

Islamic Republic of Iran:

Non-implementation of accepted UPR recommendations

as concerns human rights violations against Iranian Bahá'ís

(February 2015)

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has been established with the understanding that member states would adopt its recommendations for the improvement of the human rights situation in their countries. States that accept part or whole of the recommendations during the UPR process are then trusted by the international community to implement those recommendations that they have accepted. Iran was reviewed for the first time in February 2010 and accepted a number of recommendations, while specifying that some others were either implemented or in the process of implementation. Iran was reviewed in October 2014 for a second time, but it regrettably chose to postpone making any commitments under the UPR to the March session of the Human Rights Council (HRC). As such, using “facts on the ground” since the Bahá'í International Community's August 2014 report, this document focuses on the implementation of the recommendations that were officially accepted by that country during its first review.

In this report, we have only selected those recommendations that unquestionably apply to Iranian citizens who are Bahá'ís. The analysis set forth below shows that since Iran's first UPR review almost five years ago, not a single recommendation that had been accepted by that country with regards to the Iranian Bahá'ís has been implemented. Sadly, by failing to abide by its commitments and assurances made to the international community, Iran has gravely undermined the whole UPR process.

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In a recent interview with the semi-official Fars News Agency, senior cleric Ayatollah Mousavi Bojnurdi mentioned his involvement in the draft of the Charter of Citizens' Rights proposed by President Rouhani, which is often cited by the Iranian authorities as an example of their Government's new approach towards promoting the human rights of religious and ethnic minorities in the country. When asked whether citizenship rights, including the right to education, envisioned in the Charter would be extended to the Bahá'ís, he stated:

Not at all. Some matters do not need to be considered as exceptions; whoever is against Islam is effectively out. Bahá'í [Bahatism] is against Islam and discussing it is out of the question.

We will never say that the Bahá'ís have the right to education; they do not even have citizenship rights. Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians have citizenship rights and have representatives in the parliament, because they are [followers of] the Abrahamic religions. We have interactions with them, and their representatives are our friends.¹

The statement was made only weeks after Mr. Mohammad Javad Larijani, Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights and head of the Iranian delegation to the UPR denied persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran during Iran's second UPR. He stated in his concluding remarks:

You know Bahá'ís are minority in Iran ... they are dealt under the so called citizenship contract. So under this citizenship contract, they enjoy all the privileges of any citizen in Iran. They are very much affluent people. They have factories and firms and economically they are very active. They have professors at the university. They have students at the university. So they enjoy all the possibility of privileges.²

Despite Iranian government officials' rhetoric at international fora claiming respect for the rights of the Bahá'ís, statements such as the one by Ayatollah Mousavi Bojnurdi and facts on the ground clearly indicate that the reality of the situation of Bahá'ís is quite different. Since Iran's UPR in 2010, violations of civil, economic, social and cultural rights of Iranian Bahá'í citizens have severely intensified:

- Today, there are 100 Bahá'ís imprisoned, including the seven former leaders wrongfully convicted and sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment. Since 2011, the number of imprisoned Bahá'ís has never dropped below the 100 mark. From late 2004 to the present day, there have been over 770 arrests. In addition, since 2005, intelligence officers have summoned well over 1,000 more for interrogation, without officially arresting them.

¹ Fars News Agency, *Fars News Conversation with Ayatollah Mousavi Bojnurdi, Order 9 of Imam [Khomeini] is one of the most advanced citizenship rights; Bahá'ís do not have citizenship rights* (15 December 2014), <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13930923001403> (in Farsi) The Charter was proposed by President Rouhani on 26 November 2013 and is to be adopted after it has been reviewed by the Iranian civil society and individuals. An analysis of certain provisions of the charter relating to the rights of minorities further confirms that the Charter does not extend to the Bahá'í citizens. The Charter makes repeated references to different types of diversity including Mazhab-based diversity. Mazhab-based diversity refers only to Islamic schools of thought and it does not include other religions or beliefs. As such, the Charter does not extend to Bahá'ís. (See Nazila Ghanea, *The Iranian Charter of Citizens' Rights*, EJIL: Talk! (December 10, 2013), <http://www.ejiltalk.org/the-iranian-charter-of-citizens-rights/>)

² UN Web TV, Mr. Mohammad Javad Ardeshtir Larijani, Secretary of the High Council for Human Rights of Islamic Republic of Iran Final Remarks (31 October 2014) <http://webtv.un.org/search/iran-20th-session-of-universal-periodic-review/3868635227001?term=IRAN&sort=date>

- BIHE administrators and educators continue to serve their four or five year prison terms merely for having helped young members of their religious community who were otherwise deprived of any form of higher education to receive necessary training and fulfill their potential.
- Students identified as members of this community continue to be barred and expelled from universities and vocational training institutes. This academic year, when results of the National University Entrance Examination were made available, Bahá'ís were denied access to their scores. When they sought explanation, they were referred to the office of National Education Measurement and Evaluation Organization in Karaj. Upon visiting this government office, they were shown only a section on eligibility for university admittance in the booklet on the National Entrance Examination stating that only Muslims and officially recognized minorities can be admitted into university.
- Officials harshly intensified the long-applied measures that deny adherents of this faith the right to work and earn a decent living. There have been at least 125 employment related incidents against the Bahá'ís in Iran since our latest report in August 2014. Incidents varied from summary closure of Bahá'í shops in several cities throughout Iran, to denying or revoking business licenses and in other cases preventing Bahá'í farmers from harvesting their crops.
- Officials failed even to respect the rights of the deceased Bahá'ís. Bahá'í cemeteries have been closed in two different localities, and Bahá'í families continue facing difficulties in burying their dead at the Bahá'í cemetery of Tabriz.

