.

Tonekabon (near Sari in Mazandaran province)

43. Mr. Vahid Ismaelzadeh

44. Mr. Soroush Garshasbi

On 21 November 2009, Intelligence Ministry agents searched the home of Mr. Ismaelzadeh and beat him during questioning. Mr. Soroush Garshasbi, one of the Bahá'í guests in Mr. Ismaelzadeh's home, was arrested and taken for interrogation. He was later released (date and conditions not known). On 21 November, Ministry agents also went to the home

of Mr. Mokhtari in Tonekabon and detained him for several hours. Following Mr. Garshasbi's release, Mr. Ismaelzadeh was arrested and taken into custody. On 24 December 2009, he had a telephone conversation with his family and told them that he would not be granted a visit until interrogation had been completed. He was arbitrarily detained for over two months before being released on bail on 8 February 2010.

Yasouj

45. Mr. Ali Bakhsh Bazrafkan

In the afternoon of 31 October 2009, Intelligence Ministry agents searched the home of Mr. Bazrafkan, confiscated items linked to his religion, and arrested him. He used to be a member of the former ad hoc administrative group in this town. Apparently, Ministry agents also went to the home of his son, Arman, and confiscated all material there related to the Bahá'í Faith. The agents had a warrant to search Mr. Bazrafkan's home, but not his son's.

Mr. Bazrafkan was interrogated every day from 31 October to 16 November 2009, while arbitrarily detained in section 1 of Yasouj prison. No lawyer in Yasouj would accept his case, but a lawyer from Shiraz agreed to defend him. A trial closed to the public was held on 7 December 2009. Mr. Bazrafkan was sentenced to two and half years of imprisonment, followed by five years of internal exile.

Yazd

46. Mr. Behnam Rouhanifard

47. Mr. Soheil Rouhanifard

Mr. Behnam Rouhanifard, who recently moved from Yazd to Tehran, was arrested on 12 October 2009 by agents of the Intelligence Ministry. It seems that he was stopped while driving to Yazd to attend the funeral of a relative. Two days later, his wife was summoned to appear at the local Ministry office, where she was interrogated for two hours.

Mr. Rouhanifard was able to call his family for the first time on 17 October, when he was briefly able to talk to his young son. Following the end of the interrogation period, he was transferred to the public wing of Yazd prison, where he was finally granted a family visit on 19 November 2009. As previously reported, his home had already been searched in March 2009, based on an earlier court verdict against him related to the duplication of Bahá'í music CDs and their distribution abroad.

His brother, Mr. Soheil Rouhanifard, was also arrested. His home in Yazd was searched on 27 September 2009, by Intelligence Ministry agents who confiscated some belongings and all material related to his religion. He was summoned to the local Ministry office for interrogation the following day, then released, summoned again and arrested on 19 October 2009. He was not allowed to receive any family visits for over a month. Eventually, he, too, was transferred to the public wing of the prison, where he shared a cell with two other Bahá'ís, Mr. Mehran Bandi and Mr. Rostam Behifar.

Quite recently (exact date not known), both brothers faced trial and were sentenced to nine months of imprisonment, which will be calculated from the date of their arrests. They were given nothing in writing; the sentences were communicated orally to their lawyer.

Mr. Behnam Rouhanifard was accused of "propaganda against the regime" for having sung propaganda [i.e. Bahá'í] songs, and Mr. Soheil Rouhanifard of "insulting the station of the Supreme Leader" and "propaganda against the regime".

As on previous occasions, we would add that many other Bahá'ís have been summoned for interrogation during the period under review, without being officially arrested. For example:

