



BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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NGO Leaders Call for Immediate Release of “Baha’i Seven” in Iran

WASHINGTON — This May, to mark the eight-year anniversary of the imprisonment of seven Baha’i leaders in Iran, the **leaders of 29 organizations issued a strong statement**, calling for the immediate release of these innocent individuals and advocating for the rights and liberty of all prisoners of conscience.

Drawing **wide support from American faith-based and human rights NGOs**, the statement is a direct appeal to the Iranian government. It highlights the plight of Iran’s Baha’i community, especially the **unjust imprisonment of seven Baha’i leaders**, members of the former ad hoc leadership group of the Baha’i community known as the “Yaran-i-Iran,” or friends of Iran: Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm.

In the statement, civil society leaders note that, “Since May 14, 2008, the leaders of Iran’s Baha’i community have been punished and imprisoned for their beliefs.” The **so-called “Baha’i seven”** were each sentenced to 20 years, the longest of any prisoner of conscience in Iran at the time, though their sentences have now reportedly been reduced to 10 years.

It further recognizes that, “Officially-sanctioned repression of Baha’is ranges the entire lifespan, from birth to death,” and places the persecution of Iran’s Baha’i community, the country’s largest non-Muslim religious minority, within the context of the **broader human rights crisis in Iran**.

The statement concludes with a call for freedom: **“We call on the Iranian government: Free the seven Baha’i leaders. Respect and protect all Iranian citizens who have a common desire for justice and peace.”**

For more information about religious persecution and the rights of the Baha’is in Iran, please contact the U.S. Baha’i Office of Public Affairs at 202-833-8990, or visit publicaffairs.bahai.us.