



**To the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Mr. Ali Ardashir Larijani, Chairman of the Iranian Parliament
Majles Shoraye Eslami
Baharestan Square
Tehran
Iran**

The Hague, 17 March 2011

Re: Freedom of Religion or Belief

Esteemed members of the Iranian Parliament,

We bring you cordial greetings of the Parliament of the Netherlands.

We, members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Dutch Parliament, contact you as we are both members of the United Nations and therefore share the responsibility to promote and protect the fundamental human rights as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is in a spirit of unity and shared service to our citizens that we approach you, and we trust that you will receive our letter in that same spirit of unity and goodwill.

Iran can rejoice in its rich history and culture. It is therefore in a humble spirit that we express our deep concern about reports on violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reads:

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”

Based upon this article, we call upon you, our Iranian colleagues, to consider the following suggestions. Could you exercise your power and responsibility in such a way to:

- *Call for the immediate release of seven Bahá'í leaders* who were sentenced to 10 years in prison. Although the seven Bahá'í leaders, Fariba Kamalabadi, Mahvash Sabet, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Vahid Tizfahm, have been acquitted of conspiracy or any activity against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran, they have been sentenced to ten years in prison based on charges that pertain to the activities undertaken in administering the social and spiritual affairs of the Iranian Bahá'í community.

We would highly appreciate it if you could ask his honorable Ayatollah Mohammed Sadeq Larijani to review this case and secure safety and justice for those involved. The circumstances in Gohardasht prison are appalling.

- *Change policy regarding the Bahá'í Community* and grant the Bahá'ís full freedom of religion or belief as spelled out in various international human rights treaties. We refer to the recommendations of Special Rapporteur Mr. Abdelfattah Amor dealing with ways to emancipate the Iranian Bahá'í community. Further, we refer to the recommendations laid down in the Universal Periodic Review of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We call upon you, as legislators of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to amend the laws of your country in accordance with the recommendations mentioned above, thereby assuring that each and every Iranian will enjoy full freedom of religion or belief, including the right to change his or her religion or belief.

- *Call for the release of a Church leader who has been sentenced to death.*

On 13 November 2010, Yousef Nadarkhani, pastor of a church in Gilan province, was sentenced to death for apostasy. An appeal is pending.

- *Call for the release of Behrouz Sadegh-Khanjani* who has also been accused of apostasy.

We would highly appreciate if you could ask his honorable Ayatollah Mohammed Sadeq Larrijani to review these cases and secure safety and justice to those involved.

- *Cooperate with international human rights mechanisms.*

We call upon you to show a willingness to enhance the human rights situation of persons belonging to religious, ethnic, linguistic or other minorities, recognized or otherwise, in law and practice. This includes working with UN Special Procedures and the implementation of requests and recommendations of UN bodies.

Dear colleagues, we thank you very much for your time and attention to our letter and we are looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours respectfully,

Members of Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Parliament of the Kingdom of the Netherlands,

C.G. van der Staaij (SGP)
J.S. Voordewind (CU)
R. de Roon (PVV)
H. van Bommel (SP)
M.L. Thieme (PvdD)
A. EL Fassed (GroenLinks)
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A copy of this letter is sent to the Iranian ambassador in the Netherlands