

## **UN Special Rapporteur Concerned About Bahá'is in Iran**

On March 20, the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief revealed the existence of a confidential letter from the Command Headquarters of Iran's Armed Forces ordering the Ministry of Information, the Revolutionary Guard and the Police Force to identify Baha'is and collect information on their activities.

Please find below the UN news release on the report by the UN Special Rapporteur regarding the treatment of the Baha'is in Iran. Below the UN news release is a statement by Ms. Bani Dugal, principal representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations.

For background information, please visit [www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org).

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UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

### **SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF CONCERNED ABOUT TREATMENT OF FOLLOWERS OF BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN IRAN**

20 March 2006

The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, made the following statement today:

"The Special Rapporteur is highly concerned by information she has received concerning the treatment of members of the Baha'i community in Iran.

A confidential letter sent on 29 October 2005 by the Chairman of the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces in Iran to a number of governmental agencies has been brought to the attention of the Special Rapporteur. The letter, which is addressed to the Ministry of Information, the Revolutionary Guard and the Police Force, states that the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, had instructed the Command Headquarters to identify persons who adhere to the Baha'i faith and monitor their activities. The letter goes on to request the recipients to, in a highly confidential manner, collect any and all information about members of the Baha'i faith.

The Special Rapporteur is apprehensive about the initiative to monitor the activities of individuals merely because they adhere to a religion that differs from the state religion. She considers that such monitoring constitutes an impermissible and unacceptable interference with the rights of members of religious minorities. She also expresses concern that the information gained as a result of such monitoring will be used as a basis for the increased persecution of, and discrimination against, members of the Baha'i faith,

in violation of international standards.

The Baha'i community has an estimated 300,000 to 350,000 adherents throughout Iran. However, members of the Baha'i community are not recognized as a religious minority in the country and do not have the right to practice their religion. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has closely monitored the treatment of religious minorities in Iran, and has long been concerned by the systematic discrimination against members of the Baha'i community. Since taking up the mandate in July 2004, the Special Rapporteur has intervened with the Government on a number of occasions regarding the treatment of the Baha'i community.

The Special Rapporteur is concerned that this latest development indicates that the situation with regard to religious minorities in Iran is, in fact, deteriorating. She takes this opportunity to emphasize that the fact that a religion is recognized as a state religion must not result in any discrimination against adherents to other religions. She calls on the Government of Iran to refrain from categorizing individuals according to their religion and to ensure that members of all religious minorities are free to hold and practise their religious beliefs, without discrimination or fear".

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*For use of the information media; not an official record*

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Statement by Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations, in the wake of the announcement of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief concerning treatment of followers of the Baha'i Faith in Iran

20 March 2006  
New York City

The statement of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief about recent actions taken by the Government of Iran concerning the Baha'is arouses grave apprehension in the Baha'i International Community about their fate. The Baha'is have been the victims of an unrelenting persecution ever since the revolution of 1979, and one hesitates to think of what horrors could be implied by the combined effort of intelligence, military and police agencies to identify Baha'is and monitor their activities, as has been ordered by the Chairman of the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces at the direction of the Head of State. We are dreadfully afraid for the lives of our fellow Baha'is in Iran.

Because of the unprecedented character of the Government's action, we are addressing a request to the Ambassador of Iran for an explanation.

Such actions come in the midst of mounting media attacks on the Baha'is, the nature of which in the past have preceded government-led assaults on them. "Kayhan," the official Tehran daily newspaper, has carried more than 30 articles about the Baha'is and their religion in recent weeks, all defamatory in ways that are meant to create provocation.

Radio and television programs have joined in as well with broadcasts condemning the Baha'is and their beliefs.

We know what hateful propaganda can lead to; recent history offers too many examples of its horrific consequences. We make an urgent plea to all nations and peoples on behalf of our Iranian coreligionists that they not allow a peace-loving, law-abiding people to face the extremes to which blind hate can lead. The ghastly deeds that grew out of similar circumstances in the past should not now be allowed to happen. Not again.

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