

# Bahá'í International Community

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## PRESS RELEASE

Bahá'í International Community

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### Archives chronicle decades of Bahá'í Persecution in Iran

GENEVA – In response to growing interest on the persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran, a website was launched today by the Bahá'í International Community providing a glimpse into several decades of discriminatory treatment against the Bahá'ís in that country. The website, named Archives of Bahá'í Persecution in Iran ([iranbahaipersecution.bic.org](http://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org)), makes available, for the first time, thousands of official documents, reports, testimonials, and audio-visual material, revealing documentary evidence of years of relentless oppression.

“The website was created”, Ms. Diane Ala'i, Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations in Geneva explains, “in response to rising interest both internationally and within Iran to understand the depth and breadth of the persecution.” Indeed, in recent years, an increasing number of journalists, human rights activists, researchers, and filmmakers have featured the persecution of the Bahá'ís in their work.

Over time, many more documents and audio-visual records accessible in Persian and English will be added to the Archive.

The website chronicles, through documents, photos, and videos, the story of a community under continuous systematic persecution supported by officials. It puts into question claims made by Iranian authorities throughout the years that the Bahá'ís in Iran are not treated with discrimination.

Documents on the website show the breadth of the persecution against the Bahá'ís in Iran, including cases of imprisonment and execution, acts of violence against individuals, kidnapping, the burning and destruction of homes, confiscation of properties, expulsion of army officers from their posts in the army despite having received praise for the dedication and service to the Islamic Republic's armed forces, and the spreading of hateful propaganda against them through the state media.

“The compelling accounts and documents on the website”, explains Ms. Ala'i, “provide proof of the decades of systematic implementation of policies designed to suffocate an entire community.”

Although most documents on the Archive are related to the years following the Islamic revolution in 1979, many also date back prior to this period.

During years immediately following the establishment of the Bahá'í Faith (1844 to 1920), thousands of followers were killed at the urging of religious leaders and governmental officials and faced successive outbreaks of persecution. During the Pahlavi dynasty (1925 to 1979), the government formalized a policy of discrimination against the Bahá'ís as a concession to the

clergy. Bahá'í literature was banned, Bahá'í marriages were not recognized, Bahá'ís in public service were demoted or fired, and Bahá'í schools were forced to close. After 1979, however, the Bahá'ís became subject to a new and systematic wave of persecution, enduring the most cruel forms of oppression.

In the early years of the revolution, over 200 Bahá'ís were executed or disappeared without a trace. Hundreds were arrested, tortured, imprisoned, and expelled from their jobs and universities. In response to condemnation from the international community, the Iranian government shifted its strategy of to destroy the community as a viable entity through more covert forms of persecution, such as economic, educational, and cultural discrimination.

Bahá'ís continue to be denied access to university education, excluded from employment in the public sector as well as numerous professions in the private sector, denied benefits of the pension system, and are unjustly arrested, imprisoned, and sentenced to years in prison after trials lacking due process of law. Approximately 90 Bahá'ís are presently in prison in Iran only because of their beliefs. Bahá'í cemeteries are destroyed and the government's extensive use of the mass media as means to denigrate and vilify the Bahá'ís has increased in recent years. In recent years, the “economic apartheid against a segment of Iran’s population” (see [an open letter](#) to President Rouhani) has accelerated and small Bahá'í shops have become the target of attacks and closures by the authorities.

Discrimination against the Bahá'ís is entrenched in the Iranian legal system. The Constitution of Iran, for example, only recognizes Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism as official religious minorities in the country. Moreover, the Iranian Penal Code only allows the right to *diya* (blood money) for Muslims and the three constitutionally-recognized religious minorities while granting *qesas* (retributive justice) exclusively to Muslims. It thus legally deprives Bahá'ís of the right to seek justice and allows violence against them to take place with impunity. Despite this, the Bahá'ís in Iran have and continue to seek justice through whatever legal means are available to them.

“The documents on this website bear testimony to a justice system that has, for almost forty years, violated every accepted element of due process,” says Ms. Ala'i. “This ranges from arbitrary arrests and detentions to expulsion of innocent individuals from school and places of employment for no other reason than their Faith.”