

The Bahá'ís of Iran – A Persecuted Community

(January 2023)

In the midst of increasingly violent and repressive actions by the Iranian authorities against their own citizens, the Iranian authorities have continued their relentless, multidimensional and state-sponsored persecution of the Bahá'í community in Iran, affecting every one of its members across generations and within every phase of life and even in death.

While the specific tactics employed by the Iranian authorities for over more than 40 years have sometimes changed—including as a result of external pressure—there is no doubt that their aim of destroying the Bahá'í community as a viable entity in Iran continues in full force. Through various means, new and old, the authorities maintain focus on this goal by striving to exclude Bahá'ís from the public sphere and prevent them from expressing their beliefs; impoverishing them economically; undermining their intellectual advancement; erasing traces of their history and culture; as well as spreading disinformation about them and inciting the public so as to create an environment of hatred against them.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, early adherents of the Bahá'í Faith faced violent opposition from the ruling establishment in Iran, which responded to its growth with fierce opposition, inciting violence against followers of the new religion. This persecution has continued intermittently since then to varying degrees of severity, and Bahá'ís were often used as scapegoats for other problems within Iran's borders.

Since the early 1980s, Bahá'ís have been subjected to a new wave of persecution, this time systematic and, clearly, state-sponsored. The campaign initially targeted many Bahá'ís of influence and those who served on Bahá'í administrative institutions at the local and national levels. In August 1980, for example, all nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly—a democratically elected national council that forms part of the Bahá'í administrative structure in all countries—together with two individuals serving on other Bahá'í institutions, were abducted by a group of armed men from their meeting in a private home and taken to an unknown location. These individuals disappeared without a trace, presumably the victims of extrajudicial killings, although the government authorities have never admitted to this crime. In the years that immediately followed, subsequent members elected to this council, as well as scores of other Bahá'ís, were executed by the government without due process of law. On 29 August 1983, the Iranian Attorney General announced a legal ban on all Bahá'í administrative and community activities in Iran, making membership of Bahá'í administrative institutions a criminal offense.¹

¹ This ban was announced in a statement by the Attorney General, published in the newspaper *Kayhan* on 29 August 1983; a translated excerpt from this statement reads as follows: “Now, if a Baha'i himself performs his religious acts in accordance with his own beliefs, such a man will not be bothered by us, provided he does not invite others to Baha'ism, does not teach, does not form assemblies, does not give news to others, and has nothing to do with the

In response to this announcement, in an open letter dated 3 September 1983 addressed to Iranian authorities, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran detailed the abuses faced by the Bahá'ís in the Islamic Republic, and appealed to the Iranian people and the Islamic government to restore their rights as Iranian citizens and as human beings. This letter was the final act of the National Spiritual Assembly before it voluntarily dissolved itself and the rest of the Bahá'í administrative structures within the country as a demonstration of goodwill towards the government.

Since then, over 200 Iranian Bahá'ís have been executed or murdered, thousands have been arrested, detained, and interrogated, and tens of thousands more have been deprived of jobs, pensions, and opportunities for higher education. The Bahá'í community's holy places, cemeteries, and properties have been confiscated, vandalized, or destroyed, and many Bahá'ís have had their homes and other property seized or damaged. In fact, the total number of incidents since 31 July 2022 is 343. These include 89 detentions and interrogations, and other incidents such as: beatings, workplace searches, home raids, confiscation/destruction, denial of education, economic pressure, summons to court, and cemetery desecrations.

The official policy of the Iranian government against their Bahá'í citizens is summarized in a government memorandum obtained in 1993 by the United Nations Special Representative on the Human Rights Situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.² Written in 1991 by Iran's Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council and approved by the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, this document, entitled "The Bahá'í Question," sets forth specific guidelines for dealing with the Bahá'ís. It states that "[t]he government's dealings with [Bahá'ís] must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked." It outlines a series of measures to systematically restrict and repress the educational, economic, and cultural life of Iranian Bahá'ís. This memorandum continues to remain in effect today.

The above endeavors to oppress the Bahá'ís are facilitated by the fact that, within Iranian society, people's religious beliefs are more socially discernable. Furthermore, in many official registration forms—such as those for enrolling in school and applying for university or business licenses—individuals are required to declare their religion. Bahá'ís answer these questions truthfully, yet this very honesty of the Bahá'ís is used as an instrument with which to oppress and punish the community. Not only this, but authorities also monitor and surveil the Bahá'ís to collect information for the systematic implementation of the state's program of persecution.

In recent years, Iran has witnessed economic and health crises afflicting the entire population, including the Bahá'ís, who experience these in addition to the gross discrimination that is targeted

administration. Not only do we not execute such people, we do not even imprison them, and they can work within society. If, however, they decide to work within their administration, this is a criminal act and is forbidden, the reason being that such administration is considered to be hostile and conspiratorial and such people are conspirators."

² The text of the 1991 government memorandum can be accessed through the following links:

Persian original:

<<https://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/ran/1991%20Bahai%20Question%20Memo%20PER.pdf>>; English

translation: <<https://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/ran/1991%20Bahai%20Question%20Memo%20ENG.pdf>>.

against them. For instance, there are presently some 90 Bahá'ís in prison, (including those under house arrest with rigorous control through monitoring via electronic ankle bands), and the number of pending court cases around the country have sharply increased, thereby subjecting hundreds of Bahá'ís and tens of thousands of their relatives to intense psychological pressure and ill-treatment as Bahá'ís have been forced to endure cycles of arrests, pay heavy bails, and spend months or even years waiting to be called to court or to be imprisoned at any time. Furthermore, hundreds of Bahá'í-owned shops remain sealed by the authorities, depriving thousands from receiving viable incomes. Bahá'ís are barred from employment in the entire public sector and numerous other professions, university studies remain inaccessible, and properties confiscated. Moreover, the authorities have leveraged the increasing presence of the Iranian population on the Internet to spread hate speech about Bahá'ís and their beliefs to various segments of society with increasing sophistication.

Ms. Mahvash Sabet and Ms. Fariba Kamalabadi, former members of the Yárán, or “the Friends,” were condemned to 10 years imprisonment on 11 December, and are presently held in the notorious Evin prison. In 2008, all seven members of the Yárán—an ad hoc group consisting of law-abiding, morally upright, and well-respected individuals tending to the social and spiritual needs of the Bahá'í community in Iran, created out of necessity due to the ban on Bahá'í administration and with the knowledge and approval of the government—had been arrested, declared illegal, and disbanded, with each individual sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, of which they served 10 years and were finally released in 2018. Now, the only two female members of this former group, Ms. Sabet and Ms. Kamalabadi, are being forced to unjustly serve a further 10 years, solely because of their religious beliefs.

It is safe to say that no Bahá'í in Iran remains untouched by this persecution, as the authorities strive to heighten a state of constant insecurity and uncertainty amongst the Bahá'ís across every aspect of life. This represents the latest phase in a calculated plan by the authorities to eliminate the entire Bahá'í community of Iran through its gradual strangulation.