The situation of the Bahá'ís was included in the Secretary General's report to the General Assembly in August 2014:

Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities reportedly persists both in law and in practice. Baha'is remain barred from access to higher education and government employment; they also continue to experience governmental interference in private employment. Restrictions are placed on their rights to assemble and worship, and numerous Baha'i websites have been blocked. In May 2014, there were reportedly 366 in-country websites containing anti-Baha'i remarks, and between April and May 2014 pro-government media outlets published hundreds of anti-Baha'i articles.³

I. Incitement to Hatred

Rec #119: Fully respect the rights of the adherents of the Baha'i faith and to judicially prosecute those inciting hatred against them in religious environments, the media and the Internet (Luxembourg);

Luxembourg's two-pronged recommendation (i) to fully respect the rights of the adherents of the Bahá'í Faith and (ii) to judicially prosecute those inciting hatred against them in religious

³ General Assembly, 69th Session-agenda item 2, *Report of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/69/306)* (12 August 2014) available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/69/306

environments, the media and the internet was not only accepted, but also considered as already implemented or in the process of being implemented by Iran.⁴

In a recent speech, Hojatoleslam Abbas Ramezani-Pour, the Friday prayer Imam of the city of Rafsanjan called for the Bahá'ís to be expelled from the city.⁵ He also stated that according to religious fatwas, Bahá'ís are "unclean" and that it is "forbidden" to conduct business with them. The talk came a few days after an anti-Bahá'í demonstration was held in front of the Governor's office in that city. Given the influence the statements by clerics have on those who follow them, Hojatoleslam Ramezani-Pour's address was clearly aimed at inciting hatred against the Bahá'ís of Rafsanjan.

Since our report in August 2014, four arson attempts were made against houses belonging to Bahá'ís in different localities:

- On 2 October 2014, a firebomb was thrown into the house of a Bahá'í in the city of Yazd. Fortunately, it did not ignite, and no fire ensued.
- On 5 October 2014, a similar firebomb attack was made against the home of another Bahá'í in Yazd, where a fire ensued but was quickly extinguished. The police was informed but did not undertake any investigation.
- On 3 November 2014, a number of unidentified individuals broke into the home of a Bahá'í in the village of Owj Pelleh in Hamadan. The house's windows were broken, walls were defaced with graffiti and an attempt was made to set it on fire. Fortunately, no one was injured as the residence is only used during the farming season.
- On 7 November 2014, a number of unidentified individuals broke into the home of a Bahá'í in the village of Amzajerd in Hamadan and set it on fire. As a result, the furniture and some papers – including money – were destroyed. The incident was declared by the fire department as arson.

In his August 2014 report to the General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran noted the prevalent incitement to hatred against the Bahá'ís:

At least 900 online articles that perpetuate xenophobic beliefs or depict the Baha'i faith as politically subversive were published between January and May 2014. In December 2013, a documentary aired on national television alleged that the Baha'i community was closely connected to foreign Governments and former Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Other interviews, reportedly broadcast in May 2014, alleged that Baha'is were spies. In June 2014, anti-Baha'i leaflets were reportedly distributed in the city of Yazd, claiming that the blood of Baha'is was worthless, and slogans calling for death to Baha'ism were allegedly spray-painted on walls in the city.⁶

⁴ Human Rights Council, 14th Session, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Islamic Republic of Iran*, (A/HRC/14/12) (15 March 2010)

⁵ For more information, see *Hateful propaganda sparks concern for Baha'is of Rafsanjan*, 16 December 2014 <http://www.bic.org/news/Hateful-propaganda-sparks-concern-Baha%E2%80%99-Rafsanjan>

⁶ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to the General Assembly, 69th session, (A/69/356) (27 August 2014) available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/newyork/Pages/HRreportstothe69thsessionGA.aspx>

Unfortunately, facts on the ground and the Special Rapporteur's report suggest that Iran has not only failed to prosecute those who have incited violence against the Bahá'ís, but it has sanctioned – and, in many cases, sponsored – such incitement against them. To date, not a single individual has been judicially prosecuted for acts of violence against the Bahá'ís; and regrettably, these acts of violence continue to be perpetrated with complete impunity.

II. Arbitrary Arrests, Detentions, and the Judicial Process

In the matter of arbitrary arrests, detentions and the judicial process, seven recommendations were made concerning: the arrest of the seven Bahá'í leaders, known as the Yaran; overall concern regarding the arrests and detention of the Bahá'í community; freedom to practice one's faith without harassment; and torture and violent attacks of Bahá'ís. In his report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran noted the following regarding the detention and judicial process of the Iranian Bahá'ís:

At least 126 Baha'ís were held in detention as at August 2014. Reports referred to insufficient fair trial safeguards, including inadequate access to legal counsel. Several interviewees also maintained that lawyers often declined to take their cases owing to fear of reprisals.⁷

A. Arbitrary Arrest and the Judicial Process – the case of the Yaran

Rec # 50. Respect freedom of religion, and assure a fair and transparent trial for members of the Baha'i faith, in full compliance with the commitments undertaken as a State party to the implementation of ICCPR and other human rights instruments (Romania)

Rec # 117. Ensure the trials of seven Baha'ís are fair and transparent and conducted in accordance with international standards, and that Iran amend all legislation that discriminates against minority groups (Australia)

Rec # 118. Ensure that the trial of the Yaran is conducted in a fair and transparent manner, consistent with Iranian law, natural justice and due legal process (New Zealand)

The above recommendations were not only accepted by Iran, but recommendations 117 and 118 were pointed out by Iran as already implemented or in the process of being implemented.

As it has been discussed in our previous reports, in dealing with the case of the Yaran, Iran violated a number of ICCPR provisions including Articles 9(2), 9(3) and 14.⁸ By keeping the Yaran in prison for some 20 months before informing them of the charges against them, Iran violated Article 9(2) which requires that the arrested individual be promptly informed, at the time of arrest, of the reason for the arrest and the charges against him⁹ and Article 9(3) of the ICCPR which requires that anyone who is arrested or detained on a criminal charge be promptly brought before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or else be released. During their trial, the Yaran were provided with limited access to their lawyers and the

⁷ A/69/356

⁸ Art 9 (2) ICCPR, Art 9(3) ICCPR and Art 14 ICCPR

⁹ Also see Art 32 Iran Constitution: no one may be arrested except by the order and in accordance with the procedure laid down by law. In case of arrest, charges with the reasons for accusation must, without delay, be communicated and explained to the accused in writing, and a provisional dossier must be forwarded to the competent judicial authorities within a maximum of twenty-four hours so that the preliminaries to the trial can be completed as swiftly as possible. The violation of this article will be liable to punishment in accordance with the law.

purported “evidence” that was used to prosecute them. As such, yet another international norm was violated, namely Article 14 of the ICCPR, which requires that the accused “have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence and to communicate with counsel of his choosing.”¹⁰

In Recommendation 117, Australia recommended that Iran ensures that the trial of the Yaran is conducted in a fair and transparent manner, consistent with Iranian law and due process. As set forth above, Iran has neither been transparent in conducting the trial of the Yaran, nor has it complied with its commitment to the ICCPR, international norms, or their own legal procedures set forth in the Iranian Constitution. As such, it is quite disconcerting that Iran declares Recommendation 117 as already implemented or in the process of implementation.