1. Mr. Ezatollah Ahmadian and Mr. Babak Roohi of **Mashhad** were recently summoned to the local office of the Intelligence Ministry for interrogation. The exact date and circumstances are not known.
2. The home of Mr. Pejman Nikounejad of **Babol** was searched on 22 October 2009, and some materials related to the Bahá'í Faith were confiscated. Mr. Nikounejad was taken in for questioning and detained for few hours before being released.
3. Mr. Shahram Azadi of **Khorramshahr** and Mr. Behnam Habibi of **Abadan** (both in Khuzestan province) were summoned by the Intelligence Ministry, interrogated and then released late last year (precise date not known). They used to be members of the former administrative group serving the Bahá'ís in these localities.
4. On 8 December 2009, Mr. Shokrollah Hajiouni and his wife, Mrs. Sedigheh Behzadi, of **Mahshahr** (in the same province) were summoned to the Prosecutor's office and asked to leave the city. When they raised objections to this, they were informed about a request from the Intelligence Ministry that they be kept under observation for a month. The officials then told them that as long as they did not do anything against the interests of the regime, they could remain in their current residence. Mr. Hajiouni was also formerly a member of the local Bahá'í administrative group in Khuzestan province.
5. On 27 October 2009, Ms. Eghdam Sheikhi of **Bushehr** (southern Iran) was summoned to the local Intelligence Ministry office, interrogated, and released the same day.
6. Also on 27 October, the Ministry summoned Mr. Hasan Bazrafkan of **Marvdasht** (in Fars province) to its local office there, interrogated him for two hours and then released him.
7. On 14 November 2009, Intelligence Ministry agents searched the homes of Mrs. Simin Gorji and Mr. Ali Ahmadi, both of **Ghaemshahr** (in Mazandaran province). All material and belongings related to their religion were confiscated in these homes, as well, and both Bahá'ís were told to report to the Ministry's local office the following day.

It should be recalled that Mrs. Gorji has been arrested and imprisoned three times since 2005; she is currently appealing the one-year sentence handed down after her third arrest. Mr. Ahmadi has also previously been imprisoned – he was released on 3 February 2009 after having served out a ten-month sentence.
8. Mr. Ashkan Absari of **Karaj** (near Tehran) was summoned for interrogation on 10 February 2010, but he was released later on the same day.

Finally, we would add that on 8 November 2009 the home of Mr. Khosrow Dehghani of **Vilashahr** near Najafabad (Isfahan province) was raided by four agents of the Intelligence Ministry. One of the agents presented Mr. Dehghani with a paper that contained the instructions they had been given, as follows: "search the residence of Mr. Khosrow Dehghani thoroughly and take with you all books, pamphlets, CDs". When Mr. Dehghani tried to turn this paper over to ascertain its source, they did not allow him to do so, but its presentation was clearly not that of a court order.

The search took about one and half hours. According to the count made by the agents, they confiscated around 300 books, as well as a laptop computer, CDs, and a satellite receiver. At the end of their search, the agents presented Mr. Dehghani and his wife with a written summary of their findings and asked them to sign and affix their fingerprints to it. This is the fourth time that Mr. Dehghani's home has been searched since the Islamic Revolution.

3. **Arson and other violent attacks**

As previously reported, recurring acts of violence and intimidation have been specifically targeting Bahá'í families in **Semnan** during the past year. In the latest incidents reported from this town:

- On 7 October 2009, the windows of a car belonging to a Bahá'í were broken while the car was parked in front of his house. This individual had recently been released from prison and returned home on 2 July 2009. During the month of December 2009, windows of the same car were broken again.
- At two in the morning on 24 December 2009, arsonists attacked – for the third time – a shop belonging to another member of the Bahá'í community in this city (the previous attacks had occurred in March and June). We do not yet know the extent of the fire and damage; the attack was reportedly carried out by three individuals. Only four days later (on 28 December, also in the middle of the night) a more extensive operation was conducted against the same individual's property. There were again three vandals, who came on motor bikes to break the windows of his car as well as the windows of his shop, and to set the shop on fire once more.
- Windows of the store belonging to yet another Bahá'í shopkeeper were broken during the nights following the two Islamic Holy Days on 26 and 27 December 2009. The sign identifying the store was also destroyed. This store had already been attacked by arsonists in June last year.

As in all such cases, all of the latest incidents were reported to the local police, who said that nothing could be done about the situation.

It should also be noted that members of the families of two of the Bahá'ís arrested in February 2010 (reported in section 2, above) were targeted by arsonists and harassed by officials numerous times last year.

In addition, a two-page anti-Bahá'í pamphlet (entitled *Supporters of Satan*) was recently distributed to a number of Bahá'í homes in Semnan. The pamphlet contains the same misrepresentations regularly published in Iranian State-sanctioned media over the past five years regarding the origin, history and principles of the Bahá'í Faith, together with false allegations of its links to Zionism.

On 30 September 2009, a car belonging to a Bahá'í inhabitant of **Rafsanjan** (in Kerman province) was set on fire. No other details have been reported to us, but the Human Rights Activists News Agency published some information about this incident. It seems that the car was parked in the garage of his home. By the time the family realized that there was a fire, the intruders had already gone, having left two four-litre cans of gasoline behind. The fire was extinguished with the help of neighbours and fire-fighters who arrived at the scene.