To date, Iran has been reviewed three times under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR); in February 2010, in October 2014, and more recently in November 2019. In 2010, Iran accepted a number of recommendations that resulted through this process, while also claiming that some others had either already been implemented, or were in the process of implementation. In 2014, of the 10 recommendations that dealt specifically with the situation of the Bahá'ís, only two of them were partially accepted by the Iranian government. However, the Bahá'í International Community, in a recent analysis of the implementation of these recommendations accepted by Iran in 2010 and 2014, confirmed that, in fact, not a single one has yet been implemented.³ In effect, by failing to abide by the commitments and assurances it made to the international community, Iran has gravely undermined the entire UPR process. In the most recent third cycle of UPR, Iran also supported, or partially supported, a number of recommendations, which it has again failed to adhere to. The

³ See Islamic Republic of Iran: Non-implementation of accepted and partially-accepted UPR recommendations - Concerning human rights violations against Iranian Bahá'ís (January 2018), <https://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/iran/iran_upr_mid-term_report_january_2018.pdf>. See also Bahá'í International Community's publication *Unfulfilled Promises: Iran's failure to act after its 2010 Universal Periodic Review*, <<https://www.bic.org/publications/unfulfilled-promises#vv1u85hT00ISXzhR.99>>.

sections that follow provide an overview of the current situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran in relation to the third cycle UPR and contain a sample of the latest reported and confirmed cases of persecution.

I. Home Raids, Unlawful Arrests, Arbitrary Detentions, and Violations of Due Process

In violation of third cycle UPR recommendations #26.1, 26.46, 26.145, 26.170, 26.172, 26.176, 26.178, and 26.180.

Bahá'ís are not free to practice their religion without harassment. Arbitrary detentions and interrogations are continually carried out against adherents of the Bahá'í Faith throughout the country, and the charges they are accused of reflect the absence of freedom of religion or belief for Bahá'ís in Iran. Currently, more than a thousand Bahá'ís are awaiting their legal hearings on spurious charges or waiting to be summoned and placed into overcrowded prisons; their state of limbo presenting another form of psychological torture.

Those who are arrested suffer ill-treatment at the hands of governmental officials. As the number of arrests and imprisonments continue, there are still grave concerns owing to the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) through the prison system and in the country. For those who are arrested, they are kept in solitary confinement for long periods and are often detained for weeks or months before being released on bail. The bail demands are exorbitantly high, requiring families to hand over deeds to their properties or business licenses. Others are serving their unjust sentences under conditions that are now further compounded by the risk of being unnecessarily exposed to the virus in Iran's overcrowded prison system.

In nearly all cases of those detained, their homes and/or workplaces are searched, and items confiscated, such as personal belongings, particularly books, photographs, computers, copying machines, and other supplies, as well as items related to the Bahá'í Faith.

The situation has not changed since Ebrahim Raisi became president, nor has the government's adherence to due process and equal citizens' rights as detailed in Iran's own Constitution and its obligations under its international commitments.

In fact, in late July and early August, there was a significant surge of persecution with the mass raids and arrests of Bahá'ís across Iran.

On 31 July 2022, intelligence agents raided a number of homes in the cities of Tehran, Karaj, Mashhad, Shiraz, Sari, Gorgan, Gonbad, and Qazvin and after searching the homes and confiscating the usual items (phones, laptops, Bahá'í books and works, etc.), some Bahá'ís were arrested, and some others were summoned to the Information Office.

Below are some of the details of those individuals who were targeted. Most occurred on 31 July 2022 unless otherwise indicated.

- The security forces searched the homes of two Bahá'ís in Tehran, Ms. Shaghayegh Keshavarz

Rahbar and Mr. Esmail Jamali and confiscated some of their personal belongings. The workplace of Mr. Esmail Jamali was also searched by the security forces.

- The homes and workplaces of two other Bahá'ís in Tehran, Mr. Nima Hagher and Ms. Nazila Karambakhshian (Hagher) were searched by the security forces. The home of Ms. Soheila Ajir was also searched, and some of her personal belongings were confiscated.
- Security forces of the Ministry of Intelligence searched the home of Ms. Mahsa Mahdavi, a Bahá'í living in Tehran, and confiscated some of her personal belongings, including her mobile phone.
- It was learned on 1 August 2022 that three members of a Bahá'í family in Tehran, Ms. Afsaneh Imami, Mr. Hamid Naseri, and Mr. Saied Naseri, were arrested at their home and taken to Evin prison to serve their sentences. The arrest of these Bahá'ís took place without any prior summons for the execution of their sentences.
- Security forces searched the homes of two Bahá'ís in Karaj, Ms. Sara Shabanpour (Heravi) and Ms. Nakisa Sadeghi and confiscated some of their personal belongings.
- The homes and workplaces of Mr. Afif Naimi, Mr. Kamyar Habibi, Mr. Saman Ostovar, Mr. Mozaffar Nabilin, and Mr. Nasir Heravi, Bahá'ís living in Karaj, were also searched separately by the security forces. The agents confiscated some of their personal belongings, including mobile phones, electronic devices, and documents related to the Bahá'í Faith. After the search, the workplace of Mr. Kamyar Habibi was sealed. Among these Bahá'ís, Mr. Afif Naimi and Mr. Saman Ostovar were arrested by security agents and detained. Mr. Naimi was transferred to the Rajaei-Shahr Prison and his case is being processed by Branch 7 of the Magistrate Office in Karaj. Mr. Naimi suffers from heart disease and this has increased the level of concern among his family.
- Security agents searched the homes of two other Bahá'ís, Ms. Bita Momtazi (Sarraf) and Ms. Pouya Momtazi (Sarraf), in Karaj.
- In addition, the home and workplace of Mr. Sabin Yazdani, a Bahá'í in Karaj, were searched by the security forces. During the search of Mr. Yazdani's home, the agents confiscated all of his digital devices and those of his family members.
- It was learned on 9 August 2022 that in a telephone call, Mr. Hamed Forghani Nameghi, a Bahá'í living in Karaj, was summoned to report himself to the Bureau of Investigation of Intelligence Office on the morning of 10 August 2022.
- It was learned on 2 August 2022 that Mr. Houman Khoshnam, Ms. Elham Salmanzadeh, Mr. Payam Shabani, Mr. Kianoush Salmanzadeh, Mr. Soroush Agahi, Mr. Parvan Manavi, Ms. Jamileh Pakrou, Mr. Payman Manavi, and Ms. Neda Shaban, appeared in the Public Court in Shahryar city to serve their sentences. The conviction of these Bahá'ís was executed by installing electronic ankle bands on each of them after appearing in court. These Bahá'ís are

only allowed to travel within a radius of 500 meters from their residences for 304 days. From each of these individuals an amount of 2.5 million tomans was levied as a bond deposit and they were obliged to pay 150,000 tomans per month as rental for the ankle of bands.

