

PRESS RELEASE

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For more information, contact Diane Ala'i in Geneva at (office) +41 (-22) -798-5400 or (mobile) +41 (-78) -60-40-100, or Bani Dugal in New York at (office) 212-803-2500 or (mobile) 914-329-3020

UN votes for continued monitoring of human rights in Iran

GENEVA – In a clear rejection of Iran's claim that the human rights situation in that country has improved, the UN Human Rights Council today extended the mandate of its special rapporteur on rights in Iran.

"The Council's vote to renew the mandate of Ahmed Shaheed sends a strong signal to Iran that the world does not accept mere promises on human rights but rather expects concrete action," said Diane Ala'i, the representative of the Baha'i International community to the United Nations in Geneva.

The vote, 20 to 11 with 16 abstentions, came after Dr. Shaheed and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told the Council that, among other human rights violations, Iran continues to discriminate against ethnic and religious minorities, including Baha'is, while also repressing women, suppressing freedom of expression, and executing people without fair trials.

Ms. Ala'i said the sharp contradiction between Iran's words and actions was revealed numerous times during the Council's 28th session, such as during its Universal Periodic Review outcome session on 19 March when Kazem Gharibabadi, the deputy secretary general for human rights in Iran, claimed "all citizens" enjoy full range of human rights in Iran.

"Iran's assertions that all of its citizens enjoy legal protection and the full range of political, economic, social and cultural rights is flatly contradicted by its treatment of its large Baha'i minority, who continue to face widespread persecution," said Ms. Ala'i.

"Some 100 Baha'is are wrongly imprisoned solely because of their religious beliefs, thousands more are excluded from higher education, and the Baha'i community as a whole is discriminated against in employment and prevented from freely assembling for worship and community activities.

"The treatment of the Iranian Baha'is is an accurate barometer of what is happening generally in Iran, which, as stated by Dr. Shaheed and Mr. Ban, is an indicator of ongoing violations of a wide range of human rights in that country.

“If Iran genuinely wished to make good on its talk, it could easily start by allowing Baha’is to attend university, a step that would be easily implemented – and something that Dr. Shaheed could bring to the Council next year as a sign of improvement,” said Ms. Ala’i.

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