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PRESS RELEASE

Baha'i International Community

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Baha'is condemn lack of due process at trial in Iran

NEW YORK – The Baha'i International Community has issued a statement condemning the trial of 16 individuals in Iran yesterday as a “violation of all internationally accepted standards of legal due process.”

The statement highlights the lack of proper legal representation for the defendants and the use of unreliable “confessions” in the trial. One of the 16 on trial is a Baha'i.

“The use of coerced ‘confessions’ and the denial of adequate legal representation reflect the Iranian authorities’ growing assault on human rights,” said Bani Dugal, principal representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations.

The complete statement follows:

The trial yesterday of 16 individuals in Iran, apparently accused of participating in the Ashura demonstrations on 27 December, stands in violation of all internationally accepted standards of legal due process.

While facts are unavailable to the Baha'i International Community concerning 15 of the defendants in the court proceedings, it can confirm that one individual — identified only as “P.F.” in government reports — is a Baha'i.

The show trials in the aftermath of the June 2009 presidential election, at which defendants have been forced to read statements incriminating themselves, have completely discredited “confessions,” such as the one purportedly made by “P.F.,” both inside and outside of Iran. It is well known that such confessions are obtained while prisoners are under extreme duress, often after being exposed to such appalling tactics as food and sleep deprivation, fake executions, threats against their families, and worse. Rather than accepting responsibility for the turmoil in the country, the Iranian

government organizes such show trials in order to lay the blame on innocent citizens and others.

While it is claimed that the court proceedings are open, not even the families of the defendants are notified of the trial of their loved ones.

The person identified as P.F., along with nine other Baha'is who were arrested on 3 January in Tehran, has not been able to contact his family, has been denied access to a lawyer, and was not allowed to choose his own legal representation. The government-appointed lawyer who acted on behalf of P.F. did nothing more than to accept the "confession" of his client and make a *pro forma* request for leniency.

The Iranian government is well aware that it is a fundamental principle of the Baha'i Faith that its followers strictly refrain from involvement in any partisan political activity, whether local, national, or international. Consequently, the arrest of ten Baha'is on 3 January, a full week after the Ashura demonstrations, and the claims that Baha'is were behind the recent anti-government turmoil have come as a complete surprise to the Baha'i community. These fabricated accusations clearly appear to be not so much about some Baha'is participating in the Ashura demonstrations. They point instead to a scenario which has been concocted by the authorities to justify placing further restrictions on the activities of the Baha'i community. This is but the most recent tactic in the ongoing systematic campaign of persecution that seeks to eliminate the Baha'i community as a viable entity in that country.

We call on governments and fair-minded people throughout the world to join us in raising their voice to protest against the blatant violations of human rights in Iran, of which yesterday's trial is only the most recent example.

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