- The security agents searched the homes of a Bahá'í, Ms. Farideh Hedayati, in Mashhad.
- Agents from the Ministry of Information, with a search warrant, searched the homes of Ms. Shadi Kasezad (Tabrizi) and Ms. Hadieh Ghiabi, Bahá'ís in Mashhad and confiscated their personal and electronic equipment belonging to their family members. At the time of the home search, Ms. Kasezad (Tabrizi) was on a trip, and her husband was told that she should report to the Ministry of Intelligence after returning from her trip.
- Security agents searched the homes of two Bahá'ís in Shiraz, Mr. Ehsan Jaberri and Ms. Bahar Bangaleh.
- Security agents searched the home of Ms. Raheleh Keshani, another Bahá'í in Shiraz, and confiscated some of her personal items and religious books. Ms. Keshani had recently had surgery and was not arrested because of her poor physical condition.
- Mr. Siamak Honarvar and Mr. Saeid Etehad were summoned to Adelabad Prison in Shiraz to serve their sentences. According to the sentence, which was issued by the Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court of Shiraz on 1 November 2021, these Bahá'ís were each sentenced to 7 months and 16 days in prison under *tazir* law on charges of “propaganda activity against the regime” and 31 months and 16 days in prison under *tazir* law on charges of “membership in hostile groups.”⁴
- Security agents searched the home of Mr. Navid Misaghi in Sari.
- The homes of other Bahá'ís, including Ms. Sanaz Alizadeh and Ms. Soraya Manouchehrzadeh (Misaghi) in Sari, were searched by the security forces.
- Security agents searched the home of Ms. Soha Sabeti (Rahmani), a Bahá'í in Sari, and confiscated some of her personal belongings, including her mobile phone. She was arrested and taken to an unknown location. On 14 August, she was released on bail pending the conclusion of her trial.
- Security agents searched the homes of Bahá'ís, Ms. Shafagh Fahandezh, Mr. Shakib Movadi Masoumi, Ms. Afsoon Movadi (Masoumi), Ms. Shaghayegh Poureayati, and Ms. Neda Taefi in Gorgan.
- The homes of other Bahá'ís in Gonbad-e Kavus, Ms. Azadeh Yaghini (Hedayati) and Ms. Afsaneh Tashakkor were also searched by security forces.

⁴ *Tazir law* (discretionary punishment): Punishment with maximum and minimum limits determined by law and judge, respectively.

- The homes of two Bahá'ís, Mr. Omid Keshavarz and Ms. Pariya Aghdasi, in Qazvin were searched by the security forces. The security forces confiscated some of their personal belongings, including mobile phones, laptops, and hard drives.
- Security forces searched the homes of four Bahá'ís, Mr. Navid Moulai, Ms. Sowgand Rangraz, Mr. Masoud Bahrami, and Mr. Rozhin Bayk Aghaie, in Qazvin and confiscated some of their personal belongings.
- Security forces searched the home of Mr. Behnam Momtazi, a Bahá'í in Qazvin, and arrested him. There is no information available about his whereabouts.
- The home of Ms. Afnaneh Ansari, in Mahshahr, was searched by the security forces. Ms. Ansari was arrested and released after a few hours.
- It was learned on 5 August 2022 that on 2 August 2022, Ms. Mahboubeh Misaghian, a Bahá'í living in Yazd, went to the prison of this city to serve her sentence. At the same time, Mr. Aminollah Zolfaghari's request for his release with an electronic ankle ban was rejected by the Revolutionary Court of Yazd.

Below are some other examples of recent home raids, arrests and detentions, and sentencing of Bahá'ís in Iran merely because of their religious beliefs.

- As mentioned above, on 11 December 2022, Ms. Mahvash Sabet (Shahriari) and Ms. Fariba Kamalabadi, former members of the Yárán (Friends) were each sentenced to 10 years in prison by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran, presided over by the Judge Iman Afshari. Their court hearing took place on 21 November 2022. The verdict cited Article 498 of the Islamic Penal Code, which carries a prison term of two to ten years. They were accused of meeting with Bahá'ís in different cities of Iran, participating in Bahá'í religious ceremonies, and communicating with Bahá'ís abroad via WhatsApp. Both Ms. Kamalabadi and Ms. Sabet were previously imprisoned for 10 years, from 2008 to 2018, along with other former members of the Yárán on similar charges. Both Ms. Sabet and Ms. Kamalabadi were arrested on 31 July 2022 by security forces at their homes in Tehran and were transferred to the detention center of the Ministry of Intelligence known as Ward 209 of Evin Prison.
- On 10 December 2022, the home and workplace of Mr. Pouya Nowrouzi was searched and he was arrested by security agents. During the search of his home and workplace, the agents confiscated a number of personal belongings, including laptops and mobile phones. It was also noticed that one of those present during the searches was the examining magistrate of Branch 14 Court, Mr. Seyyed Mohammad Khosravani. At the time of writing, there was no information available as to Mr. Nowrouzi's whereabouts or the reason for his detention.
- On 10 December 2022, the home of Mr. Faraz Haghghatjou was also searched, and he was arrested by security agents and taken to Adelabad prison. During the search of his home, the agents confiscated a number of personal belongings, including laptops and mobile phones. The examining magistrate of Branch 14 Court, Mr. Seyyed Mohammad Khosravani was also

present at this search. At the time of writing, there was no information available as to Mr. Haghghatjou's whereabouts or the reason for his detention.

- On 6 December 2022, Mr. Vesal Momtazi was arrested by security agents and taken to Lakan Prison in Rasht. He was arrested following a search of his and his wife's home which had taken place some time before. It was further reported that he had been summoned and interrogated several times in recent weeks. At the time of writing, there was no information available about the reason for his arrest.
- On 4 December 2022, at 7:30 a.m., security agents traveling in four cars went to Mr. Farbod Alavi's home in Sari and arrested him. After about three hours at his residence, the agents went to Mr. Alavi's workplace and also searched it. During the search of his home and workplace, the agents confiscated some of his personal belongings, including his mobile phone, laptop, and books. Three days after his arrest, in a short phone call with his family, Mr. Alavi was able to inform them of his transfer to Evin Prison. He remains under arrest without due process in that prison. In recent days, his family went to Evin Prison to follow up on their son's condition and get information. The officers at the prison informed them that Mr. Alavi's name was not in the registration system. They went to the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary and were also told that Mr. Alavi was not there. Despite their repeated appeals to the prosecutor's office, the authorities refused to provide any clear answers to his family as to his whereabouts. The non-responsiveness of the security institutions has increased their concern. Security agents again visited and searched Mr. Alavi's workplace, where they arrested another individual who was on the premises. Mr. Alavi's case has been referred to Branch 2 of the Evin Prosecutor's Office headed by Mahmoud Haj Moradi. At the time of writing, there was no information about his whereabouts or the charges against him.
- On 4 December 2022 at 8:40 a.m., 11 intelligence agents from Kerman raided the home of Ms. Rouha Imani in Kerman. The agents entered her home under the pretext of being health officials, then presented an arrest warrant and arrested Ms. Imani and Ms. Firouzeh Soltan Mohammadi Tajerzadeh. They were taken to a detention center. The security agents searched the home of Ms. Imani and confiscated some of her personal belongings and those of her family members, including mobile phones, laptops, and religious books. After searching Ms. Imani's home, the agents then went to Ms. Soltan Mohammadi's home and confiscated some of her personal belongings as well. At the time of writing, no information has been provided about the reasons for their arrest, and both of these women have been deprived of making phone calls to their families.
- On Tuesday, 29 November 2022, Mr. Homayoun Khanlari, a Bahá'í in Rasht, was arrested by security agents and taken to an unknown location. The agents searched Mr. Khanlari's workplace, then went to his home, searched it, and confiscated some of his personal belongings, including all books, albums, mobile phones, laptops, and bank cards.
- On 24 November 2022, Mr. Bashir Allahverdi, a Bahá'í from Tehran, was arrested by security agents. During his arrest, the security agents searched his home and confiscated some of his personal belongings. At the time of writing, there was no information about the

reasons for his arrest or his whereabouts.

