

**PRESS RELEASE**

Baha'i International Community

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**Reports say Iran's seven Baha'i leaders "sentenced"**

NEW YORK — The Baha'i International Community has received reports indicating that seven Iranian Baha'i leaders have each received jail sentences of 20 years.

The two women and five men have been held in Tehran's notorious Evin prison since they were arrested in 2008 – six of them on 14 May and one of them two months earlier.

"If this news proves to be accurate, it represents a deeply shocking outcome to the case of these innocent and harmless people," said Bani Dugal, the principal representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations.

"We understand that they have been informed of this sentence and that their lawyers are in the process of launching an appeal," said Ms. Dugal.

The prisoners – Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm – were all members of a national-level group that helped see to the minimum needs of Iran's 300,000-strong Baha'i community, the country's largest non-Muslim religious minority.

The trial of the seven consisted of six brief court appearances which began on 12 January this year after they had been incarcerated without charge for 20 months, during which time they were allowed barely one hour's access to their legal counsel. The trial ended on 14 June.

The defendants were accused of espionage, propaganda activities against the Islamic order, and the establishment of an illegal administration, among other allegations. All the charges are completely and categorically denied.

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