

Trial of Iran's seven Baha'i leaders

Oral Statement to the Eleventh Session of the UN Human Rights Council, June 2009

<http://news.bahai.org/human-rights/iran/yaran-special-report/un-statements/bic4>

Situation of the Baha'is in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Baha'i International Community is gravely concerned about the seven Baha'i leaders who have been arbitrarily detained in Iran for over a year without access to their lawyer, Mrs. Shirin Ebadi.

Recently, their families were told that these Baha'is may face a new, extremely serious accusation: "the spreading of corruption on earth" ('Mofsede fel-Arz' in Persian), which can carry the death penalty in Iran.

Governments, civil society, and others throughout the free world have called for the release of these seven men and women, who are innocent of all wrongdoing.

Their detention has been a travesty of justice from the start. They were subjected to intensive interrogation, but it took seven months before even a single pretext was given for their arrest. In February, an Iranian news agency quoted Tehran's deputy prosecutor as having said that the investigation was complete and that the case would be sent to court the following week, with all seven accused of espionage for foreigners, insulting religious sanctities and propaganda against the Islamic Republic. But then three full months went by. And now we hear of yet another baseless accusation, long after the investigation had supposedly been completed.

The charge of "spreading corruption" was misused against many Baha'is who were executed in the years immediately following the Islamic Revolution. Its utilization again in this case demonstrates that the authorities have no basis for any allegation against these individuals, other than blatant religious persecution.

Clearly, this action reflects the government's sharply increased persecution of the entire Baha'i community, the largest religious minority in Iran.

We call upon the international community to state once again, in the strongest terms, its demand for the immediate release of the seven Baha'i leaders, or, at the very least, for a fair and open trial that meets international standards of justice.

The Iranian President frequently calls for “justice and human dignity” and “the establishment of a just world system”, as he did at the Durban Review Conference earlier this year.

How can this call be taken seriously if the Iranian government does not grant justice to its own citizens? In Iran, human rights are ignored not only for Baha'is, but also for those who defend the rights of minorities, women, trade unionists, journalists, students, and many others...who seek only justice and human dignity.