- On 22 November 2022, the agents of the Intelligence Department arrested Ms. Sanaz Tafadduli, a Bahá'í in Mashhad, while she was driving in her car in the city and taken to an unknown location. After her arrest, her home was searched, and the agents confiscated a number of her and her son's personal belongings and digital devices. At the time of writing, there was no information about her whereabouts.
- On Monday, 21 November 2022, at 12:00 p.m., Mr. Nima Mahin-Bakht, a Bahá'í living in Sari, was arrested by plainclothes security agents in the street. He was taken to his home where the agents conducted a search and confiscated some of his personal belongings. He was then taken to an unknown location. At the time of writing, there was information available about the charges against him.
- On 2 November 2022, Mr. Pouya Momtazi Sarraf, a Bahá'í in Karaj, was arrested by the security forces. While searching Mr. Sarraf's workplace and home, the agents confiscated some of his and his family's personal belongings, including computers. He currently remains in detention without due process. After his arrest in Karaj, Mr. Saraf was transferred to Shiraz for interrogation. He has not had any contact with his family in the last two weeks. At the time of writing, his family has not been provided with any further information and has been unsuccessful in attempts to follow up on this matter.
- On Saturday, 22 October 2022, Mr. Hami Bahadori, a Bahá'í living in Tehran, was arrested by security agents. At 9:00 p.m., security agents came to his house, confiscated his personal items and those of his family members, including mobile phones, laptops, computers, books, cameras, gold, and jewelry and then arrested him. After a few hours, during a short phone call with his family, he told them of his transfer to Evin Prison. Later, when family members tried to follow up with the prison authorities concerning his condition, they were unsuccessful, and similar to Mr. Farbod Alavi's situation mentioned above, Evin Prison officials denied that anyone with that name or profile was registered there. However, it is clear that he remains in the detention center of the Ministry of Intelligence known as Ward 209 of Evin Prison without due process. His family has sent numerous letters (17 letters) to the security and judicial institutions, and no response has been received from the authorities. Despite the cold weather and Mr. Bahadori's severe cold, Evin Prison authorities refuse to accept warm clothing and basic necessities. At the time of writing, there was no information about the charges against him. His case is under investigation in Branch 2 of the Evin Prosecutor's Office, headed by Mahmoud Haj Moradi.
- On the morning of Thursday, 13 October 2022, a number of armed security agents raided the house of Mr. Saman Khadem, a Bahá'í living in Shiraz. Security forces searched his home and confiscated some of his personal belongings, including a laptop and a mobile phone. Then the agents arrested Mr. Khadem and transferred him to Adelabad Prison. Mr. Khadem has been active in the field of photography and the environment. He remains in detention without due process. Mr. Khadem's family have repeatedly been pursuing his situation through the security institutions. It has been reported by his family that due to the obstruction

of the special investigating officer for security crimes in Shiraz, Mr. Seyyed Mohammad Khosravani, Mr. Khadem has not been able to access a lawyer. Mr. Khosravani has said that only lawyers mentioned in Article 48 (appointed by the State) can be involved in this case, and he does not accept private lawyers. At the time of writing, there is no information about the charges against Mr. Khadem.

- On 12 October 2022, two 16-year-old Bahá'í youths, Mr. Barbod Shojaei, and Mr. Araj Sadeghi, were detained by security forces in Shahin Shahr, Isfahan. After their families had searched for them for many hours, including going to the police stations and hospitals, security agents brought the boys back to their homes. After searching their homes and confiscating the usual items, including personal belongings, the boys were handed over to their families. These two youths had been beaten and interrogated.
- On 8 October 2022, Mr. Badi Khazeie, a Bahá'í living in Bandar Abbas, was arrested in Tehran and transferred to Evin Prison. Mr. Khazeie had gone to Tehran for work, and on 7 or 8 October 2022, he, along with his friends, were arrested on the street by a number of uniformed security forces and taken to the Tehran Central Prison. After the security forces found out that Mr. Khazeie was a Bahá'í, they transferred him to Evin Prison. Before the fire at Evin Prison, Mr. Khazeie told his family of his transfer to Evin Prison in a phone call, but since the recent fire in the prison, he has not had any contact with his family. His family traveled from Bandar Abbas to Tehran to get news of him, but the authorities of Evin Prison claimed that Mr. Khazeie was not there, which caused his family extreme concern.
- On 27 September 2022, Ms. Ayda Rasti, from Tehran, was arrested. She was transferred from Evin Prison to Qarchak Varamin Prison on Tuesday, 6 December 2022, where she remains in detention without trial. Ms. Rasti has experienced nervous problems during her detention and as a result, has experienced sudden weight loss, having lost 14 kilos due to anxiety during detention. She has also suffered from numbness in her legs. According to the orthopedic doctor, this type of numbness is caused by temporary nerve paralysis, and if it is not treated quickly, it may spread to other parts of the body. This issue has made it more difficult for her to endure the period of detention. A month has passed since the interrogation of Ms. Rasti was completed and her case was declared closed by the investigator. The date of the trial is still unknown and her situation remains uncertain. In prison, they told her that a bail of 1 billion tomans was set for her, but the authorities have so far refused to announce and accept the bail. So far, there is no information available about the charges against her.
- On 24 September at 2:30 a.m., security agents raided the home of a Bahá'í couple, Mr. Arash Zamani and Ms. Armaghan Zabihi and after searching their home, arrested them. They are still in the detention center of the Ministry of Intelligence known as Ward 209 of Evin Prison, without due process. To date, there is no information available about the reasons for their arrest or the charges against them.
- On 24 September 2022, Mr. Payam Vali, a Bahá'í in Karaj and Mr. Sepehr Ziaie, a Bahá'í in Tehran, were separately arrested and taken to Ghezel Hesar Prison in Karaj. On 24 September 2022, eight agents of the Ministry of Intelligence went to Mr. Vali's workplace in Karaj

where he was beaten and arrested. Security agents then searched his home, during which Mr. Vali's son, Adib was also beaten. The agents confiscated a number of personal belongings, including Adib's mobile phone and laptop. Simultaneously, 15 security agents went to Mr. Ziaei's home and arrested him. While searching his home, the agents confiscated some of the personal belongings of family members, including mobile devices, laptops and computers, bank and personal documents, and some cash. Mr. Vali remains in detention in Ghezel Hesar Prison in Karaj without due process. He wrote another letter addressed to the head of the Karaj Revolutionary Court protesting against his arrest and accusations made against him. Following the release of Mr. Vali's audio files, he has been denied the right to make phone calls to his family. He has been denied the right to access a lawyer, and the security agents are trying to obtain a forced confession from him. He has not been provided with the option of bail for release pending trial. As for Mr. Ziaie, he remains detained in Evin Prison without due process. Despite the completion of an interrogation process, the court branch to handle his case has not been determined, and his relatives have been told that until the court branch is determined, a lawyer cannot access the case. The family has only been able to meet him once so far. Mr. Ziaie has so far been denied access to a lawyer. Last year, Mr. Ziaie had an ear infection and got much better after undergoing treatment and was practically without any problem. But during the detention period, due to the suspension of his treatment, he has lost a major part of his hearing. The poor quality of the food has caused Mr. Ziaie to lose weight and in the last month he has suffered severe digestive problems. Mr. Ziaie's physical problems have increased the concern of his family.