Finally, we must report a particularly abhorrent incident that took place during the night of 29 October 2009, when a Bahá'í from **Shiraz** was tortured by unknown plainclothes agents. At a gas station around midnight, a Bahá'í man was attacked by several assailants, one of whom wielded a knife. Thinking this was a robbery, he offered them all the money he had, but they replied that they did not want his money, they wanted his life. They stripped off his clothes in the cold weather and acted as if they were going to hang him. Then they burned his body in 16 different places with a cigarette. Finally, at 8 a.m. the next morning, they left him in the street. He had previously received an anonymous threat (on 7 October 2009), ordering him to stop visiting the Bahá'ís who are in prison in Shiraz.

4. Follow up on previously reported cases

First of all, we would like to draw attention to two particularly grievous cases of arbitrary detention, unresolved to date:

- Ms. Simin Mokhtari
- Mr. Pouriya Habibi

As of 12 February 2010, these two Bahá'ís have been **arbitrarily detained without charge for over two years** in Tehran, since their arrests on 27 January 2008. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention included them under its mandate, among 14 individual cases of arbitrary detention, in Opinion No. 39/2008 for the Islamic Republic of Iran. We recently received confirmation that Ms. Mokhtari is still being detained without charge in Evin prison. It has not been possible for us to obtain any additional information about Mr. Habibi, who had also been taken to Evin prison after his arrest.

The following information has been received about other previously reported cases involving a total of 44 members of the Bahá'í community in Iran.

Babol

1. Mr. Moshfeqh Samandari
(*arrested on 14 April 2009, released on bail on 28 June 2009*)

At his trial (exact date not known), Mr. Samandari was sentenced to six months in prison and fined 500,000 tumans (± US\$500) on charges of “propaganda against the regime” and “teaching Baháism”.

Bushehr

2. Mr. Asad Jaberí
3. Mr. Emad Jaberí
4. Ms. Aaliyeh Jaberí
5. Mrs. Farideh Jaberí
(*arrested in July 2009, subsequently released on bail*)

On 22 October 2009, a trial was held in the case of these four Bahá'ís: Mr Asad Jaberí, his son, daughter and sister. No verdict has as yet been issued, and we also await information regarding the charges against them.

Ghaemshahr

6. Ms. Pegah Sanaie
(*arrested on 10 January 2009, tried and sentenced*)

We have received more detailed information about this case. When Intelligence Ministry agents went to the Sanaie home in January last year to arrest Ms. Sanaie, the family refused to let them in. The agents jumped a wall surrounding the house, gained entry through forcible means, took Ms. Sanaie in for interrogation, and then released her on bail the same day. Convicted at her trial, she was sentenced either to pay a fine of 20 million rials (±US\$2,000) or to spend one year in prison. At a recent hearing, the court of appeal reduced this sentence to a lower fine (precise amount not known).

7. Ms. Firouzeh Yegan (Asadi)
(*arrested on 18 January 2009, tried and sentenced*)

The original sentence handed down in this case has also been reduced on appeal, from one year of imprisonment to six months.

8. Mr. Masoud Ataiyan

(arrested on 18 November 2008, released on bail on 15 February 2009)

Mr. Ataiyan was summoned to appear in the Revolutionary Court of Sari on 23 January 2010. We will report the outcome as soon as details become available.

9. Mr. Sohrab Laghaie

(arrested on 8 July 2009, tried, convicted, sentenced to six months of imprisonment)

Mr. Laghaie has been released, having completed his prison term.

Hamadan

10. Ms. Sahba Khademi (Khademideljoo)

11. Ms. Sorour Sorourian

(original date of arrest not known)

These two Bahá'ís faced trial on 22 December 2009 and were sentenced to one year of imprisonment for “teaching Baháism and spreading propaganda against the regime”.

Karaj

12. Mr. Shahram Safajou

(arrested on 26 April 2009, released on bail on 18 May 2009)

On 29 January 2010, Mr. Safajou received a summons (dated 17 January) to appear in Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on 7 February 2010. No further details have been received for the moment.