Iran has also failed to apply its laws in the case of the Yaran. The Secretary General in his report to the 69th session of the General Assembly noted:

Seven Baha’i leaders are currently serving 20-year prison terms, although the new Islamic Penal Code allows a court to issue parole to individuals who have served one third to one half of their sentences. Given that more than six years have passed since these leaders were imprisoned, the Secretary-General urges their unconditional release, or at least their release on parole.¹¹

Detailed information about the above case can be found in a report available at:
<http://news.bahai.org/human-rights/iran/yaran-special-report/>.

B. Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions of Members of the Bahá’í Community and Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

Rec # 9. Ensure that its legislation and practice conform fully with requirements of article 18 of ICCPR and with its other obligations under international human rights law (Poland)

Rec # 48. Respect the freedom of religion (Germany)

Rec # 50. Respect freedom of religion, and assure a fair and transparent trial for members of the Baha’i faith, in full compliance with the commitments undertaken as a State party to the implementation of ICCPR and other human rights instruments (Romania)

Rec # 103. Guarantee, in compliance with its obligations under ICCPR, the effective independence of the procedures and administration of justice, restricted emergency legislation, adequate protection for human rights defenders and political opposition members, and the effective guarantee of freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of religion and belief (Chile)

Rec # 123. Ensure that laws do not criminalize legitimate freedom of expression, association and assembly (Australia)

Recommendation 123 proposed by Australia calls for the implementation of laws that do not criminalize legitimate freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Iran considers this recommendation by Australia as either implemented or in the process of implementation. As it will be discussed below, Iran relies on constitutional provisions to criminalize legitimate freedom of expression, association and assembly of members of the Bahá’í Faith.

¹⁰ Art 14 ICCPR

¹¹ A/69/306

Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that, Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized minorities who are free “within the limits of the law”, to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education. Since religious practices are effectively limited to these three religions, other religious minorities are essentially stripped of the freedom to practice their religion, including freedom of expression, association and assembly under the Iranian Constitution. As such, Bahá’ís are not allowed, “in community with others and in public or private”, to manifest their religion “in worship, observance, practice and teaching”, as required by Article 18 of the ICCPR.

Under Article 14 of the Iranian Constitution, “the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all Muslims are duty-bound to treat non-Muslims in conformity with ethical norms and the principles of Islamic justice and equity, and to respect their human rights. This principle applies to all who refrain from engaging in conspiracy or activity against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran.”¹² This conditionality in Article 14 justifies persecution of non-Muslims who are judged to be engaged in conspiracy or activity against Islam. Since belief in the Bahá’í Faith is considered heresy, any involvement in the Faith is then considered as “engaging in conspiracy or activity against Islam.” The Iranian government has used the vague conditionality of Article 14 to bring conspiracy charges against members of the Bahá’í Faith. This is reflected in the charges that are brought against members of the Bahá’í community throughout Iran. The following are only a few examples of malicious charges levelled against the Bahá’ís since our August 2014 report:

- On 5 July 2014, three Bahá’ís in Oroumīyeh were charged with propaganda against the regime and conspiracy and illegal assembly and were sentenced to three years imprisonment.
- In Shahinshahr, Esfahan, one Bahá’í was charged with propaganda against the regime and printing and distributing pamphlets for the purpose of misleading the youth, and another with propaganda against the regime and operating a day-care centre with Muslim children in its care. (Details of the incident are provided later in the report)
- On 13 July 2014, a Bahá’í in Tabriz was arrested and charged with propaganda against the regime.
- Three Bahá’ís in Shiraz were charged with activities against national security while two others were charged with propaganda against the regime.

Thus, as clearly evident from the nature of the charges brought against members of the Bahá’í Faith, the Iranian constitutional provisions on freedom of expression, association and assembly are discriminatory toward members of the Bahá’í Faith.

A Bahá’í man in Shiraz has recently been charged with “activities against national security, organizing legal action with respect to the Bahá’í cemetery and of encouraging and supporting the Bahá’ís in this regard.” As it has been previously reported, the revolutionary guards started demolishing the old Bahá’í cemetery of Shiraz in May 2014; and the Bahá’ís of Shiraz have made several contacts with

¹² Art 14 The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran states that “In accordance with the sacred verse ‘God does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who have not fought against you because of your religion and who have not expelled you from your homes’ [60:8], the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all Muslims are duty bound to treat non-Muslims in conformity with ethical norms and the principles of Islamic justice and equity, and to respect their human rights. *This principle applies to all who refrain from engaging in conspiracy or activity against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran.*”

the authorities in an attempt to put a halt on the demolition. This case clearly suggests that Iran not only limits but also criminalizes legitimate freedoms of expression of the Bahá'ís in the country.

In his report to the General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur indicated that several lawyers have been imprisoned or had to flee the country for accepting Bahá'í or Christian cases.¹³ Thus it is quite evident that the suppression of the freedom of expression extends to those who courageously rise to defend the rights of their fellow countrymen belonging to the Bahá'í Faith.

Bahá'ís are not only prosecuted and sentenced on baseless grounds, but regrettably their trials are conducted in an unfair manner. Recommendation 50 by Romania requires fair and transparent trial for members of the Bahá'í Faith. In his August 2014 report to the General Assembly, the Secretary General also indicated that the trial of the Bahá'ís has fallen short of international fair trial standards:

In April 2014, President Rouhani stated that “all ethnicities, all religions, even religious minorities, must feel justice”. During the same month, the head of the High Council for Human Rights publicly acknowledged that Baha'ís were entitled to the same rights as all Iranian citizens, as stipulated in the State's Constitution, and asserted that they had never been targeted because of their faith. The Secretary-General welcomes these commitments to ensuring equality. However, discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities reportedly persists both in law and in practice.

(...)