- On 31 August 2022, at approximately 4:00 p.m., Ministry of Intelligence Office agents in the cities of Sari and Qaemshahr raided a study group in which a number of youths were present, and arrested them. The agents climbed the walls and entered the house. They had with them a list of the participants in the gathering, and a general order by the magistrate for the search and arrest of all the individuals on the list. The names of those arrested are eight from Qaemshahr: Mr. Mojir Samimi, Ms. Afnaneh Nematian, Ms. Bita Haghighi, Ms. Sanaz Hekmat-Shoar, Ms. Nazanin Goli, Mr. Mani Gholinejad, Mr. Sami Samimi, and five people from Sari: Ms. Negar Darabi, Ms. Samiyeh Gholinejad, Ms. Hengameh Alipour, Ms. Mahsa Fathi, Mr. Basir Samimi, and one from Babolsar: Mr. Anis Sanaie. Ms. Sanaz Hekmat-Shoar was not present in the gathering and was arrested at her home. They then went to the home of Ms. Golbon Fallah, who was absent from the gathering due to illness and arrested her too. The agents searched their homes and confiscated some of their personal belongings. Female detainees were taken to Qaemshahr Prison, and males to the Ministry of Intelligence detention center in Sari. By the end of the night, two of the youths, Mr. Sami Samimi and Ms. Nazanin Goli were released.

Subsequently, on 4 September 2022, Ms. Mahsa Fathi's father, who suffers from epilepsy, passed out in front of the court due to emotional stress and was taken to the hospital by ambulance.

Also, Ms. Golban Fallah was suffering from COVID-19 during her arrest. She passed out a few hours after her arrest. Due to her deteriorating condition, her family were told to come and take her home with them. After her family arrived, despite the deterioration of her

condition, they were told that because she did not cooperate with the security agents (i.e., would not sign an undertaking to cease participation in the study group), the agents will not release her.

The following youths were eventually released on bail pending their trial: Ms. Sanaz Hekmat-Shoar, Mr. Mani Gholinejad, Mr. Mojir Samimi, Ms. Afnaneh Nematian, Mr. Anis Sanaie, Ms. Mahsa Fathi, Ms. Golbon Fallah, Ms. Hengameh Alipour and Mr. Basir Samimi.

On 13 September 2022, Branch 104 of the Qaemshahr Prosecutor's Office rejected the request to change the arrest order to bail for Ms. Negar Darabi, Ms. Samiyeh Gholinejad, Ms. Bita Haghighi and Mr. Basir Samimi and as a result, they remain in detention. On 19 September 2022, the investigator of Branch 4 of the Qaemshahr Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office opposed the release of Ms. Negar Darabi, Ms. Samiyeh Gholinejad, and Ms. Bita Haghighi, due to the publication of news about the investigator's trip to Karbala. The investigator of the case threatened that these three Bahá'í women, who were all infected with COVID-19, will, in addition to their ongoing detention, be banned from meeting and making phone calls. These cases have some unusual characteristics. In the past, when a person was taken for further interrogation, their bail would usually be set the next day. Also unusual have been the beatings and verbal abuse, the manner of the raid on the house where the gathering was, and the fact that once the bail was received, the individuals were not released, and were reinterrogated still further.

- On 24 August 2022, the home of Mr. Shahin Samimi and Ms. Hoda Kanan, a Bahá'í couple in Gorgan, was searched by the agents of the Intelligence Department. The couple are music teachers for children. The search warrant was for Ms. Kanan. The officers confiscated some of their personal belongings, including mobile phones, tablets, religious books, and notebooks, musical instruments, and tables and chairs that were used for children's music education classes. They were told that the agents will call them again at a later date.
- On 12 August 2022 at 4:15 p.m., after Mr. Mehrzad Zahraie had left his home, security agents searched the home of Mr. Zahraie and Ms. Golriz Nourani, a Bahá'í couple living in Qazvin, and confiscated a number of their personal belongings, including digital devices, Bahá'í books, a gold ring with religious motifs, and some of their personal pictures. The inspection of Ms. Nourani's personal belongings and clothes was carried out by male agents in the absence of a female officer.
- On 31 July 2022, it was learned that the agents of the Ministry of Intelligence Office raided the home of Mr. Behrouz Rahmani and, after searching his home, confiscated his mobile phone, laptop, and Bahá'í books and materials.
- On 19 July 2022, Ms. Niloufar Hoseini, Ms. Bahiyyeh Manavipour (Moeinipour), Mr. Misagh Manavipour, Ms. Alhan Hashemi, and Ms. Hanan Hashemi, all Bahá'ís living in Shiraz, were arrested by security forces and taken to an unknown location. During the arrests, the officers searched their homes. At the time of their arrest, the sister of Mr. Manavipour was also summoned to the judicial authorities.

- On 16 July 2022, Ms. Haleh Gholami, a Bahá'í living in Tehran, was sent to Evin Prison to serve her two-year prison term after appearing at the Judgment Enforcement Unit of the Evin Prosecutor's Office. Ms. Gholami was previously sentenced to two years in prison under *tazir* law by Branch 28 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court on charges of "Activity against national security of the country."⁵ This sentence was finally upheld by Branch 26 of the Court of Appeal of Tehran Province.
- On 13 July 2022, three Bahá'ís, Ms. Sholeh Shahidi and her two sons, Mr. Faran Sanaie and Mr. Shayan Sanaie, were arrested in Bojnourd, North Khorasan Province on 13 July 2022. The agents searched their house and confiscated some of their personal belongings, including religious books, laptops, and mobile phones. At the time of their arrest, these individuals did not have any contact with their families and there was no detailed information about the reasons for the arrests, the charges against them, and their whereabouts. They were subsequently released on bail on 4 August 2022, pending the conclusion of their trial. Since their release, these individuals have received an outpouring of solidarity from their neighbors and those in their wider community, with many expressing embarrassment and sympathy for the way these individuals have been treated.
- Ms. Shaghayegh Khanehzarrin, 20, and Ms. Negar Ighani, 22, both living in Shiraz, were arrested by security forces on 26 June 2022. At the time of their arrest, their charges and location were unknown, causing distress to their families. Sources informed us that Ms. Khanehzarrin's father suffered a stroke due to a lack of information about his daughter's condition and the stress caused by her arrest and received medical treatment in a hospital in Shiraz. On 26 July 2022, the pair, along with Ms. Jila Sharafi-Nasrabadi who had also been arrested, were released from prison on bail pending the outcome of their trial. All three of these individuals contracted COVID-19 while in detention. Ms. Negar Ighani, one of a number of Bahá'ís participating in the 2019 National University Entrance Examinations, had previously faced problems with her test results, including receiving a response of "Incomplete file" (a response typically provided by the Authorities to Bahá'ís to exclude them from acceptance to enter University), and as a result, she was deprived of further education because she was a Bahá'í. In September of that year, at least 23 Bahá'ís were similarly deprived of education in the National University Entrance Examination.
- On 15 June 2022, Ms. Samin Ehsani, a specialist in child education, was arrested and transferred to Evin Prison to serve her sentence. Ms. Ehsani's case dates back to 2011 when on 1 July 2011, she was sentenced by Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran to five years in prison under *tazir* law on charges of "propaganda against the regime," "activities against the national security," and "membership in the perverse Bahá'í sect." This sentence was later upheld by the Tehran Court of Appeals. Her case was finally referred to the Judgment Enforcement Unit of the Evin Court, and notice was sent to Ms. Ehsani's bailer in the middle of last year. It was learned on 17 August 2022 that while in Evin Prison, Ms. Ehsani was infected with COVID-19. Since being transferred to the quarantine ward of this

