

# Bahá'í International Community

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## PRESS RELEASE

Baha'i International Community

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### Lawyers worldwide challenge denial of persecution of Baha'is in Iran

GENEVA – In a striking show of solidarity, twenty-five prominent professors, lawyers, and judges from around the world have addressed the head of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, Mr. Mohammad Javad Larijani, asking him to acknowledge and take steps to remedy the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran.

The [open letter](#), reported on by the British newspaper [the Times](#), brings attention to a [website](#) – recently established by the Baha'i International Community and called *The Archives of the Persecution of the Baha'is in Iran* – that evidences the persecution of the Baha'is over the past decades.

The website makes available for the first time thousands of documents, first-hand reports, testimonials, and audio-visual materials. It was created in response to rising interest both internationally and within Iran by journalists, researchers, activists and others to understand the depth and breadth of the persecution.

The open letter calls on Mr. Larijani to review the contents of the new site and to reconsider statements he and other Iranian officials have made to deny the discrimination against the Baha'is. Referring to these statements, the letter remarks that the records on the *Archives* “present a different story”.

The website “vividly demonstrates the depth and breadth of unjust, relentless, and systematic oppression against a religious minority”, the letter states, adding that it “provides evidence... which contrasts sharply with statements of denial made over the years by the Iranian authorities.”

It cites examples of the persecution found on the website covering a wide range of violations by Iranian authorities, including arrest and imprisonment, execution, economic oppression, denial of education, acts of destruction and violence, and incitement to hatred. These include:

- A [court verdict](#) from the government's Department of Justice regarding the murder of a Baha'i man which states that, “as the victim was a Baha'i at the time of accident... and the fact that the provision of blood money [*diyeh*] is only legally applicable to Muslims”, the accused is acquitted of charges.
- An [official letter](#) from the General Office of the Department of Education in Tehran to a junior high school student which states that she “was a very well-behaved student”, but

that she was being expelled “in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic as she is a follower of the Baha’i sect”.

- A [letter](#) from the General Affairs Educational Office of the University of Isfahan to a student states that, as she is “a follower of the Baha’i sect”, she is “not permitted to pursue [her] studies”.
- A [letter](#) from the Court of Administrative Justice to a person with disabilities informs him that he has been “dismissed from his job due to his membership in the Baha’i sect”, that his pension benefits have been stopped, and that his further complaints to the court are “deemed invalid and rejected”.
- A [letter](#) from the Ministry of Education to one of its employees states that she is “dismissed from service in the [Ministry] of Education” and is “ordered to return all salaries received” as she is “affiliated with the illegal Baha’i sect”.

The persecution, as detailed by the *Archives*, “represents violations of international law, including a number of treaties to which Iran is a party,” and “demonstrates a breach of Iran’s [own] obligations”, the letter says. Quoting from the Iranian constitution, which states that “the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Muslims are required to treat the non-Muslim individuals with good conduct, in fairness and Islamic justice, and must respect their human rights”, the signatories ask:

“How can the prevention of thousands of young people from access to university be considered fair? How can Islamic justice be upheld when efforts are made to exclude an entire community from participating in the economic life of their own country? How can human rights be respected when innocent individuals are arbitrarily arrested, tortured, and imprisoned for many years; or when they are legally deprived of the right to seek justice for crimes committed against them and when the perpetrators are treated with impunity?”

The signatories hail from various countries throughout the world, such as Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The letter was signed by the following academics and lawyers, listed in alphabetical order:

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im  
*Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law*  
*Emory University School of Law*

Mehrsa Baradaran  
*Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives and*  
*J. Alton Hosch Associate Professor of Law*  
*University of Georgia School of Law*

Upendra Baxi  
*Emeritus Professor of Law in Development*  
*University of Warwick*

Kirsty Brimelow QC  
*International Human Rights Lawyer*  
*Doughty Street Chambers*  
*Chair of Bar Human Rights Committee of*  
*England and Wales*

Khaled Abou El Fadl  
*Omar and Azmeralda Alfi Professor of Law*  
*Deputy Chair of Islamic Studies Program*  
*University of California, Los Angeles School*  
*of Law*

Lord Anthony Gifford QC  
*Doughty Street Chambers*  
*Senior Partner*  
*Gifford Thompson & Bright*

Richard Goldstone  
*Retired Justice of the Constitutional Court of*  
*South Africa*  
*First UN Chief Prosecutor of the International*  
*Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia*  
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Claudio Grossman  
*Professor of Law, Dean Emeritus  
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Law*

Christof Heyns  
*Professor of Human Rights Law  
Director of the Institute for International and  
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Cora Hoexter  
*Professor of Law  
University of the Witwatersrand School of Law*

Baroness Helena Ann Kennedy QC  
*Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws  
Justice of the British arm of the International  
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and Reconciliation Commission*

Juan E. Mendez  
*Professor of Human Rights Law in Residence  
Washington College of Law  
Former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture*

Sir Geoffrey Nice QC  
*Professor of Law  
Gresham College  
Former UN Prosecutor at the International  
Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia*

Michael J. Perry  
*Robert W. Woodruff Professor of Law  
Emory University School of Law*

Niels Petersen  
*Professor of Public Law, International and  
European Law  
University of Münster*

Catherine Powell  
*Professor of Law  
Fordham Law School*

René Provost  
*Professor of Law  
Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism  
McGill University*

Jaya Ramji-Nogales  
*Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
I. Herman Stern Research Professor  
Temple University, Beasley School of Law*

Ingo Wolfgang Sarlet  
*Professor of Constitutional Law  
Pontifical Catholic University  
Judge of the Rio Grande do Sul State Appeals  
Court*

Soli Sorabjee  
*Senior Advocate  
Supreme Court of India  
Former Attorney General for India*

Patrick Thornberry, CMG  
*Emeritus Professor of International Law  
Keele University  
Former member of the UN Committee on the  
Elimination of Racial Discrimination*

Hildebrando Tadeu Valadares  
*Ambassador (ret.) of Brazil*

Johan D. van der Vyver  
*I. T. Cohen Professor of International Law  
and Human Rights  
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