Khoramshahr (Khuzestan province)

13. Mrs. Noushin Ghanavatian

(detained and interrogated on 29 July 2008, together with her husband)

A trial was held on 10 November 2009 in this case. Mrs. Ghanavatian was charged with conducting Bahá'í group activities, convicted, and sentenced to eight years of imprisonment, which was reduced to five years because she had no previous criminal record.

Mahforouzak

14. Ms. Vesal Yousefi

(arrested on 28 July 2009, released on bail on 9 September 2009)

Ms. Yousefi has been fined 300,000 Tumans (± US\$300), but we have received no other details about her trial.

Mashhad

As previously reported, the following nine Bahá'ís (who are all residents of Mashhad) were originally arrested in August/September 2005. They were released on bail after having spent between three and eight weeks in arbitrary detention, but their cases have remained unresolved since then:

15. Mr. Jalayer Vahdat and

16. Ms. Sima Eshraghi (Aghdas Zadeh)

(both arrested again on 26 January 2009 and released on bail on 12 May 2009)

17. Ms. Rozita Vaseghi and

18. Mr. Kaviz Noozdahi

(whose homes were searched on 26 January 2009)

19. Mr. Davar Nabilzadeh

20. Ms. Nasrin Ghadiri

21. Ms. Nahid Ghadiri

- 22. Mr. Hooman Bakhtavar
- 23. Ms. Sima Rajabian

Apparently, all nine Bahá'ís were summoned to appear in court on 15-16 August 2009 and charged with “teaching against the regime” and “taking action against national security”, as well as “illegal dissemination of CDs, teaching [their Faith], and insulting religious sanctities”. A court hearing was held on 25 October 2009, and verdicts were issued some time later: all nine Bahá'ís were sentenced to five years of imprisonment. In addition, their sentences reportedly stipulate that they will not be allowed to leave the country for the next ten years.

Mazandaran

- 24. Mrs. Sonia Tebyani
- 25. and her husband, Mr. Ziaollah Allahverdi
(tried, convicted and sentenced in June 2009)

On 12 December 2009, these two Bahá'ís were able to obtain an appeal hearing. Mrs. Tebyani had previously been sentenced to one year in prison and her husband, Mr. Allahverdi, to two years of imprisonment. The appeals court reduced each of their sentences to either one year of imprisonment or payment of a fine set at three million tuman (±US\$3000).

Sanandaj (Kurdistan province)

- 26. Mr. Zabihollah Raoufi
(faced trial late last year – exact date not known)

Mr. Raoufi was sentenced to six months of imprisonment, to be followed by a period of internal exile. On 7 December 2009, he was transferred to a prison in Toyserkan (Hamadan province). This is understood to be the place where he will be in exile, after having completed his prison term in two months time.

Sari

- 27. Mr. Anvar Moslemi
(arrested in November 2008)
- 28. Mr. Adel Samimi
(arrested in December 2008)
- 29. Ms. Shirin Foroughian
(arrested in March 2009)
(all three of whom were tried in September 2009)

The verdicts have finally been announced for these three members of the community, each of whom has been fined 300,000 tumans (± US\$300) for having engaged in activities related to their religious beliefs.

- 30. Ms. Didar Hashemi
(released on bail on 9 September 2009)

We have been informed that bail required for Ms. Hashemi's release was set at the excessively high amount of 70,000,000 tumans (± US\$70,000).

- 31. Mr. Foad Naeimi
(tried and sentenced in 2008)

Mr. Naeimi completed his prison sentence and was released on 10 December 2009. He has now begun two additional years of internal exile in the city of Eghlid.

- 32. Mr. Asadi (first name not known)

(arrested 5 January 2009, tried and sentenced to one year of imprisonment)

At a recent hearing in this case, the court of appeal reduced Mr. Asadi's sentence to six months in prison.

Semnan

33. Mr. Behnam Motearefi

(tried in July 2009, sentenced to one and half years of imprisonment)

Mr. Motearefi has lodged an appeal against the judgement in his case.

34. Ms. Manijeh Nasrollahi (Monzavian)

(arrested on 17 June 2009, released on bail on 30 June 2009)

Ms. Nasrollahi was recently tried and convicted of "activity against national security by engaging in teaching Bahá'ism" and "membership in anti-regime groups associated with Bahá'is". She was sentenced to three and half years of imprisonment and has appealed against this judgment. Her verdict also stated, however, that there is no appropriate place for her in Semnan prison, so she will be moved to a prison in Tehran.