⁵ *Tazir law* (discretionary punishment): Punishment with maximum and minimum limits determined by law and judge, respectively.

prison, she has been deprived of medical treatment. Background to her arrest: On 2 July 2011, Ms. Samin Ehsani went to the Evin Courthouse to resolve some issues regarding her passport and was arrested there. Following the arrest, security forces raided her home and confiscated all of her personal belongings, including computers and Bahá'í-related items. Ms. Ehsani spent the first 11 days of her detention in 2011 in solitary confinement in Ward 2A of Evin Prison and then confined in a multi-occupancy cell in the same ward. After a month of detention, she was temporarily released from prison on bail of 185 million tomans pending the conclusion of her trial. Ms. Ehsani had previously provided educational assistance to Afghan children deprived of the right to study in Iran by holding educational classes. The teaching of children was one of the examples of the charges made against her in court and formed the basis for the court verdict.

II. Economic Persecution and Confiscation of Property

In violation of third cycle UPR recommendation #26.318.

Following the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the government commenced a systematic campaign to deny Bahá'ís the right to work and employment in violation of Article 23.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Part III and Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. In hundreds of cases, the authorities have taken measures to make it nearly impossible for Bahá'ís to earn a living. Incidents include arbitrary shop closures, unjust dismissals, the actual or threatened revocation of business licenses, and other actions to suppress the economic activity of Bahá'ís.

More recently, the authorities have found a new way to limit the livelihoods of Bahá'ís by confiscating their properties, farmlands, and personal homes. A recent ruling by the Constitutional Court has now formalized these confiscations and “legitimized” the actions of the authorities.

On 4 November 2019, the Special Court for Article 49 of the Constitution decided to confiscate all properties belonging to Bahá'ís in the Village of Ivel. In its ruling, the court referred to age-old and discredited conspiracy theories regarding the Bahá'ís and their supposed collusion with the Shah (the previous regime) and other international actors and “enemies” of the Islamic Republic. It is worth noting that these properties were in the possession of the Bahá'ís since the mid-1800s.

On 1 August 2020, Branch 54 of the Special Court for Article 49 of the Constitution in Tehran rejected the appeal, and issued a final and binding order upholding the previous decision of the Special Court for Article 49 of the Constitution, Mazandaran Branch handed down on 4 November 2019, which determined that the ownership of the lands belonging to the Bahá'ís of Ivel to be illegal.

In a final decision on 13 October 2020, Branch 8 of the Court of Appeals of Mazandaran, citing the 1 August 2020 decision, also ruled that the ownership of lands of the 27 Bahá'ís of Ivel was illegal and there was no error made in law, and as such, endorsed the decision in favor of the *Sitád-i-Ijrá'iy-i-Farmán-i-Imám* (the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order, known as EIKO), to

forcibly confiscate and sell the lands owned by the Bahá'ís.⁶ Following this order, the case was then closed.

These unjust rulings set a precedent with wide-ranging effects throughout the country with the potential to cause mass displacement of the Bahá'í community through a systematic confiscation of their properties.

The mass confiscation of Bahá'í-owned property in Ivel, Mazandaran Province, follows an official Iranian directive that instructs local authorities in another city in the same province to “conduct strict controls” on the Bahá'ís in the city by “monitoring their operations.” The directive, dated 21 September 2020, adopted a “detailed plan” to ensure that the Bahá'í community is “rigorously controlled,” including their “public and private meetings” as well as “their other activities.” The document was issued by the Commission on Ethnicities, Sects, and Religions in Sari, which operates under the aegis of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, a body chaired by Iran’s president and responsible for security matters.⁷

In addition, the authorities systematically seal Bahá'í-owned shops, giving spurious reasons for doing so, many of which have yet not been allowed to reopen and have been closed now for years. Official documents prove that these abuses are not isolated cases but are, in fact, a matter of established government policy. In particular, a letter from Tehran’s *Amaken* (Public Places Supervision Office)⁸ dated 9 April 2007 confirms orders to the commanders of police and heads of intelligence and security throughout its province that members of the “perverse Bahaist sect” must be prevented from engaging in certain occupations.⁹ The letter stipulates that Bahá'ís must be denied work permits and licenses for over 25 kinds of specifically-listed businesses and are barred from any other “high-earning businesses.”

Furthermore, with the adoption of this governmental policy, applicants applying for business licenses are required to fill out and sign a form asking them to declare their religion. The authorities attempt to actively and pre-emptively deny legal recourse to those already subject to mistreatment under discriminatory regulations. Moreover, since 2006, various trade associations, unions, and business organizations have been instructed to compile lists of Bahá'ís in every type of employment under their purview.¹⁰

⁶ The Execution of Imam Khomeini’s Order (EIKO) is a parastatal agency controlled by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

⁷ The leaked document was first revealed by the League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran: <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/iran/iran-leaked-document-reveals-plans-to-intensify-suppression-of-baha>

⁸ *Amaken* (Public Places Supervision Office): Is reportedly responsible for the enforcement of accepted moral codes in places of work and other offices.

⁹ Letter dated 9 April 2007 from the Public Intelligence and Security Force F.A.A. [F.A.A., Headquarters of Intelligence and Security] in the province of Tehran—Public Places Supervision Office, to the Commanders of Police Forces of the Provincial Regional Municipalities—Heads of the Public Intelligence and Security Force; <<https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/archive/measures-restrict-involvement-bahais-many-business-categories>>.

¹⁰ For example, in May 2006, the Trade Affairs Association Manufacturing & Technical Services of Kermanshah sent a letter to the Battery Resellers Trade Union, directing it “to provide this Association with the list of the names of the members of the Baha’i sect who are members of your Union.” <<https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/archive/requesting-names-bahais-battery-trade-kermanshah>>.

Below is a more recent example of a worrying pattern that is emerging regarding mass confiscation of Bahá'í-owned properties. A pattern, which if continued, can potentially displace a large number of Bahá'í families in Iran.

- At 6:00 a.m. on 2 August 2022, up to 200 Iranian government and local agents sealed off the village of Roshankouh, in Mazandaran Province, where a large number of Bahá'ís live, and used heavy earthmoving equipment to demolish homes. Six homes were destroyed, and over 20 hectares of land were confiscated. The homes of Mr. Keyhan Ghanbari, Mr. Sasan Alavi, Mr. Omid Ghanbari, Mr. Ghavamoddin Sabetian, Mr. Hadi Chalangari, and Mr. Arman Gholinejad were destroyed. The home of Mr. Gholinejad was fully demolished. These agents did not succeed in destroying Mr. Behzad Zabihi's house due to the inability of heavy vehicles to enter that section.

