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PRESS RELEASE

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Sixth member of the Yaran completes his imprisonment

GENEVA – Mr. Vahid Tizfahm completed his 10-year sentence yesterday. At 44, he is the youngest of the seven former Baha'i leaders in Iran who were unjustly imprisoned for their religious beliefs in 2008.

Mr. Tizfahm is the sixth of the former group, known as the Yaran, to complete his sentence and be released. The Yaran was an ad-hoc group which tended to the basic spiritual and material needs of the Iranian Baha'i community. It was formed with the full knowledge and approval of Iranian authorities after formal Baha'i institutions were declared illegal in Iran in the 1980s.

All seven members of the Yaran were arrested in March or May of 2008 and spent months in detention before receiving their charges. They were eventually sentenced to 10 years in prison through a legal procedure that lacked any semblance of due process.

“We are, of course, happy that Mr. Tizfahm and other members of the Yaran are reuniting with their families,” said Diane Ala'i, Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations in Geneva. “But there can be no joy over the fact that Mr. Tizfahm has spent one decade of his life in prison for no other reason than his faith, barred from his family, friends, and community in his 30s and 40s.

“It should also be absolutely clear that, this step does not reflect an improvement in the situation of Iranian Baha'is as a whole,” said Ms. Ala'i, noting that they continue to face economic discrimination, are deprived of access to higher education, and remain subject to arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.

Mr. Tizfahm is an optician and was the owner of an optical shop in Tabriz, where he lived until early 2008, when he moved to Tehran.

He was born on 16 May 1973 in the city of Orumiyeh where he spent his childhood and youth. At the age of 23, he married Furuzandeh Nikumanesh. They have a young son, who was in the third grade when his father was arrested in 2008. As a result of his imprisonment, Mr. Tizfahm was not able to be present during some of the most important moments in his son's life.

“The members of the Yaran, and indeed the entire Baha'i community in Iran, have endured enormous human rights violations at the hands of their government, which is, in reality, meant to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of its citizens,” stated

Ms. Ala'i. "It's unfortunate that, instead, it has taken every measure to deprive an entire segment of its population of the ability to live and contribute freely to the betterment of their country."

Following the recent launch of the [Archives of Bahá'í Persecution in Iran website](#), a group of prominent lawyers and judges from around the world [wrote to](#) the head of Iran's High Council for Human Rights calling to his attention to the vast collection of documentary evidence of the oppression of the Baha'i community, which he has brazenly denied.

With Mr. Tizfahm's release, one member of the group, Mr. Afif Naeimi, 56, remains to complete his sentence in the coming months.