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PRESS RELEASE

Bahá'í International Community

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UN General Assembly expresses “deep concern” about human rights in Iran

UNITED NATIONS (18 December 2008) — The United Nations General Assembly today adopted a resolution expressing “deep concern at serious human rights violations” in Iran.

The resolution, which passed by a vote of 69 to 54, specifically criticized Iran’s use of torture, the high incidence of executions, the “violent repression” of women, and “increasing discrimination” against Baha’is, Christians, Jews, Sufis, Sunni Muslims, and other minorities.

“Iran should reflect upon and glean from this vote that, sadly, countries from Finland to Fiji are more concerned about the rights of ordinary Iranian citizens than the Iranian government itself,” said Bani Dugal, the principal representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations.

“The General Assembly is the world’s most representative body, and the fact that this represents the 21st such resolution expressing concern over human rights in Iran since 1985 should leave no doubt that this is not about ‘politicization,’ as the Iranian government likes to say, but a genuine concern for universally acknowledged rights.

“Regretfully, despite outcries like this and the recent report of the UN Secretary General, the human rights situation in Iran grows worse each day. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that expressions of concern like this will cause Iranian leaders to rethink their stance on human rights in respect for the rights that have been so widely accepted by other nations,” she said.

Ms. Dugal also noted that Iran comes up for Universal Periodic Review in the Human Rights Council in 2010. Iran should take note of the international community’s concern and make all efforts to improve its deplorable human rights record.

Today’s resolution was put forward by Canada and co-sponsored by more than 40 other countries. It also specifically takes note of the recent report by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon,

issued in October, which also expressed concern about human rights in Iran, and calls on Iran to address the “substantive concerns” voiced therein.

In that report, Mr. Ban said “there are a number of serious impediments to the full protection of human rights” in Iran. It likewise expressed concerns over torture, executions, the rights of women, and discrimination against minorities. [To read the full report, go to: <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=a/63/459>]

The resolution asks the Secretary General to prepare an update on Iran’s progress over the coming year. It also calls on Iran to “end the harassment, intimidation and persecution of political opponents and human rights defenders, including by releasing persons imprisoned arbitrarily or on the basis of their political views” and to “uphold due process of law rights and to end impunity for human rights violations.”

The resolution takes particular note of attacks on Baha’is, noting “increasing evidence of efforts by the State to identify and monitor Baha’is, preventing members of the Baha’i Faith from attending university and from sustaining themselves economically, and the arrest and detention of seven Baha’i leaders without charge or access to legal representation.”

Ms. Dugal noted that there are at least 20 Baha’is currently in jail, including the national Baha’i leadership of seven members who were arrested last March and May and are being held in Evin prison without charges. More than 100 others have been arrested and released on bail over the last four years as part of a stepped-up government effort at persecution.

For more information, visit <http://news.bahai.org>

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