According to non-governmental sources, as of June 2014 136 Baha'ís were imprisoned, another 289 were awaiting trial and 150 had been sentenced but were awaiting appeals or summonses to serve their terms on charges ranging from membership in illegal groups to the commission of acts against national security. In April 2014, a court reaffirmed the sentences of 20 Baha'ís convicted of political charges after trials that had fallen short of international fair trial standards.¹⁴

Recommendation 103 by Chile calling for the effective guarantee of freedom of expression, opinion, religion and belief has not only been accepted by Iran, but Iran also considers it as already implemented or in the process of implementation. Iranian Bahá'ís continue to be arrested, summoned and interrogated by government officials solely for their religious beliefs. Officials have also ransacked numerous homes without immediately taking the Bahá'í residents into custody and have searched Bahá'í houses and confiscated property. The following cases are only those that have been reported to us since our August 2014 UPR implementation report:

- On 8 July 2014, a Bahá'í in Mashhad was summoned to the Office of [the Ministry of] Intelligence and was asked about her recent trip to India. She was released after a few hours. Once outside the Office of Intelligence, the agents took her to her house in an office vehicle and searched her home and confiscated her belongings and then detained her and took her to prison. She was later released on bail and subsequently rearrested and was asked to collaborate with the Ministry of Intelligence in exchange for her freedom, which she declined to do. She was then told that an order had been issued for her re-arrest accusing her of having had contact with friends who were not Bahá'ís during her temporary release.

¹³ A/69/356

¹⁴ A/69/306

- On 13 July 2014, a Bahá'í in Tabriz was arrested and charged with propaganda against the regime. Details of the incident is set below:

On the morning of 13 July 2014, the doorbell rang at the home of a Bahá'í in Tabriz. The Bahá'í resident was asked to come down to collect her mail. When she opened the door, five guards entered with a search warrant. One of them began filming while another scanned the walls with an electronic device. The guards then started collecting books, photos (including Bahá'í pictures) and other decorative objects, a computer, a printer and other electronics. She asked if she could contact her husband and they agreed. After gathering her belongings, she was asked to go with them. They left the house in two cars. She was blindfolded shortly after leaving and was taken to an unknown destination and placed in solitary confinement. While in prison, she realized that a Bahá'í family was also arrested and present there. After three hours, they were interrogated one by one while blindfolded. They were then transferred to the Criminal Investigation Office in Tabriz where they spent the night. The next morning, they were all taken back to the location where they had been taken the day before while blindfolded.

They were interrogated once again and then taken back to the Criminal Investigation Office in Tabriz to spend the night. All were finger-printed forty-eight hours after being arrested and were taken to the public prosecutor's office after their identities were verified. One by one, they entered the interrogation room of Branch 20 of the magistrate's office and each was given a form for their final confession. She was then informed that she had been charged with propaganda against the regime and being involved in forming illegal groups that are against the regime and was then taken to prison with a bail set for 50 million tuman (approximately \$18,730 USD). She, along with one female member of the other Bahá'í family, were told that they had to spend five days in solitary confinement and would then be released on bail. The two were shown a paper stating that during the five days they both had to make themselves available whenever the *Sepah-e-Ashura*¹⁵ wished to interrogate them. The interrogations continued to 16 July 2014 and they were released on bail on 21 July 2014. However, when they were released, they were not taken out of the main gate; rather they were driven in an ambulance to one of the squares in Tabriz. Their families, who had been waiting at the prison gate, were instructed to go and meet them at that specific city square and were told: "we will not let you go so easily that you can take photographs in front of the prison gate. [sic]".

- On 5 August 2014, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence of Shiraz went to the homes of three Bahá'ís and the work place of another Bahá'í and arrested them and took them to the Ministry. One was kept in solitary confinement.
- On 16 August 2014, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence in Shahinshahr, Esfahan went to the homes of four individuals and after making a thorough search, confiscated their books and other items and arrested five people. One was later charged with propaganda against the regime and printing and distributing pamphlets for the purpose of misleading the youth. Another was charged with propaganda against the regime and operating a day-care centre with Muslim children in its care. One was released and two still remain in prison.

¹⁵ Sepah-e-Ashura (Army of Ashura). Ashura is commemorated by Shi'a Muslims as a day of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad.

- On 16 August 2014, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence raided the home of a Bahá'í in Shiraz and after making a thorough search confiscated papers, mobile phones and laptops. The Bahá'í resident was told that she would be summoned if necessary.
- On 1 September 2014, two Bahá'í men were arrested in Shiraz. Agents searched their homes and confiscated their belongings. Both men were released from prison on 21 October 2014.
- On 8 September 2014, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence raided the residence of a Bahá'í woman in Shiraz and after searching the house, took all Bahá'í books or other belongings relating to the Bahá'í Faith.
- On 21 October 2014, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence raided a Bahá'í man's home in Hamadan and arrested him. He was released on bail of a hundred million tuman (approximately \$37,253 USD) on 1 November 2014.
- On 15 November 2014, intelligence officers in Najafabad and Vilashahr, Esfahan raided six Bahá'í homes. They undertook a thorough search, video-recorded the premises, confiscated all books, compact discs, and other Bahá'í materials. The work places of two of these Bahá'ís were sealed.
- In December 2014, a Bahá'í in Mashhad who was released on conditional discharge was summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence, presumably for interrogation.
- Two Bahá'ís in Yazd have been sentenced by the Revolutionary Court to one and two years' imprisonment.

In each of these cases of extreme harassment, Bahá'í documents and books are almost always confiscated, signalling that these are religious based home raids. This clearly leads one to conclude that Iran does in fact discriminate on the basis of a person's belief.

III. Discriminatory Policies

A. Protection of children and access to higher education

Rec # 22. Continue to implement measures aimed at further promoting and protecting children's rights, and intensify efforts to ensure further opportunities for access to higher education. (Qatar)

Rec #31. Redouble its efforts to prevent any form of discrimination (Nicaragua)

i. Rights of Children

The accepted recommendation by Qatar asks for continued implementation of measures aimed at further promoting and protecting children's rights.

In September 2014, a high-achieving Bahá'í pupil who obtained the highest possible Grade Point Average score became the only one from her school to be accepted into a school for children with an exceptional intelligence. However, the school authorities subsequently withdrew her place and after a few days of investigating the reason, the principal explained that this was due to a newly issued instruction regarding religious minorities instituted this year by the Ministry of Education.

Bahá'í children continue to be identified and vilified at school. Recently, some Bahá'ís in the city of Esfahan were told by a woman who manages several schools and preschools that schools receive instructions concerning the Bahá'í community annually. At the beginning of the school year, the Security Office at the Ministry of Education asked school authorities to prevent non-Bahá'í parents from contacting Bahá'í parents, to prevent school registration of Bahá'í children to the extent possible, and if they must admit Bahá'í children, to try to "control them"[sic].

