



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
de los Derechos Humanos

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الانسان

Press Release

Iran: Rising Discrimination against the Baha'is

Paris, 5 April 2006: The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) expresses its deep concern about the latest confidential measure taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran against the Baha'i community.

According to information received from the Baha'i International Community (BIC), a confidential letter has been sent by the Chairman of the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces to the Ministry of Information, the Revolutionary Guard and the Police on October 29, 2005, asking them to identify the persons who adhere to the Baha'i faith, monitor their activities and collect information about them.

On March 20, 2006, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief expressed her concern about such monitoring, qualifying it as "an impermissible and unacceptable interference with the rights of members of religious minorities".

FIDH recalls that discrimination based on religion and ethnic origin remains common in Iran. Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities (art. 13 of the Iranian Constitution).

There are clear signs that the discrimination against the Baha'i community is on the rise. According to the BIC, at least 59 Baha'is have been arrested, detained or imprisoned in 2005. Mr. Dhabihu'llah Mahrami, who spent 10 years in jail accused of spying for Israel, died in prison of unknown causes in December 2005. Although Mr. Mahrami was formally accused of spying for Israel, court records indicate that he was tried and sentenced on the charge of being an apostate.

Iranian authorities reportedly continued to bar Baha'is from access to university despite a specific recommendation to put an end to that practice made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in August 2003.

This worrying trend is confirmed by the intensity of the media attacks against the Baha'is since September 2005, and the current re-emergence of the anti-Baha'i association Hojatieh, founded in 1953 and which played an important role in rising animosity against the Baha'i community in the past.

Categorising individuals according to their religion and submitting them to a specific monitoring is a clear breach of Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which enshrines the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion, as well as Article 5 of the CERD, which prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of that right. In addition, Article 20 of the ICCPR states that "any advocacy of (...) religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law."

FIDH fears that the identification and monitoring of the Baha'is combined with the current hatred propaganda in the media could lead to increased discrimination in their regards and calls upon the Iranian authorities to abide by their international human rights commitments.

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International Federation for Human Rights

tel : (331) 43 55 25 18 / fax : (331) 43 55 18 80

17, passage de la main d'or - 75011 Paris – France

E. MAIL : fidh@fidh.org / site INTERNET : <http://www.fidh.org>