

PRESS RELEASE

Baha'i International Community

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For Immediate Release

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Baha'is reject allegations of subversive activity in Iran

NEW YORK (3 August 2008) — The Baha'i International Community categorically rejects statements by an Iranian prosecutor that seven Baha'is detained in Tehran have “confessed” to operating an “illegal” organization with ties to Israel and other countries.

“We deny in the strongest possible terms the suggestion that Baha'is in Iran have engaged in any subversive activity,” said Bani Dugal, principal representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations. “The Baha'i community is not involved in political affairs. Their only ‘crime’ is the practice of their religion.”

“The seriousness of the allegations makes us fear for the lives of these seven individuals,” she said.

She was responding to Iranian newspaper reports of statements by Hasan Haddad, deputy prosecutor general for security at the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Tehran.

Ms. Dugal said that seven Baha'is arrested earlier this year were members of a committee that helped attend to the needs of the 300,000 Baha'is in Iran.

“That is no secret – the government knew perfectly well about the existence of this committee long before its members were arrested, just as the government knows perfectly well that these people are not involved in any underhanded activity,” she said.

Ms. Dugal said the detentions are part of a well-documented, decades-long campaign to stamp out the Baha'i community in Iran, and that the latest accusations follow the same pattern as previous unfounded charges.

“Suggestions of collusion with the state of Israel are categorically false and misleading. The Iranian authorities are playing on the fact that the Baha’i world administrative center is located in northern Israel,” she said.

“The Iranian government completely ignores the well-known historical fact that the Baha’i Faith was centered in Iran until 1853 when the authorities there banished the Baha’i prophet-founder, who was forced into exile and eventually imprisoned in Acre on the Mediterranean coast under the Ottoman Turkish regime. That area happens to be in what is now Israel.”

Ms. Dugal said many Baha’is in Iran – including members of the coordinating committee before their imprisonment – are frequently detained for questioning about their activities. The Baha’is, she said, have nothing to hide and try to answer truthfully whenever they are interrogated.

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