In his August 2014 report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran further stated:

Several Baha'i students, or their parents, also reported that education officials did not grant them or their children admission to specialized middle schools, high schools and schools for gifted students on account of their faith. The only recommendation by the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review relating to education that was not accepted by the Government encouraged it to provide for urgent instructions to all schools to respect freedom of religion or belief and to take specific measures to reprimand any teacher or school administrator who intimidated Baha'i children (see A/HRC/14/12). Several accounts relate that middle and secondary school teachers and administrators continue to harass Baha'i students or attack their faith in classrooms. Individuals reported that classroom teachers often referred to their faith and its members as sexually promiscuous, unclean, immoral, part of a foreign plot or atheistic. Some students who defended themselves or their faith were allegedly expelled.¹⁶

The two above cases and the special rapporteur's report clearly suggest that Iran is not only neglecting taking measures to promote and protect the rights of Bahá'í children but it has taken steps to identify them and hamper their progress.

i. Higher Education

Recommendation #22 by Qatar calls on Iran to intensify its efforts to ensure further opportunities for access to higher education for the Bahá'ís while recommendation #31 by Nicaragua calls on that country to redouble its efforts to prevent any form of discrimination. While both recommendations were accepted by Iran, Bahá'í youth continue to be denied access to higher education in any form, from any source in Iran; and those few who are granted access are expelled from public and private universities and vocational training as soon as they are identified as Bahá'ís. According to a confidential memorandum dated 25 February 1991, drawn up by the Iranian Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council (ISRCC) and signed by the Supreme Leader, "Baha'is must be expelled from universities, either in the admission process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Baha'is."¹⁷ To this day, this memorandum is referred to as a justification of dismissal of Bahá'í students from Iranian universities.

¹⁶ A/69/356

¹⁷ See the English translation at http://news.bahai.org/documentlibrary/575/5_TheISRCCdocument_en.pdf.

The memorandum summarizes the steps taken towards the development of a new government policy on "The Bahá'í Question" before enumerating the actual policy initiatives that resulted from the process. On Education it specifies "1. They [*Baha'is*] can be enrolled in schools provided they have not identified themselves as Bahá'ís. 2. Preferably, they should be enrolled in schools which have a strong and imposing religious ideology. 3. They must be expelled from universities, either in the admission process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Bahá'ís."

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 300 cases of denial to higher education were reported. Some of the recent examples include:

- Four Bahá'í girls in Esfahan have been deprived of higher education through the pretext that their university entrance examinations were "incomplete". They have submitted their complaints to various offices including the Court of Administrative Justice, the Office of Presidency and the Ministry of Science.
- Another Bahá'í girl in Kermanshah's university entrance examination was designated as "incomplete". She has retained a lawyer in order to make a formal complaint against the directives of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council. She has also filed a complaint with the Court of Administrative Justice.

The government's denial of higher education is documented this year in a publication issued by *Sanjesh*, the national academic evaluation and measurement organization of Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. Entitled, *a guide to enrolling and participating in the National Entrance Examination for academic year 1391 [2014–2015]*¹⁸, this 46-page publication presents detailed guidelines on the application process for students wishing to enter university in Iran, including criteria for admission. On page 4, the "General Requirements" section sets out the four eligibility requirements for participation in the national university entrance exam. The first admission criterion follows:

- 4.1. A belief in Islam or in one of the recognized religions (Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian) in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This requirement of Iran's own official admission document clearly states that access to higher education in Iran is restricted only to those who believe in Islam or in one of the three other recognized religions specified in Iran's Constitution – thus excluding those who believe in the Bahá'í Faith.

The second criterion reads as follows:

- 4.2. Not having enmity towards the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
Note: cases of animosity include:
 1. Taking arms against the Islamic Republic of Iran
 2. Being affiliated with militant groups
 3. Financially sponsoring militant groups, providing organizational support to them or being a member thereof
 4. Promoting materialism or man-made religions

For years, Iran has been portraying the Bahá'í Faith as a "man-made religion" in the government-controlled and state-sanctioned media. Thus, this false categorization could also be used to exclude the Bahá'ís from higher education.

Moreover, this year when a Bahá'í student asked the person in charge how he had been identified as a Bahá'í, given that he had chosen Islamic studies as the subject to be tested on, he was told that the religion of the individual had been sought and identified. The government's policy to identify and

¹⁸ See <http://www.sanjesh.org/> 'A guide to enrolling and participating in the national entrance examination for academic year 1393 [2014–2015]' (in Persian) for the booklet

single out the Bahá'ís is reflected under the third criterion in the General Requirements section of the booklet as follows:

4.3. Being free from moral corruption

Note: Moral corruptions include: addiction to narcotics and being involved in prostitution

Important notification: Qualification of applicants will be confirmed through official/legal investigations. Making enquires through neighbors or people at the place of residence are absolutely forbidden.

Since its inception, the Islamic Republic of Iran has employed different tactics to prevent Bahá'ís from entering universities. In the previous years, for example, Bahá'ís were told that their files were "incomplete" when they tried to get university entrance examinations results. Whether flashed on a computer screen and printed out or delivered by letter, that message left a paper trail. During this academic year, the government has taken new measures to prevent Bahá'í applicants from obtaining nominal proofs of this denial. This academic year, when Bahá'í students sought their exam results online, many found the following written in front of their names:

"Please write to Post Office Box 3166- 31635 Karaj, or go to the National Education Measurement and Evaluation Organization, Inquiries Unit."

Several of them visited the above-referenced office in Karaj and made inquiries; they were all shown the Sanjesh publication. Amongst them was Ms. Shadan Shirazi, who placed 113th out of all Iranians – estimated to be more than a million, who took university entrance examinations last June.¹⁹ The new strategy clearly shows an effort by the government to deprive Bahá'ís of any document or paper that can be used to prove that they were denied higher education because of their religious beliefs. It is rather unfortunate that instead of finding a solution to extend university admissions to its Bahá'í citizens, Iran is constantly finding new ways to block their access.