35. Mr. Siamak Ighani

(arrested on 27 April 2009, faced trial on 30 June 2009)

We recently learned that Mr. Ighani had been convicted of "propaganda against the regime" and "teaching Bahá'ism", and subsequently sentenced to three years of imprisonment. He has appealed against this judgement.

Shiraz

36. Ms. Haleh Ruhi

37. Ms. Raha Sabet

38. Mr. Sasan Taqva

(tried and sentenced – based on false accusations – related to a humanitarian project for underprivileged youth, imprisoned in November 2007, serving four-year prison sentences)

The three young Bahá'is 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 four months, but have always been required to return to the centre and its cells, which are not at all suitable for long-term imprisonment.

39. Mr. Afshin Ahsanian

40. Mr. Vahdat Dana

41. Ms. Haleh Houshmandi

42. Mr. Keyvan Karami

43. Mr. Farham (Hadi) Masoumi

(arrested and released on bail last year)

The trial of these five Bahá'is, which had been scheduled for 16 December 2009, was postponed to 16 January 2010. It was reported that the judge left the court a few minutes before the trial was set to begin. We do not yet know whether or not the trial did finally take place in January.

Yazd

44. Mr. Mehran Bandi

(imprisoned since his arrest in May 2008, tried and convicted in September 2008, serving out a sentence of three and half years of imprisonment to be followed by three years of internal exile)

As previously reported, Mr. Bandi's doctors had determined that he is medically unfit to endure imprisonment, but the Prosecutor had rejected this finding. In its medical commission on 24 September 2009, the Coroner's Office decided that his condition does not prevent him from enduring imprisonment, but stipulated that he needs to be under medical care in prison and should not be in "noisy, tiring and stressful places". The Coroner's Office diagnosed Mr. Bandi as "neurocardiogenic", a condition that could result in an extreme drop in blood pressure and heartbeat if he experiences "severe psychological tension, physical pressure and fatigue".

On 9 October, Mr. Bandi had to be transferred to hospital, was returned to prison once he had recovered, then fell ill again and was taken to the emergency room. His wife appealed to the judge, who said that Mr. Bandi must have been "stressed" and that, when he had completed half of his sentence, he would be given a conditional pardon and released. The judge asked her to submit her request again in two months. On 17 October, Mr. Bandi consulted a cardiologist, who informed his wife that the medication given to him in prison could have had even more dire consequences and caused his death.

Finally, we would add that several other Bahá'ís currently serving prison terms were granted temporary releases during this period, in particular:

- Ms. Mehrangiz Hosseini and Ms. Nasrin Rahimi of Hamadan, who began serving one year sentences in August 2009, had originally been granted temporary releases for ten days, but this was later reduced to three. When their families enquired as to why, they were told that a letter in the file stipulated that any temporary release granted to them must be observed by the local office of the Intelligence Ministry.
- In Yasouj, Mr. Aliaskar Ravanbakhsh and his wife, Mrs. Zolaykha Ravanbakhsh were granted temporary releases in October 2009 and again in January 2010;
- Mrs. Rouhieh Yazdani (Baghaie), also of Yasouj, was granted a temporary release for medical reasons in September 2009 and again at the beginning of October.

5. Denial of access to education

5.1 Incidents targeting Bahá'í school children

We are particularly 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. There has been an increase in obligatory Islamic religious classes for all students, including Baha'is, and reportedly also a plan to have a Muslim cleric based in every school in the country.

We have only received detailed information about a few individual cases, as follows.

A Bahá'í pupil who attends school in **Tehran** was required to fill out a form that included a section requiring her to identify her religion. When the school officials learned that she is a Bahá'í, they informed the principal, who contacted the school security office. She was then informed that the security office required her to sign an undertaking that no one – not even her classmate seated beside her – would find out that she is a Bahá'í. As she did not wish to sign this undertaking, she went to a few other schools to see if she could be enrolled elsewhere, but each of them referred her back to the first school. She went to the district office of the Education Department about this matter, and was referred to the main Security

Office, where officials confirmed that she would not be registered at school without signing this written undertaking.

Another Bahá'í pupil, who lives in **Karaj**, was expelled from her school and transferred to another establishment a month after the beginning of the school year. Her parents received a letter from school officials, stating that she is very polite and has good behaviour and conduct. The reason for her expulsion and transfer was given as “religious matters”.

