

PRESS RELEASE

IHRDC CONDEMNS CONTINUED PERSECUTION OF IRANIAN BAHA'IS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW HAVEN - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) condemns the Islamic Republic of Iran's escalated campaign against the nation's Bahá'í community, which has included multiple raids and arrests in January.

In the early morning of January 14, agents of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence raided the homes of at least ten Bahá'í families in Tehran. During the raids, plain-clothed officials searched the families' personal property and seized items such as books, computers, CDs and photographs. Six Iranian Bahá'ís, including a human rights activist previously employed at an NGO founded by Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, were arrested. Reportedly, those arrested stand accused of insulting religious sanctities, propaganda against the system and acting against national security – charges that stem from their ties to the Bahá'í faith. One Christian was also reportedly arrested.

There are reports of similar raids and arrests of Bahá'ís occurring throughout Iran during the past month. On January 5, two members of the local Bahá'í administrative body in Semnan were arrested. A third member had reportedly been arrested and detained in mid-December. On January 26, Iranian security forces raided the homes of ten Bahá'í families in Mashhad. At least two Bahá'ís were arrested and various personal and religious items were confiscated. No further information on the reasons for their arrests or their conditions while in custody is currently available.

On January 15, Iran's Law Enforcement Force announced the arrest of eight Bahá'í women at local shopping malls on Kish Island. The women, who were vacationing from Tehran, are accused of attempting to distribute Bahá'í materials in order to convert young Muslim men to their religion.

The Bahá'í faith is denied recognition as a religion under Iranian law; it receives no protections under the constitution of the Islamic Republic, and the community periodically faces coordinated campaigns of discrimination and persecution at the hands of the state. Sites of great religious significance have been destroyed and private property confiscated.

The IHRDC believes that the recent wave of raids and arrests of Iranian Bahá'ís is part of a continuing and systematic campaign by the Islamic Republic to destroy Iran's Bahá'í community and eradicate the Bahá'í faith. Further information about the systematic persecution of the Bahá'í community in Iran can be found in the IHRDC reports *A Faith Denied: The Persecution of the Baha'is of Iran* and *Community under Siege: The Ordeal of the Bahá'ís of Shiraz*. Both reports are currently available in English and Farsi on the IHRDC's website at www.iranhrdc.org.

The IHRDC is a nonprofit organization based in New Haven, Connecticut that was founded in 2004 by a group of human rights scholars, activists, and historians. Its staff of human rights lawyers and researchers produce comprehensive and detailed reports on the human rights situation in Iran since the 1979 revolution. The Center's goal is to encourage an informed dialogue among scholars and the general public in both Iran and abroad. The human rights reports and an archive of documents are available to the public for research and educational purposes on the website.

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