The few students admitted without their religious affiliation being known are later expelled from university when it is discovered that they are Bahá'ís. Many have appealed such cases. Unfortunately, to this day, all appeals to relevant authorities and/or through the courts have been rejected; not a single expulsion case has ever been decided in favour of a Bahá'í. This past year, the pattern of such expulsion cases continues. It has become clear that the authorities are trying to ensure that Bahá'í students who began their studies during the few years that it was made possible are not allowed to graduate with a degree. The following represents only those cases that have been reported to us since our last UPR implementation report in August 2014:

- In August 2014, a Bahá'í from Esfahan was expelled from the Payame-Noor University after having completed two semesters in the field of foreign language due to her belief in the Bahá'í Faith. Mr. Mohammadi, an agent from the Ministry of Intelligence in Najafabad (Esfahan), denied having knowledge that Bahá'ís are being denied access to higher education because of their religious beliefs and said that this issue was not related to the Ministry of Intelligence. Also, the Director of the University told her that he was not able to do anything and referred her to *Harasat* (the office of the Security Services). Mr. Hoseini, the person in charge of the Office of *Harasat* confirmed that she was being expelled on account of her religion, but refused to confirm this in writing. He indicated that if the university director knew she was a Bahá'í, she would not have been allowed to advance to the second semester.

¹⁹ Bahá'í Word New Service, *Iran switches tactics to conceal how it prevents Baha'is from entering university* (25 September 2014) <http://news.bahai.org/story/1021>

He also told her that “Since your [administrative] centre is in Israel and Israel is our enemy, we have the right to treat our enemies like this [sic].” She was given the test results containing grades for her two semesters of studies and the report indicated that she was “expelled” during her second year. However, the university refused to give her a written explanation of her expulsion.

- A Bahá’í student was expelled from Baharestan University in Esfahan. After expressing their regrets and praising her work, the officials at the university stated that the [campus] security officials had been responsible for her expulsion.
- A Bahá’í with a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from the Bahá’í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) in Iran and a master’s degree in civil engineering in Greece, was planning to pursue a doctoral degree at a university in England. She was summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence office in Esfahan and was interrogated concerning her efforts to obtain a visa from the British Embassy in Turkey to continue her education in England. During the interrogation, the agents of the Ministry of Intelligence repeatedly urged her to take her family and leave the country.

In his August 2014 report, the Special Rapporteur mentioned the situation of the Bahá’í students:

University regulations (the moral selection regulations for university entrance applicants) continue to officially grant admission only to Muslim or members of officially recognized minority religions (i.e. Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism), resulting in as many as 1,000 Baha’i students being denied admission in a single year. A prominent lawyer who represented a group of Baha’i students, Mohammad Olyaei Fard, described the ruling of the Supreme Administrative Court in 2009, explaining that education regulations issued by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution barred Baha’is from enrollment. Baha’is who are not identified during the admission process are often expelled once their faith is discovered.²⁰

As indicated above, during his concluding remarks at the second UPR of Iran, Mr. Larijani mentioned that there are Bahá’í students and professors at the Iranian universities. A review of the above cases and the fact that the government ensures that those few who are accepted into the Iranian universities are expelled before graduation repudiates baseless claims, including those of Mr. Larijani, made by Iranian officials at the international bodies about respecting the rights of the Bahá’ís.

ii. Bahá’í Educators

Since May 2011, we have been documenting cases that concern educators and students arrested because of their participation in the work of the Bahá’í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE).

It should be recalled that the only objective of the BIHE is to meet the educational needs of young Bahá’ís who are denied access to university-level studies in Iran. At the time of the concerted attack against faculty and staff in 2011, nearly 300 people were serving the Institute, including international volunteer educators who teach through the Internet. About 1,000 BIHE students were studying at home and in inconspicuous laboratories in privately owned premises. Twelve BIHE educators are currently serving prison terms ranging from four to five years, solely because they had been

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providing courses to young Bahá'ís with the capacity and deep desire to continue their studies beyond secondary school.

In the case of the Bahá'ís, rather than intensifying opportunities for access to higher education as was recommended, Iran has intensified its efforts to deny higher education to students and considers the act of educating young people a criminal offence.

B. Right to Employment

Rec # 31. Redouble its efforts to prevent any form of discrimination (Nicaragua)

Barring Bahá'ís from higher education is only one aspect of the government's efforts to exclude and impoverish them. Since our last report, Iranian authorities have intensified their discriminatory policies and practices to deny members of the Bahá'í community the right to work and earn a decent living. Bahá'ís are being prevented from being promoted in certain types of professions and have been denied membership or presidency in their related trade, membership in syndicates and trade unions, participation in exhibition, becoming well-known exporters or importers, or major distributors of any goods. In most cases, officials are implementing a 2007 government policy memo issued by the Public Intelligence and Security Force (NAJA) instructing the enforcement of the exclusion of Bahá'ís from 25 specified trades and any work that could provide them with more than a minimum wage.²¹

Since the inception of the Islamic Republic of Iran, members of the Bahá'í community have been banned from work in the public sector. Not satisfied with this, the government has also reached into the private sector through harassment and intimidation of business owners and shopkeepers, refusal to issue or renew business licences, the sealing of premises, and following forced closure of a business, the seizure and sale of all merchandise by government officials in an attempt to put economic pressure on the Bahá'ís.

Authorities throughout the country continue to use harassment, intimidation and false accusations to shut down or impede the activities of tens of Bahá'í-owned businesses. Bahá'ís throughout Iran are denied access to their own, rightfully earned pensions. In August 2014, three Bahá'í veterans who had been prisoners of war and who had been receiving that to which they were entitled had been summoned to the Veterans' Affairs Foundation and told that if they did not write their religion as Muslim, their pensions would be stopped. They refused to recant their faith and are presently not receiving any pension. The following represents only those cases that have been reported to us since our last UPR implementation report in August 2014:

- In Yazd, four Bahá'í individuals were denied business licenses. They have taken steps to challenge this.
- A Bahá'í resident of Vilashar, Esfahan who has become highly skilled in the field of computer programming and is teaching at a technical and vocational institute was invited to cooperate with the authorities and did some work for them. He was later asked by the *Sepah-e-Pasdaran* (the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution) to work on a secret and highly confidential programme, which he refused. Some unknown agents arrested and detained him for a few hours and violently beat and threatened him; but he refused to cooperate with them.