Iran participates in an international robotics competition for students, aimed at promoting research and education in the field of artificial intelligence. In October 2009, an eighth grade Bahá'í student in **Tehran** finished at the top of the girls' qualifiers to enter the Javan Research Institute, a school for gifted students, which should have allowed her to prepare for the national and international competitions. But the security office of the Education Department instructed the Institute not to register her because she is a Bahá'í. The Institute nonetheless permitted her to come to the first session; she was dismissed by the security office after this class.

Recently, as well, some Bahá'í young people had formed a football team in **Yazd**, but the corresponding security office denied them access to the local sport facilities. Other local sport facilities have also been ordered to expel and exclude Bahá'í athletes.

5.2 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. Because of this, an entire generation was denied access to higher education.

Beginning in 2004, Bahá'ís were able to take the national university entrance exam without having to declare a religious affiliation. However, the hundreds who passed the exam faced mandatory declarations of religion at subsequent stages of the admission process. All those identified as Bahá'ís were barred from registration or expelled after they began their studies.

During the next two years, widespread official efforts to identify members of the community sealed off access to university for those known to be Bahá'ís. In 2007 and 2008, students who took the exam had to consult a specific website to get their results. Those previously identified as Bahá'ís were diverted to a page with the URL (note the final word): http://82.99.202.139/karsarasari/87/index.php?msg=error_bah, where they received the message: “Error: ‘Incomplete File. Forward correspondence...’”. Many students appealed, using every available means of recourse, but not a single case has been decided in favour of a Bahá'í.

This year, of the 380 Bahá'í students who passed the entrance exam, 22 had already been identified as Bahá'ís – they were informed that they had “incomplete files”. A total of 307 were listed as eligible to continue the application process. It is not yet known how many were subsequently identified as Bahá'ís and prevented from registering.

Meanwhile, expulsions continue. Some recent cases are detailed below:

- A Bahá'í student had been accepted and was to begin his studies at **Isfahan** Polytechnic University, but then he was informed that he has a “problem” preventing his registration. When he inquired about this, he was sent to the university security office, following which he went to see the university president. He was told that the matter was out of their hands and that he would have to go to the Educational Measurement and Evaluation Organization (EMEO) in Tehran. That same night he decided to travel to Tehran, but he received a call from the university instructing him

not to do so – instead, they said, he should come back to the university the following day. The officials then told him that he could be registered, after all, on condition that he sign an undertaking which stipulated that he would obey the laws and regulations of university and refrain from “teaching” his Faith. He amended the document to state: “The Bahá’í administration is currently dissolved and I am not a member of it. I do not teach in university.” The registrar informed him that his admittance would be conditional upon acceptance by the authorities of this amended undertaking. No further information has been received about his case to date.

- Three Bahá’í students who (in September 2009) were enrolled in university in **Semnan** for the 2009-2010 academic year were expelled by order of the university security office one week after the start of the semester. All three appealed to the relevant authorities and to the director of the university. They were informed that the expulsion order had come from “a higher authority”, which had also stipulated that the students cannot be provided with written documentation about their expulsions.
- Another Bahá’í student had been admitted to begin studies in business management at the Kar Higher Education Institute of **Khoramdareh** (in Zanjan province), but he, too, was expelled at the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year, and his registration fees were reimbursed. The Kar Higher Education Institute is a non-profit, non-governmental institution with laws and regulations approved by Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution and the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology.
- A Bahá’í student from **Yazd** was summoned to the university security office in October 2009 and informed that – according to regulations sanctioned by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution – because he had identified the Bahá’í Faith as his religion, he had been expelled. This individual was enrolled in Payame Noor University, a state-run, distance-education institution with its headquarters in Tehran. This student is the son of a Bahá’í currently in prison.
- An 18 year old member of the community had been enrolled in the physics programme at Payame Noor University in **Khoramshahr** (Khuzestan province) for the 2009-2010 academic year. She was subsequently identified as a Bahá’í, and then expelled in October 2009.
- A Bahá’í from Gonbad (Golestan province) had begun his studies at Allameh Mohaddes Nouri University in the city of **Nur** in Mazandaran province. In October 2009, he was called to the university’s security office for questioning. In November, the same office summoned him again and informed him that he does not have the right to be enrolled in the university.
- A Bahá’í student in the commerce programme at Payame Noor University of **Chabahar** (Sistan and Balouchestan province) was expelled in November 2009. He has appealed, and his complaint is being processed.
- A Bahá’í sociology student was also expelled from one of Payame Noor University’s branches, in December 2009.