From the moment the security forces arrived, they blocked the entry and exit roads of this village and prevented the residents from entering and exiting. Pepper spray was used to disperse people, and gunshots were heard during the operation. Anyone who tried to challenge the agents was arrested and handcuffed. Agents confiscated the mobile devices of those present and prohibited filming, and neighbors were warned to stay in their homes and barred from filming or photographing the events taking place. In addition to destroying the homes of the Bahá'ís of Roshankouh Village, the authorities installed robust metal fences to restrict access of the Bahá'ís to their own homes and properties. This action has been taken without a court ruling or prior warning.

Mr. Farid Alavi, a Bahá'í, was arrested by the security forces during this operation in Roshankouh Village. Mr. Hoseini, an elderly Bahá'í, was also beaten by the security forces during the demolition of his home. One of the elderly women of the village fainted due to the sudden arrival and harsh treatment by the government agents, and after several hours, she was taken to the hospital.

General information on Roshankouh, including maps and air photographs, is available at this link <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/term/roshan-kouh> showing incontrovertibly their proof of rightful possession for decades.

Their Muslim neighbors have prepared and signed an affidavit stating that the properties of these Bahá'ís have been in their families for generations, disputing claims by Government agents that the Bahá'ís have illegally built their homes on State land.

- On 29 August 2022, several police officers from the commercial and economic security division of the Ministry of Industries, Mines, and Trade, and *Tazirat*,¹¹ along with two agents of the Ministry of Intelligence, went to the residence of Mr. Shahram Fallah with a warrant to search his auto parts warehouse in Kerman and his personal vehicle. Although he had all the proper legal documentation for his business, both his van and stock were confiscated and he

¹¹ *Tazirat*: Government department of discretionary punishments.

has been called to appear before the commercial and economic security police and *Tazirat*.

- On 28 July 2022, it was learned that since the passing of legislation for granting loans to young couples, the Bahá'ís have often had difficulties in benefitting from this legislation. The Central Bank has subsequently announced that Bahá'í couples do not qualify to receive this loan.
- On Saturday, 14 May 2022, a person in charge of the marriage loan department in the Central Bank located in the security and information department, stated through the internal bank telephones that based on a new government regulation promulgated in the past couple of months, marriage loans are not granted to Bahá'ís. Accordingly, after making inquiries with the Personal Status Registration Office and after verifying the Bahá'í identity of the individuals, their names were removed from the loan list.

III. Denial of the Right to Education

A. Access to higher education

In violation of third cycle UPR recommendations #26.229 and 26.302.

Iranian Bahá'ís have long been denied access to higher education. It is an official policy of the government to expel individuals from universities and vocational training institutions as soon as they are identified as members of the Bahá'í community. The 1991 government memorandum concerning “The Bahá'í Question,” produced by Iran’s Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, specifically called for Iran’s Bahá'ís to be treated such “that their progress and development shall be blocked.” The document indicated, for example, that the government aims to keep the Bahá'ís illiterate and uneducated, living only at a subsistence level. The section that defined the “educational and cultural status” of adherents to the Bahá'í Faith includes the instruction that “[t]hey must be expelled from universities, either in the admissions process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Bahá'ís.”

In addition, other government documents have been identified that indicate that this discriminatory treatment represents formal and settled official state policy. Chief among these is a communication sent in 2006 by the Central Security Office of the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, and addressed to 81 Iranian universities, the names of which were listed.¹² The letter instructed these universities to expel any student that was found to be a Bahá'í at the time of enrollment or during their studies. Even during the academic year, university authorities have summoned students and demanded that they identify their religion. Whenever students have been identified as Bahá'ís, they have been expelled.

The authorities are well aware that Bahá'ís, as a matter of principle, will not deny or lie about their religious affiliation. Every year, hundreds of Bahá'í students are denied enrollment to universities

¹² A scanned copy of this letter and a provisional English translation are available at the following link: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/archive/bahais-must-be-expelled-university>.

and other institutions of higher education, such as vocational training schools, under the pretext of having an “incomplete file.” These young Bahá’ís participate in the national examination and receive high scores, making them eligible for entry into university, and yet, they are denied the right to education only because they are Bahá’ís.

Below are more recent examples:

- It was learned that between 3 and 22 August 2022, throughout Iran, at least 100 Bahá’í students received the message “Incomplete File” in their National University Entrance Examination results and were denied enrolling in higher education due to being Bahá’ís. After entering their personal details on the site of the Educational Assessment and Evaluation Organisation (*Sanjesh* organization), they were referred to a page that only informed them of their “Incomplete File” without providing any details.¹³
- On 13 October 2022, a young female student from Baharestan was faced with the “incomplete file” notification after participating in the National University Entrance Examination. While coming from an extended Bahá’í family, her mother had previously distanced herself from the Bahá’í community. The young woman’s acceptance into university has been made conditional upon her mother publicly recanting her faith in widely circulating newspapers, as well as the young woman being required to write a formal letter denouncing her grandfather, who is a Bahá’í.

IV. Denial of Cultural Rights, including Desecration and Destruction of Bahá’í Cemeteries and Violations of Burial Rights

In violation of third cycle UPR recommendations #26.296, 26.297, 26.298, 26.307, and 26.309.

The desecration and destruction of Bahá’í cemeteries began methodically during post-revolutionary Iran as a means to strip the Bahá’ís of their cultural identity and to erase any ties to the community as a whole. Although in some cities, Bahá’ís have been given access to land for a modest cemetery, such initiatives on the part of the authorities are not acts of compassion; rather, it is a reflection of their deep-seated prejudice towards the Bahá’ís. Most alarming are their rationales that Bahá’ís should not be buried in Muslim cemeteries because they are considered *najis* (unclean)¹⁴ and they are not “people of the Book [Qur’an].”¹⁵ When Bahá’ís are provided property to use as a cemetery,

¹³ *Sanjesh*: The National Educational Measurement and Evaluation Organization (EMEO) of Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research and Technology.

¹⁴ For example, in April 2017, the Bahá’ís in Tabriz visited the director of the *Vadiy-i-Rahmat* (“Valley of Mercy”, referring to a cemetery) in Tabriz to ask about the refusal to bury Bahá’ís in the cemetery. The Bahá’ís were told that instructions had been issued by higher authorities, and were advised to wait patiently for a response to a complaint filed earlier. A member of the Islamic Council in Tabriz wrote to the Mayor of Tabriz requesting him to make it possible for the Bahá’ís to bury their deceased in the city. However, in response, the authorities, determining the Bahá’ís to be *najis* (“unclean”) based on the fatwa of the religious jurists, stated that the people were opposed to the burial of the Bahá’ís in the public cemetery.

