

Bahá'í International Community

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Top UN officials say human rights violations in Iran continue unabated

GENEVA – Members of minority groups, including Baha'is, continue to face persecution and discrimination in Iran, despite promises by the government to the contrary, according to two high level UN officials.

In reports to the Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also expressed concern over the continuing high rate of executions in Iran, the jailing of journalists and human rights activists, the lack of freedom of expression, and discrimination against women.

The reports were issued on the eve of next week's session on Iran's response to the Council's 2014 Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In October 2014, at the Council's review of Iran's human rights record, governments from around the world made 291 recommendations to the Iranian government regarding steps it could take to ameliorate its human rights violations. At a session scheduled for Thursday, 19 March, the Iranian government will indicate which of these recommendations it plans to accept.

Dr. Shaheed, in a report issued yesterday, expressed a particular concern that widespread human rights violations continue unabated despite numerous promises from Iran to take steps to end or ameliorate them at Iran's 2010 UPR session.

"The Special Rapporteur recognizes a number of Government efforts to implement the 2010 UPR commitments, but regrets that a majority of them remained unimplemented by 2014 and that underlying causes of violations highlighted during the UPR and in his 2011 and biannual 2012, 2013, and 2014 reports remain unaddressed," said Dr. Shaheed.

Altogether, he added, the fact that other governments had given 291 recommendations to Iran in October 2014 "reflect this reality" that human rights are unimproved.

Dr. Shaheed said, for example, that violations against Iran's Baha'i community remain unabated.

“Despite statements from high-ranking officials that Baha’is are entitled to citizenship rights, they continue to face discrimination, arrest, and arbitrary detention in connection with their religion,” said Dr. Shaheed.

“Between September and December 2014, security forces in the cities of Isfahan, Tehran, Shiraz, Hamedan, Karaj and Semnan reportedly arrested at least 24 Baha’is, bringing the total number of Baha’is in detention to 100.”

Mr. Ban, in his report, which was issued 3 March, also expressed concern over Iran’s continuing persecution of Baha’is.

“Members of ethnic and religious minority groups continue to face persecution, including arrest and imprisonment, the denial of economic opportunities, expulsion from educational institutions, deprivation of the right to work, and closure of businesses and the destruction of religious sites, such as cemeteries and prayer centers,” said Mr. Ban.

The two senior officials also expressed concern over the continued detention and harassment of journalists, human rights defenders, and women’s rights activists.

“The continued crackdown on media professionals, the pervasive restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, including the closure of newspapers and magazines, and the ongoing monitoring, filtering and blocking of websites that carry political news and analysis raise great concern,” said Mr. Ban.

Diane Ala’i, the Baha’i International Community’s representative to the United Nations in Geneva, welcomed both reports and urged governments to vote in favor of continued international monitoring of Iran’s human rights situation when the resolution to renew the mandate for the Special Rapporteur comes before the Council later this month.

“As both Ahmed Shaheed and the Secretary General have clearly indicated, Iran continues to violate the human rights of its people at all levels of society, whether you are a woman, a journalist, a lawyer, or a religious or ethnic minority -- or simply an average citizen,” said Ms. Ala’i.

“Iran has long promised to respect the human rights of its citizens but it remains evident that these promises are hollow, and that the only protection for Iranians comes from continued monitoring and expressions of concern by the international community,” she said.

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