²¹ Bahá'í International Community, *The Bahá'í Question – Cultural Cleansing in Iran*, September 2008, (pgs 86-87) available at <http://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/TheBahaiQuestion.pdf>

- In April 2014, the Public Places Supervision Office in Babolsar refused to renew the business licenses for two Bahá'í-owned hair salons.
- A Bahá'í resident of Sari had leased a store in 2007 for a cell phone business. The owner filed a complaint against him, arguing that the lease was worth more than what the Bahá'í lessee was paying. He was ultimately exonerated. In 2011, the owner filed a second complaint identifying the lessee as a Bahá'í and accusing him of undertaking activities against the country's interest. On 3 May 2014, the court found against the Bahá'í lessee, saying that he had changed the use of the store and must leave.
- On 31 May 2014, the Public Places Supervision Office visited two shops owned by Bahá'ís in Agh-Ghala, Gorgan and seized their business licenses because the two shop owners had closed their shops during the Bahá'í Holy Day commemorating the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith. The two were threatened with closure of their shops.
- On 29 June 2014, while riding the metro, a Bahá'í who is engaged in filmmaking, writing screenplays and stories was summoned to the Information Office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Karaj and questioned about whether she was a Bahá'í and if she made films for the Universal House of Justice – the International governing body of the Bahá'í Faith – and for Bahá'í institutions. She was also questioned about her beliefs and her participation in Bahá'í religious gatherings, among other things. Most questions appeared to be aimed at finding reasons to then accuse her of acting against the government. She was released on the same day.
- On 13 July 2014, the business of a Bahá'í in Kafshgar Kala, Ghaem Shahr in the province of Mazandaran which employed 20 people was closed by the Public Places Supervision Office, despite the fact that the Bahá'í owner had a business license to distribute food and hygiene supplies.
- On 11 March 2013, a Bahá'í in Esfahan filled out a rental agreement for a shop in the city centre complex of Esfahan. She had filed the necessary forms and completed all required procedures at the Trade Union to obtain her business permit and indicated Bahá'í in the religion section of the form. Sometime in June/July 2014, the Office of Amaken (Public Places Supervision Office) issued an order for her shop to be closed and sealed. Later, when she followed up with that office, she was told that her application had been denied and that no Bahá'í would be granted a business permit to work in the city centre. After visiting several different offices, including the office of the Provincial Governor General, and speaking to numerous individuals about the issue, she was finally able to meet with the director of the Office of Amaken, who had previously denied her request. After speaking with her, the director ordered that the seal be removed but explained that he could not give her a permit and suggested that she apply for one under someone else's name. After visiting the Office of Amaken one more time, she was told to wait a few days, after which they contacted her to say that there was no possibility for issuing a permit to her under her own name.
- On 2 August 2014, a Bahá'í in Golshahr, Karaj who had moved from Shiraz to Karaj a year-and-a-half ago, received a telephone call from the Intelligence Office of Shiraz and was summoned to that office for an employment-related interrogation. When he told the agent that he lived in Karaj, the agent asked in a harsh tone of voice "Why did you not inform us?"

and began questioning him in detail about his job. When he informed them that he worked from home, he was further questioned about it and whether he uses his computer for his job. He was also asked to provide his exact home address. He was then told that the Intelligence Office of Karaj would follow up the issue.

It should be noted that, about two-and-a-half years ago, instructions were given by the Ministry of Intelligence in Shiraz, whereby Bahá'ís from every trade or union had to present themselves to the Office of Amaken and provide any information that was asked of them. He was one of the individuals who presented himself and provided them with a copy of his National Identity Card and responded to their questions, which were mainly related to his and his family's jobs. He was also asked to provide his cell phone number, home number and address. During this interview, the interrogator emphasized that "we are gathering this information for your own protection and safety". The Bahá'í man worked in photography and graphics and produced images for children's books.

- In the early hours of 11 August 2014, officials of the Ministry of Intelligence raided the place of business of Mr. Aladdin (Niki) Khanjani (Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani's son) and Mr. Babak Mobasher and arrested the two men together with their three Bahá'í employees (Mr. Naser Arshi-Moghaddam, Mr. Ataollah Ashrafi and Mr. Rouhollah Monzavi). A fourth employee, Mr. Javad Salehi was released in the afternoon of the same day. The officials confiscated their computers and other electronic devices and took a large amount of goods and products from their shop. Mr. Babak Mobasher is Mr. Niki Khanjani's son-in-law. Ms. Leva Khanjani, Mr. Mobasher's wife, was recently released from prison. The fact that only the employee who was not a Bahá'í was released clearly demonstrates that the arrests were religiously motivated. Numerous pro-government websites have accused these Bahá'ís of smuggling eye glasses to Iran.
- Three individuals in different localities were arrested for their relations with the Khanjani family.
- On 26 and 27 October 2014, 81 Bahá'í-owned shops in Kerman, Rafsanjan, Jiroft and Bam (47 in Kerman, 24 in Rafsanjan, 8 in Jiroft and 2 in Bam) were summarily sealed, an action taken in response to the shops closures to observe Bahá'í holy days. The authorities displayed banners at the shops asserting that the owners had violated the rules governing business and trade practices. Having so many banners ready for use points clearly to the fact that the attacks on Bahá'í-owned businesses were systematic and planned ahead of time. The shop owners were asked to sign an agreement requiring that they would only close their places of business according to the law and calendar of the country, and that they would observe religious holy days in coordination with the Public Places Supervision Office and the Trade Union Council.²²
- Some of the Bahá'í business owners and truck operators in the city of Ghaemshar were summoned and asked questions concerning their personal lives and the Bahá'í community. They were also asked to provide copies of their family members' identification papers.
- A Bahá'í goldsmith in Ghazvin, was recently summoned to the Public Places Supervision Office (*Amaken*), and his business license was confiscated.

²² Bahá'í International Community, *Widespread attack launched in Iran against Baha'i businesses* (31 October 2015) available at <http://www.bic.org/news/Widespread-attack-launched-Iran-against-Bahai-businesses>

- A Bahá'í in Tabriz was threatened by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence and expelled from his occupation.
- On 18 November 2014, four shops in Nashtarud, Tonekabon belonging to Bahá'ís were sealed. The authorities also visited 16 other shops belonging to Bahá'ís with the intention of sealing the businesses. The owners resisted and, as the authorities did not have a warrant, the shops were not sealed. However, the authorities threatened to return soon with a warrant.
- Authorities have destroyed a Bahá'í-owned mushroom-growing facility in Vilashar.

In addition, in many places, but especially in Shiraz, the authorities have repeatedly gone to Bahá'í-owned shops where mechanical design graduates are working and have acquired an excellent reputation for their fine work. The authorities sealed the shops giving spurious reasons for doing so. Sadly, there has been no attempt by the Iranian government to prevent the employment discrimination against members of the Bahá'í Faith.