¹⁵ In the early 1980s, the Mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Kazem Seifian, instructed cemetery directors to prohibit the burial of Bahá’ís in Muslim cemeteries. In one letter dated 12 December 1981, the mayor said, in part, “Many

oftentimes officials fail to respect the rights of the deceased Bahá'ís to be buried according to Bahá'í laws.¹⁶ For example, many deceased Bahá'ís from Tabriz and Sanandaj are required to be buried in the Miandoab and Ghorveh Cemeteries, respectively, which are at least 160 and 90 kilometers away, and take well over an hour to get to. This is because the authorities have barred the use of Tabriz and Sanandaj Bahá'í Cemeteries. Ghorveh Cemetery itself has also faced vandalism and destruction of its facilities. In several cases where the authorities have taken over the burial process altogether, the families concerned were only informed of the location of their loved ones after the burials had already taken place. Since the Islamic Revolution, there have been constant attacks against Bahá'í cemeteries in different localities throughout Iran. Vandals have attacked Bahá'í cemeteries with total impunity, destroying graves and causing extensive damage.¹⁷

More recently, in April 2021, the authorities banned Bahá'ís from burying their loved ones on land previously allocated to them in Tehran's Khavaran Cemetery. This land, which was assigned to the Bahá'ís after the previous Bahá'í Cemetery of Tehran was confiscated and destroyed in 1981, has sufficient burial space for several more decades. However, agents from the Security Office of the Behesht-e Zahra Organization, which manages Khavaran, banned the community from using these plots. The only recourse available to the Bahá'ís was to bury their loved ones in the narrow gap between existing graves or to use a mass burial site known to be the burial place of thousands of political prisoners killed in the early years of the Islam revolution, including at least 50 Bahá'ís. However, the Bahá'ís refused to use this site, and, following international pressure, the authorities have for now reversed course and lifted their ban.

Below is another example:

- Since 28 June 2022, some restrictions have been imposed by the Bonyad-e- Mostazafan Foundation on the Arak Bahá'í Cemetery. The Bahá'ís in Arak were contacted by the Bonyad-e-Mostazafan and were told that they were no longer permitted to bury their dead in the Bahá'í cemetery of Arak. They then asked as to what they should do with their dead and were told to contact the Foundation if such a situation arises. The Bahá'ís from Arak have reported that after the burial of Mr. Hemmat from Saveh, the Bonyad-e-Mostazafan had once again stated that the property had been confiscated and that the Bahá'ís had no further rights to bury their dead in that place.

simpletons have been misled by this sect and many Muslims have wasted their time arguing with them [the Bahá'ís]. It [“Bahá'í sect”] is therefore, not an officially recognized religion and these individuals [i.e., the Bahá'ís] must be buried in the section of the cemetery that is allocated to those people who are not of the Book.”

<<https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/archive/bahais-must-be-buried-part-cemetery-reserved-those-who-are-not-people-book>> In another letter dated 27 December 1982, the mayor said, “In view of the approval given by Sharia Judge Hojjat al-Eslam Mohammadi Gilani and to prevent contamination of the environment and to maintain cleanliness [purity], it is permissible to construct in the cemetery a facility where individuals who are not of the Book can be washed in the cemetery.” <<https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/archive/permission-build-washing-area-cemetery>>.

¹⁶ Bahá'í teachings require that the bodily remains of the deceased be buried in a location that is less than an hour's journey from the city in which he or she died.

¹⁷ For more historical information, see the Bahá'í International Community's report *Situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran with respect to their cultural rights*, November 2016:

<<https://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/srculturalrights-1116.pdf>>.

V. Incitement to Hatred

In violation of third cycle UPR recommendations #26.167, 26.310, and 26.314.

The upsurge in human rights violations against the Bahá'ís in Iran since 2005 has been preceded and accompanied by efforts to incite hatred, distrust, intolerance, and even violence against them. Some officials have openly encouraged the persecution, and some members of the clergy have preached sermons against the Bahá'í Faith and its adherents. National and provincial budgets have included allocations for “educational” programs to “confront” the Bahá'í Faith, and official organs have been established and dedicated to that purpose. This is institutionalized incitement to hatred.

The materials espousing hatred towards Bahá'ís present a wide range of completely false allegations. Incitement to hatred against the Bahá'ís has long been a mainstay of campaigns by the government to promote religious orthodoxy. Members of the Bahá'í community across Iran receive threatening telephone calls, text messages, and anonymous letters, and they encounter anti-Bahá'í pamphlets in shops, schools, and other public places. In many localities, graffiti is spray-painted in and on Bahá'í cemeteries, houses, shops, orchards, and vehicles. Without fail, these secondary sources of slander contain the very same malicious lies and incendiary language found in media affiliated with and controlled and sanctioned by the government, as listed below.

Given the numerous methods that are used to disseminate information, it is difficult to provide the exact number of articles, videos, or web pages appearing in government-controlled or government-sponsored media featuring anti-Bahá'í propaganda. Nevertheless, these platforms have been producing hundreds of thousands of pieces of disinformation, reaching millions of Iranians. As these figures only represent a fraction of the material, what is certain is that in all cases, the dissemination was sponsored and/or approved by the State. Since August 2016, hundreds of influential figures, including clerics, religious figures, academics, editors, and government representatives, have publicly issued speeches, articles, or written declarations against the Bahá'ís. Such statements have been published on the websites of various media organizations affiliated with the Iranian government that regularly attack the Bahá'ís. They include Aftab News, Basij News, Fars News, Ferghe News, Hawzah News, Iranian Quran News Agency (IQNA), QudsOnline, Rasa News, and Shabestan News.

Moreover, because Iranian Bahá'ís have long been denied access to all means of communication with the public, they cannot counter the lies and misinformation propagated about them and their religion, which, in many cases, come from those who give the Iranian people guidance in spiritual matters. When Bahá'ís have tried to contact newspapers and other media requesting the right of reply, they have been ignored or else mocked for having thought that they would be granted the means to deny published allegations or to present their own point of view. This refusal is in total contradiction with Article 5 of Iran's Press Law.¹⁸

¹⁸ Article 5: The press are lawfully permitted to acquire and disseminate domestic and foreign news aimed at enhancing public awareness by taking into consideration the best interests of the community and by observing the provisions of the existing law. *Press Law* (Ratified on 19 March 1986) And Its Executive By-law (31 January 1987) With amendments of 18 April 2000.

On 26 March 2018, the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei issued, via his website,¹⁹ a new religious decree (fatwa) concerning “association and dealing with Bahá’ís.” He stated that “[y]ou should avoid any association and dealings with this perverse and misguided sect.”

Below are some recent examples:

- Recently, some false accusations against the members of the Bahá’í community are being reported and spread in the Ferghe News channel as follows:
 - The role of Bahá’ís in the disturbance of Tehran universities.
 - Some centers located on the outskirts of Tehran universities are affiliated with the “Bahá’í movement” and played an active role in organizing the recent riots.
 - The reports obtained indicate that about 350 cafes and most of the women’s hair salons located on the outskirts of these universities have become a place to coordinate and organize gatherings for the recent disturbances in Tehran’s universities. They further state that some of these places, which lack any supervision, and sometimes the necessary legal permits, are managed by active members of the “Bahá’í sect.”
 - During the recent disturbances in the country, the Bahá’ís have played a major role and entered into conflicts. According to some reports, in provinces such as Mazandaran, the majority of the rioters were affiliated and organized by Bahá’í “elements.”
- On 2 November 2022, the Iranian TV news channel repeatedly showed the subtitle “A Basiji member was killed by a Bahá’í.” This claim is patently false.
- A teacher at a local kindergarten informed the grandfather of one of their students that at the same time as the raids against the homes of Bahá’ís were taking place in late July and early August 2022, several agents from the Ministry of Intelligence arrived at the kindergarten, distributed several Bahá’í books and publications among the staff and, while filming the proceedings, asked the staff to falsely state that Bahá’ís had brought and distributed those books amongst the teachers.

¹⁹ <<http://www.leader.ir>>.