



## BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

### OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 22, 2017

Contact: James Samimi Farr

Phone: (202) 833-8990, Email: [USBahaiMedia@usbnc.org](mailto:USBahaiMedia@usbnc.org)

#### **Following Recent Arrests, U.S. Senate Condemns Persecution of Baha'is in Iran**

WASHINGTON — Last night, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed [Senate Resolution 139](#), condemning the Iranian government's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority as well as its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights. The resolution garnered **strong bipartisan support**, with a total of 32 cosponsors – 14 Republicans and 18 Democrats – in addition to the original sponsor, with the total number in support representing almost one third of the Senate. The resolution was introduced by **Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR)** on behalf of himself and **Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Dick Durbin (D-IL), and John Boozman (R-AR)**.

**"I'm proud to stand with the Baha'is in Iran** against the mullahs' despicable oppression," **Senator Wyden said.** "Iran's continued religious persecution of Baha'is is a blatant affront to basic human rights that has no place in the international community. My colleagues and I are going to keep pushing back on discrimination against the Baha'i people, who should be able to practice their own religion in their own country without fear."

The passage of the resolution follows a [recent wave](#) of arrests and shop closures in Iran that took place during the Baha'i community's celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Baha'u'llah, the founder of their faith, in late October. It also follows the **December 19 [adoption of a resolution](#) in the United Nations General Assembly condemning widespread human rights abuses in Iran, including the [persecution of the Baha'is](#).**

"For decades," **Senator Rubio said,** "the Iranian regime has brutally persecuted and oppressed members of the Baha'i community, treating them as second-class citizens. **The United States cannot ignore the lack of religious freedom in Iran for the Baha'is and other peaceful religious minorities.** The Baha'i community should be able to exercise their fundamental right to practice their faith without persecution or discrimination from their government."

In addition, Iran still holds four former members of the Baha'is' ad-hoc leadership group after the [release](#) on December 5 of Mr. Behrooz Tavokkoli, who was imprisoned for nearly ten years.

BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

“Mr. Tavakkoli’s decade of unjust incarceration, along with the recent arrests and shop closures, shows with somber clarity the necessity of Senate Resolution 139,” said Mr. Anthony Vance, Director of Public Affairs for the Baha’is of the United States.

Among other measures, **the resolution calls on the government of Iran to release all prisoners held solely on account of their religion.** It also asks the President and the Secretary of State to condemn the Iranian government’s continued violation of human rights.

“The treatment of Iranian Baha’is takes on a special sadness in contrast to the unfettered celebrations of the bicentenary of the birth of Baha’u’llah that we saw in other countries across the world,” Mr. Vance continued. “It is only in Iran that Baha’is are systematically treated with such unfounded suspicion and malice by the authorities.”

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](http://publicaffairs.bahai.us).