Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned university professors, ascertain that the promotion of education up to university level must be regarded as among the most precious cultural assets of any nation, providing the groundwork for the development and well-being of its populace.

For this reason we are shocked to observe that higher education is being denied to young people of diverse groups in your country – one of the oldest cultural nations of mankind – in accordance with national policy. Those affected include a large number of Bahá’í youth, who over the last three decades have systematically been prevented by the authorities of your land from pursuing higher education. The informal institution “Bahá’í Institute for Higher Education” (BIHE), which was established by Bahá’ís as a surrogate measure, has recently been declared illegal. A few days ago the Revolutionary Court in Teheran sentenced seven of the BIHE’s teachers and organizers, who have already been incarcerated since May this year, to prison terms of variously four and five years – according to the hearing, as punishment for “activities hostile to the government.”

We demand the immediate release of these unjustly imprisoned individuals, and we insist upon the unrestricted observance of the right of higher education for all citizens of your country in accordance with international norms which your country has ratified and which recognize that “higher education shall be made equally accessible to all” (ICESCR, Article 13) and bar countries from “depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level” and from “limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard” (Convention against Discrimination in Education, UNESCO, Paris, 14 December 1960).

For us, the undersigned, the freedom of research and teaching and the universal recognition of human rights, also in the field of education, are of paramount importance. It is our conviction that these principles must also serve as a catalogue of values for the international cooperation among universities, which has for many years included close and cherished bonds between numerous universities in your country and partner institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Signed by:

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