6. Denial of access to employment

In the past, we were able to report detailed information about the Iranian government’s well organized, systematic campaign to deny Bahá’ís the right to employment. In hundreds of cases from 2004 to 2008, we documented official measures taken to make it impossible for Bahá’ís to earn a living. Since mid-2008, it has been much more difficult to obtain information from Iran. In cases involving imprisonment or violent attacks, family members still find a way to transmit information to us. For dozens of other cases involving denial of access to employment or education, details are lacking (names, dates, precise locations,

etc.), and it is impossible to obtain more. This situation is preventing us from providing confirmed information on individual cases to UN human rights mechanisms and to others in the international community.

There are clear indications, however, that governmental efforts to drive Baha'is out of Iran by denying them access to employment have intensified in recent months. As in previously reported cases, the methods include harassment of their employers, refusal to issue or renew business licences, confiscation of property, orders for the destruction of Baha'i-owned farmlands and livestock, and threats against merchants and professionals to dissuade them from doing business with or awarding contracts to Baha'is. As in the section on denial of access to education, above, we have been able to obtain detailed information about only a few individual cases, as follows.

A member of the community in Semnan who was recently released from prison received a letter (dated 30 August 2009) from the Semnan Union of Clothing Traders, stating that that her business license had been cancelled. She was informed that the Union had been ordered to take this measure in a letter (dated 15 August 2009) from the Public Places Supervision Office, on the grounds of incompetence. The Union asked her to return the cancelled license and stated that any abuse of the license would be prosecuted. In Semnan earlier last year, the Chamber of Commerce and some 40 trade unions had decided – under pressure from the head of the Basij Trade Union – to prohibit the issuing of business licences or managerial permits to Baha'is and to refuse to renew existing ones.

A member of the Bahá'í community owns an optical shop in **Khomein** (Markazi province). He received a confidential letter, dated 21 October 2009, addressed by the Deputy of Health of the Ministry of Health and Medical Treatment and Medical Education to the Director of the Office of Health and Hygiene Network of Khomein. In this letter, the Director was instructed to close the shop within two weeks and to report back to the Ministry should the Bahá'í attempt to keep the shop open. Officers of the Health and Hygiene Network informed him that this is a nationwide order, which will gradually be put into effect for all optical shops owned by Bahá'ís.

The order has already been implemented in at least two other localities:

- One Bahá'í shopkeeper went to court to appeal the closure of her shop, which had been sealed in December 2008 at the same time as four other shops run by Bahá'í opticians in **Nazarabad** (near Karaj). The Court of Administrative Justice issued a verdict permitting her to re-open her shop, but the local Intelligence Ministry office is still preventing her from doing so.
- An optical shop in **Rafsanjan** (Kerman province) had to be shut down after the authorities concerned refused to renew the relevant business license.
- Another shop in **Rafsanjan** was also forced to close (the precise date not known). The Bahá'í shopkeeper appealed to the relevant authorities, in vain.

Furthermore, two other businesses run by Bahá'ís in **Rafsanjan** were sealed by officials, with no forewarning: an appliance repair shop, and an alarm system shop owned by the individual whose car was set on fire in September 2009 (as reported in section 3, above). The officers who sealed the premises had an official government order to close the shops.

Another Bahá'í from Rafsanjan heard (in confidence) that the police headquarters there had been officially instructed to ensure:

- that the number of Baha'is who engage in any one business or trade is strictly limited;
- that steps be taken to restrict the amount of income they earn to prevent them from accumulating wealth; and

- that they be prevented from purchasing real estate or properties 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.

Sketchy reports indicate that similar measures are being taken against Bahá'ís in other types of business – any of the 25 trades from which Bahá'ís were officially banned in 2007, as specified in the letter sent by the Public Places Supervision Office to commanders of police and heads of public intelligence and security. As previously reported, we obtained a copy of the letter sent in this regard throughout the province of Tehran (details can be found in the attached *Background* document).

7. Intimidation, harassment, denial of access to cemeteries

Many Bahá'ís continue to receive threats by phone, text message or post, in localities throughout the country. In addition, officials have persisted in their efforts to obtain information about members of the community, as well as to monitor and impede activities related to their Faith.

We report below recent events involving Bahá'í cemeteries, as these are the only incidents about which we have received detailed information.