According to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Iran:

In recent years, the authorities have reportedly been involved in the systematic closure of Baha'i businesses, including many that had previously obtained licences. Sources record at least 578 cases where the right to work of Baha'is was infringed by the authorities, and in a few cases by private businesses, between 2007 and June 2014. The cases include at least 291 in which businesses were either seized or closed, 42 in which a business application was denied or not renewed and 49 in which Baha'is were either dismissed on account of their faith or whose employers were pressured by the authorities to dismiss them. The Baha'i community also reported numerous cases of arson that appeared to be aimed at intimidating business owners or employees.²³

C. Confiscation of Property, eviction and burial rights

Rec # 49. Take all measures necessary to ensure the protection of religious minorities, including implementing the recommendations on adequate housing put forward by the Special Rapporteur after his visit in 2006 (Denmark)

Rec # 19. Extend the rights guaranteed in Iranian legislation to all religious groups, including the Bahá'í community (Brazil)

Since Iran's UPR, confiscation and destruction of Bahá'í property has continued. Plainclothes agents and others have also continued to attack Bahá'í homes and cemeteries with total impunity.

In our previous reports, we detailed the confiscation of farmland and the destruction of many Bahá'í homes in 2010, attacks against Bahá'ís in 2011 that were directly related to disputes over confiscated land, and recent confiscations involving farmland in several different provinces, including a group of Bahá'í farmers in Kata imprisoned in 2012 because they continued to cultivate their own land after repeated official attempts to seize their property. At their trial, the court convicted them of "forcible possession" of their own farmland.

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Additionally, the right to property is also totally disregarded by intelligence agents who search Bahá'í homes and/or workplaces. They seize everything related in any way to the Bahá'í Faith; i.e., books, music, photos, documents, CDs, and computers, amongst other things. (See above under arbitrary arrest)

Bahá'í cemeteries

Since Iran's UPR, Bahá'í cemeteries have been demolished in several cities throughout Iran; this act is contrary to Iran's own laws, which requires that the destruction of a cemetery only be carried out upon an order.²⁴ Moreover, Bahá'ís have been prevented from burying their deceased in three different cities throughout the country.

It was previously reported that Revolutionary Guards began demolishing the old Bahá'í cemetery in the city of Shiraz, where approximately 950 Bahá'ís are buried. Among those buried in this cemetery are the ten women who were cruelly hanged in 1983 for belonging to the Bahá'í Faith. On 4 September 2014, three Special Rapporteurs issued a joint statement expressing their dismay with the excavation work at the Bahá'í cemetery of Shiraz and asked the government to take urgent action to stop the exaction.²⁵ Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief noted that "cemeteries, like places of worship, are an essential part of how people exercise and manifest their right to freedom of religion or belief. Their significance goes beyond their physical presence." According to Mr. Bielefeldt, "attacks on cemeteries are unacceptable and are a deliberate violation of freedom of religion or belief." The destruction of the Bahá'í cemetery of Shiraz was also mentioned in the Special Rapporteur's latest report on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to the General Assembly: "The destruction or closure of religious sites such as cemeteries, prayer centers and churches continues. In May 2014, officers from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps demolished a Baha'i cemetery in Shiraz, the appeals from the community and rights groups notwithstanding."²⁶

Despite the appeal by the Special Rapporteurs and the concerned Bahá'í community of Iran, no action has been taken by the government to stop the excavation. We have recently learned that construction materials have been unloaded in the excavations dug in that cemetery and that the land has been excavated deeply enough to lay the foundations of what appears to be a building of several stories.

In November 2014, government agents closed the Bahá'í cemetery in Mahmoudiyeh, near Najafabad, Esfahan, denying the burial of the deceased. Bahá'í families have been told that the cemetery would be open every Thursday to visit the graves.

In some cities Bahá'ís are not even allowed to bury their loved ones in peace. Authorities in the city of Semnan have recently asked families of the deceased to sign an agreement in order to be able to bury their loved ones at the Bahá'í cemetery. In the agreement, the relatives are required to indicate their relationship with the deceased, their birth certificate number and to sign and comply with the following six requirements in the form:

- a. Write only first and last name, date of birth and death of the deceased in Iranian calendar on the gravestone.
- b. Will not create green space in the cemetery.

²⁴ Municipality Article Commission 9. [*Commission e Madeye 9*]

²⁵ See <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14990&LangID=E>

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- c. Considering the embankment of the cemetery, abstain from building walls around the cemetery.
- d. Will not construct additional buildings around the funeral home.
- e. Abstain from posting any signs and posters, and having any writings on the gravestone and around the cemetery.
- f. The gravestone will be level with the ground and will not have anything raised above it.

Serving the same end, in some localities officials have refused to issue burial permits to Bahá'í families. In March 2014, the Bahá'í cemetery of Ahvaz's metal door was welded shut and a wall was built in front of it. A Bahá'í family has taken legal action to have the body of their deceased relative released from the coroner's office, where it is being stored, and buried in that cemetery. However, their efforts have proven to be not successful. Authorities in the city of Tabriz continue to deny burial rights to Bahá'í families. A Bahá'í girl who developed a disability which left her unable to move her hands, recently passed away in that city but the authorities denied her burial rights at the Tabriz Bahá'í Cemetery. In another case, a Bahá'ís family was not allowed to bury a loved one in the same cemetery. The body was buried in the local cemetery in Miandoab in the neighbouring province (over 160 kilometres away) nine days after on 9 July 2014. In the past, officials have transferred remains of the deceased to the Miandoab cemetery without informing the families; and buried the bodies without a casket, according to Muslim rites, without any family member present. This has become a recurrent problem in Tabriz, where local authorities seem determined to impose Muslim burial rites on Bahá'í residents. In several cases, the families of the deceased were informed only after the fact that the burials had taken place.

IV. Conclusion

The above documents only those incidents that have been reported to us since our August 2014 UPR report, and clearly demonstrates that the Iranian government has failed to take measures of any kind to implement the recommendations pertaining to the Bahá'ís that it accepted. On the contrary: during the past five years, the situation of the Bahá'ís has steadily deteriorated, and the violations against them are now much more intense and severe than in 2010. Despite all its claims, Iran has shown no sign that it intends to cooperate with this or any other UN human rights mechanism.