

URGENT ACTION

MEMBERS OF BAHA'I FAITH FACE UNFAIR TRIAL

Seven members of Iran's Baha'i religious community may face the death penalty at a trial that could begin around 18 August. They have not had any contact with their lawyers, and it is unlikely that their trial will be fair. They are prisoners of conscience, held for their beliefs.

The seven have been charged with spying for Israel and "insulting religious sanctities and propaganda against the system". In addition, their families were told in May 2009 that they were now facing the additional charge of "mofsed fil arz", or "corruption on earth", which can carry the death penalty.

The seven include two women, **Fariba Kamalabadi** and **Mahvash Sabet**, and five men: **Jamaloddin Khanjani**, **Afif Naeimi**, **Saeid Rezaei**, **Behrouz Tavakkoli** and **Vahid Tizfahm**. All are leading members of a group responsible for the Baha'i community's religious and administrative affairs. Mahvash Sabet who acted as the group's secretary, was arrested on 5 March 2008. The others were arrested on 14 May 2008. All seven are held in Section 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence. They haven't been allowed to meet with their lawyers at all while they have been in custody.

They had been scheduled to be tried before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on 11 July 2009, but the trial was postponed. It appears that the trial may now take place on 18 August because an official notification has been sent to one of their lawyers, Abdolfattah Soltani, who is himself in prison (see UA 160/09, MDE 13/059/2009, 19 June 2009), that he should attend court on 18 August for the case of the seven members of the Baha'i community. Amnesty International has consistently criticized Iran's Revolutionary Courts for their failure to adhere to international standards for fair trials.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English, French, or your own language:

- expressing concern that Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaei, Behrouz Tavakkoli, Vahid Tizfahm, and Mahvash Sabet may imminently be facing an unfair trial before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release, as Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, held solely because of their beliefs and peaceful activities on behalf of the Baha'i community;
- expressing concern that the charges brought against them are politically-motivated and calling on authorities to drop them;
- expressing concern that the seven could face the death penalty if convicted.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 SEPTEMBER 2009 TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

via website:

<http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter> (English)

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh
(Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran
1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)

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<http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=letter> (Persian)

Salutation: Your Excellency

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Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Baha'i faith was founded in Iran about 150 years ago and has since spread around the world. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, the Baha'i community has faced systematic persecution and harassment. They are denied equal rights to education and their access to employment and advancement in their jobs is restricted. They are furthermore not allowed to meet or hold religious ceremonies.

Since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was first elected in 2005, several members of the Baha'i community have been arrested. Three of the seven people named above (Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Jamaloddin Khanjani) had been arrested previously for their activities on behalf of the Baha'i community.

The seven were previously the subjects of UA 128/08 (MDE 13/068/2008) and follow-ups.

Under Article 502 of the Penal Code, those convicted of espionage can be sentenced to between one and five years' imprisonment. Under Article 508, those convicted of the more serious charge of "cooperating with foreign states to harm national security" can face either the death penalty or a sentence of one to 10 years' imprisonment. "Insulting the religious sanctities" carries the penalty of execution or one to five years' imprisonment. "Propaganda against the system" carries a penalty of three months to one year's imprisonment. Ali Ashtari, a telecommunications salesman, was hanged in November 2008 after being convicted for espionage for Israel.

Prominent human rights attorney Abdolfattah Soltani, a member of the Center for Defense of Human Rights and a close associate of Iranian Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, was arrested on 16 June and has been held incommunicado at an unknown location since then.

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