

PRESS RELEASE

Baha'í International Community

7 January 2014

For Immediate Release

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Three Baha'is stabbed in Iran, apparently a religious hate crime

GENEVA – In an apparent hate crime, three Baha'is were stabbed in their home in Birjand, Iran, by an unidentified intruder on Monday, 3 February, the Baha'i International Community has learned.

The three – a husband and wife and their daughter – survived but are currently in intensive care at a nearby hospital.

According to reports from Iran, the attacker – who was masked– entered the home of Ghodratollah Mavadi and his wife, Touba Sabzehjou, at about 8 pm.

He immediately assaulted Mr. Mavadi, Mrs. Sabzehjou, and their daughter, Azam Mavadi, with a knife or sharp instrument, seriously injuring all three of them.

Mr. Mavadi was injured in his stomach and side; Mrs. Sabzehjou was wounded in the neck. Both lost consciousness from the loss of blood.

Ms. Mavadi, although also seriously hurt, was able to call the police and all three were taken to the hospital, where they are being closely monitored.

Diane Ala'í, the Baha'i International Community's representative to the United Nations in Geneva, said the attacker's only goal appears to have been to kill three innocent Baha'is in their home.

“As such, there can be no doubt that this crime was religiously motivated. Mr. Mavadi was well-known as a leader in the Baha'i community in Birjand.

“Our immediate concern is for the recovery of the Mavadi family. But we are also concerned that authorities in Iran begin immediately to investigate this crime and bring the perpetrator to justice.

“The sad fact is that there have been more than 50 physical assaults on Iranian Baha'is since 2005 – and none of the attackers has been prosecuted or otherwise brought to justice. And at least nine Baha'is have been murdered under suspicious circumstances in the same period, and the murderers have likewise enjoyed impunity.

“Most recently, for example, a Baha'i in Bandar Abbas was killed – and police have yet to charge anyone with the crime. Mr. Ataollah Rezvani, who was also a leader in the Baha'i community in his locality, was murdered in his own car by a gunshot to the head on 24 August 2013.

“If the new government of President Hassan Rouhani is sincere about his assertion that, under his presidency, all Iranian citizens will enjoy equal rights, then this new case should be taken extremely seriously, starting with an immediate search for the man who attacked the Mavadi family.

“What is heartening is that once again non-Baha'i Iranians are registering their deep concern and support for the Baha'is of Iran, as evidenced by several online reports asking that Baha'is be treated with justice,” said Ms. Ala'i.