



BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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U.S. House of Representatives Passes Resolution 220 Condemning the Persecution of Baha'is in Iran

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution **“Condemning the Government of Iran’s state-sponsored persecution of its Baha’i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.”** Introduced by Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen [R-FL-27], on behalf of herself, Congressmen Ted Deutch [D-FL-21], Robert Dold [R-IL-10], Eliot Engel [D-NY-16], Steve Chabot [R-OH-1], and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky [D-IL-9], [House Resolution 220](#) **gained strong bipartisan support.** Of the 152 representatives co-sponsoring the resolution, 62 are Republicans and 90 are Democrats.

The resolution calls on the President and Secretary of State, together with responsible nations, to condemn the ongoing persecution of the Baha’is in Iran, and to **demand the release of religious prisoners, including seven Baha’i leaders** who have been **sentenced to 20 years** in prison. Their sentences have now reportedly been reduced to 10 years.

The resolution specifies several examples of **economic hardship**, imposed by the Iranian government and experienced by the Baha’is in Iran, including **the dismissal of over 10,000 Baha’is** from government and university jobs since 1979, the **confiscation of residential and commercial property**, and the **denial of access to higher education for Baha’i youth**. Further, the resolution urges the President and Secretary of State to utilize measures “to impose **sanctions on officials of the Government of Iran** and other individuals directly **responsible for serious human rights abuses**, including abuses against the Baha’i community of Iran.”

Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen stated, **“Iran’s Baha’i community is a frequent target** of the regime, subjecting adherents to arbitrary arrest and harassment, refusing to recognize Baha’i marriages, and destroying their cemeteries and holy places. **Economic repression** is also severe as Baha’is are prohibited from public sector employment while private employers are pressured not to hire them. With this resolution, **Congress makes clear that it has not forgotten about the suffering of the Iranian people**, condemning the regime’s repression and its notable persecution of the Baha’is while urging the State Department to sanction the officials responsible for human rights violations.”

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Congressman Deutch stated, “The **Baha’is continue to face persecution and repression** of the most basic of human rights. The Iranian regime not only bans members of the Baha’i Faith from openly practicing their religion, but **prevents them from holding employment**, frequently seizes their property, and suppresses opportunities for Baha’i youth. The **unanimous passage** of this resolution shows that the United States House of Representatives will continue to speak out for the **rights of religious minorities** and will continue to condemn human rights abuses.”

These statements are significant in the wake of a letter penned by the Baha’i International Community addressed to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. In this [letter](#), Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Baha’i International Community, points out that “this **economic apartheid** against a significant segment of Iran’s population has **undeniable negative consequences** for the economic dynamism of the country and has ultimately deprived Iran of considerable human and financial resources. How will history judge those who have designed and carried out this scheme of economic strangulation?”

In its clear and direct condemnation of the Iranian government’s persecution of Baha’is and its call for human rights sanctions against those individuals who have perpetrated abuses, **Congress has spotlighted the vital importance of religious freedom and human rights.**

For additional information, please contact the U.S. Baha’i Office of Public Affairs at (202) 833-8990, or visit <http://publicaffairs.bahai.us/what-we-do/human-rights/persecution-of-the-bahais-in-iran/>.

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