- **Najafabad** (Isfahan province)

Further to previous reports about the graves in this Bahá'í cemetery, which had been covered over with soil: on 10 September 2009, the municipal authorities prevented the Bahá'ís from entering their cemetery, by blocking the access road with soil piled some ten meters high. The authorities also refused to grant permission for the Bahá'ís in Najafabad to bury a member of the local community who passed away in September 2009. The hospital informed the family of the deceased that they would only release his body with the permission and in the presence of an Intelligence Ministry agent.

Upon enquiry, the Intelligence Ministry stated that this permission would be conditional upon the burial not taking place in the Najafabad Bahá'í cemetery. The body was to be held in the morgue pending the issuance of a burial permit. The family later learned that their deceased relative had been buried in the Bahá'í cemetery in Isfahan, at night (exact date not known). The authorities who carried out the burial had informed neither the family nor any of the Bahá'ís in Isfahan. The family lodged a complaint with the hospital for having released the body for transfer and burial without their knowledge and permission.

- **Vilashahr** (near Najafabad, also in Isfahan province)

In November 2009, a Bahá'í woman passed away at the hospital in Najafabad. Her body was kept in the morgue for several days, following which she was buried in Isfahan cemetery by municipal authorities, in her hospital clothing and without her family's permission. The authorities for Najafabad and Vilashahr are apparently refusing to issue burial permits to allow Bahá'ís to be interred in those localities; instead, they have indicated that they will pay the ambulance costs to transport the deceased from Najafabad to Isfahan.

- **Semnan / Sangsar Municipality**

A Bahá'í in Semnan passed away in September 2009. For two days his family sought permission for burial from Sangsar Municipality and the City Council, but both authorities refused to issue the required permit. The family was told that they could not bury their deceased relative in the Sangsar Bahá'í cemetery and would have to take the body to Tehran or purchase land in Semnan for the burial. Eventually, they were able to obtain a

permit through the Office of Provincial Governor. They had to pay 200,000 tumans (± US\$200) for this permit, and were instructed to limit the funeral service to as few people as possible.

On the day of the funeral in September 2009, strangers gathered outside the cemetery and video-taped the service. The Bahá'ís called the police. When officers arrived, the strangers began to threaten the family and insult the deceased. The following day, the same group of strangers gathered in front of Sangsar's Municipal Offices, together with 20-30 other people, and chanted anti-Bahá'í slogans (including "death to Bahá'ís"). During the two days between the passing and the burial, the family received threatening and degrading phone calls from an unknown number, which they also reported to the police.

One of the two water storage tanks recently disappeared from the same cemetery. The tank is reportedly so large that it could only have been taken away by a large tractor or a crane. Sangsar Municipality then blocked the road to the cemetery with a locked barrier.

- **Marvdasht**

The Bahá'í cemetery in this town has been vandalized once again. In the latest attack, 200 trees were uprooted. In previously reported incidents, graves were damaged and over 100 trees uprooted.

- **Abadan/Khoramshahr** (Khouzestan province in southern Iran)

On 6 December 2009, the Bahá'í cemetery in this locality was vandalized by unknown intruders, who destroyed a number of graves and some sections of the cemetery walls. The local Bahá'ís have appealed to the authorities about the attack.

8. Incitement to hatred based on religion or belief

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

This campaign continues unabated. We will give only one example here, as it concerns the latest UN General Assembly resolution on Iran.

It should be recalled that a strongly worded resolution on Iran, approved by the General Assembly in November 2009, denounced numerous violations. The text included concern over "attacks on Baha'is and their faith in State-sponsored media, increasing evidence of efforts by the State to identify, monitor and arbitrarily detain Baha'is, preventing members of the Baha'i Faith from attending university and from sustaining themselves economically." The resolution also noted the continued detention of the seven former leaders.

In response, *Kayhan*, the State-run newspaper whose managing editor is appointed by Iran's Supreme Leader, published an article on 22 November 2009 asserting: "In this Resolution, there is support for the colonialist Baha'i party and some of its spies who are in prison, and there is a claim that the rights of religious and ethnic minorities in Iran are violated. Saudi Arabia is the only Islamic country to vote in favour of the Resolution.... Of course, this vote is understandable, bearing in mind that Wahhabism like Bahaism is a handiwork of British colonialism, and the Saudi regime, representing the United States and England, is committing wholesale human rights violations (including suspension of elections) in the cradle of Islam."

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/>
