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HUMAN RIGHTS

Statement submitted by the Bahá'í International Community,
a non-governmental organization in consultative status,
category II

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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The Bahá'í International Community wishes to submit the following information with regard to the practice of torture in the contemporary world. This information is based on reports received by the Bahá'í International Community concerning the treatment of Bahá'í prisoners in Evin Prison, Teheran.

Typically, the prisoner is awakened at 4.00 a.m. and taken to the interrogation chamber to await the interrogators who arrive at 7.00 a.m. and work uninterruptedly on their victim until 4.00 p.m. The prisoner - man or woman - is punched and kicked, then tied to a specially designed table and beaten mercilessly on all parts of the body, but particularly on the soles of the feet with a metal cable, rubber hose or similar object while other interrogators administer repeated severe blows to the head. The interrogators periodically check to see whether the prisoner's will has been broken and whether he is willing to comply with the demands of the prison authorities. The treatment continues for hours or days, depending on the victim's ability to withstand the torture. A doctor is sometimes summoned to administer superficial medical treatment in order to keep the prisoner alive. In between beatings, the prisoner is forced to mark time on his lacerated feet. The prisoner experiences extreme thirst as a result of the torture and is goaded to walk unaided on his grossly swollen legs to slake his thirst with a glass of water alluringly displayed some distance away. The severe beatings cause internal injuries and the prisoner inevitably passes blood in his urine.

After undergoing torture, the prisoner is taken to an interrogation room. Interrogation normally takes place with the prisoner blindfolded or facing a wall, so that he cannot identify his interrogators. In cases where both the husband and wife are prisoners, one will be shown the damaged body of the other during the course of the interrogation. The prisoner is given a questionnaire and ordered to complete it according to the wishes of the interrogators. Enfeebled and in a state of shock, the prisoner is subjected to blows and abuse if he fails to comply with the interrogators' demands. As the post-torture numbness of his body subsides, the prisoner is overwhelmed by pain even more excruciating than the agony he suffered in the torture chamber. The pattern of torture-interrogation-torture then resumes, lessening or increasing in intensity according to the resistance of the victim.

In order to increase the psychological pressure on prisoners, some are transferred from Evin Prison to Gawhar-Dasht Prison in Karaj, a small town on the outskirts of Teheran. They are kept there for weeks or months in solitary confinement in isolated cells measuring approximately 1.7 metres by 2 metres. Apart from the guards who bring their food, and who curse and beat them, the prisoners see no one and speak to no one. The only sounds they hear are the screams and moans of their fellow prisoners who are undergoing torture. The purpose of the torture is to extract false confessions which will implicate the prisoner and also those who share his beliefs.
