

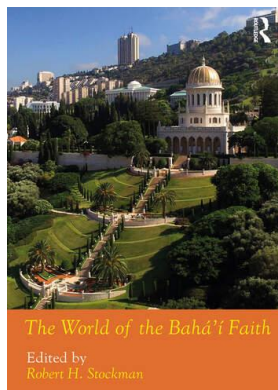
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The World of the Bahá'í Faith

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Religious Persecution of Bahá'ís under the Islamic Republic of Iran

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RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION OF BAHÁ'ÍS UNDER THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Siyamak Zabih-Moghaddam

Through the short history of their Faith, Bahá'ís have been subjected to persecution in different lands and periods, including the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and several Muslim countries. Iran stands out, however, for several reasons. It has been the scene of the most ferocious incidents of persecution of Bahá'ís to date; persecution has occurred under successive regimes; and the present regime's repression of Bahá'ís has been extremely vicious, pervasive, and has continued incessantly for four decades. Iran is currently the only country in the world in which Bahá'ís are persecuted as a matter of state policy.

Iranian Bahá'ís constitute the country's largest non-Muslim minority. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, more than 200 Bahá'ís have been killed or executed; thousands have been imprisoned, detained, and interrogated; and tens of thousands have lost their jobs, means of livelihood, pensions, and access to higher education. Furthermore, many Bahá'í religious and cultural sites and cemeteries have been destroyed, Bahá'í graves desecrated, and Bahá'í communal and private property confiscated. This chapter provides an overview of the persecution of Bahá'ís under the Islamic Republic of Iran and discusses their response to this persecution.

The experience of repression and human rights violations in the Islamic Republic is not unique to Iranian Bahá'ís. All ethnic and religious minorities, as well as human rights defenders and lawyers, women's rights activists, political dissidents, journalists, and other Iranians have faced persecution and violence. Iran is one of the few countries in the world for which the United Nations has appointed Special Representatives and Rapporteurs to monitor and report on the situation of human rights. The effects of the persecution of the Bahá'ís have been to some extent mitigated by the international community's attention and response to the issue. Gross violations of their rights and those of other Iranian citizens, however, have not ceased.

Bahá'ís' adherence to a post-Islamic religion sets them apart from the Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Christian minorities in Iran. Considering Muhammad to be the last of the divine prophets, the authorities view the Bahá'í Faith as a false religion and deny its followers the legal protections accorded the other non-Muslim minorities. They also refer to Bahá'ís as apostates and enemies of Islam. Moreover, the clerical establishment and state authorities perceive in the Bahá'í Faith a threat to their influence and power. Historically, thousands of Muslim Iranians converted to the Bahá'í Faith, and today many are attracted to its message in spite of the ongoing persecution. An exacerbating factor is that there is no clergy in the Bahá'í Faith. It is also infuriating to the

Iranian authorities that the headquarters of the international Bahá'í community is located in Israel, a country toward which they hold bitter hostility.

Intermittent and mostly random persecution of Bahá'ís had occurred under the Qajars (1796–1925) and the Pahlavis (1925–1979). In 1903, for example, in one of the most harrowing incidents in the history of the community, more than 80 Bahá'ís were killed by mobs in the province of Yazd. What distinguishes the Islamic Republic is that sworn enemies of the Bahá'í community are now at the helm of power and have used the apparatus of the state and its resources to attack it with increased sophistication ever since the revolution. In the first years after the victory of the revolution, the community was subjected to a reign of terror, but the persecution was not fully centrally coordinated. By the early 1990s, however, it had become very well-organized and has since proceeded according to a clearly defined strategy. In the last three decades, brutal killings of Bahá'ís have been relatively rare, but there have been systematic and pervasive violations of their economic, social, and cultural rights. The Iranian regime is aware that bloody killings and executions of Bahá'ís give rise to widespread international protest and have greater repercussions than the quiet strangulation of the community. During the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005), there was a slight improvement in some aspects of the situation of the Bahá'í community. Since 2005, however, the state's anti-Bahá'í campaign has intensified.

From the Islamic revolution to 2005

The persecution of Bahá'ís was particularly savage in the first six years of the Islamic Republic. The large majority of executions and killings of Bahá'ís took place during this period. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (d. 1989), the leader of the revolution and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, shared with other members of the clergy and their allies and supporters among other classes of the population unyielding prejudice and hostility toward the Bahá'í community (Yazdani 2012). His attitude and that of other senior figures in the regime enabled the enemies of the Bahá'ís to unleash a violent assault on them, which continued almost completely unchecked for several years.

During the tumultuous months of the revolution, ten Bahá'ís were mobbed or killed. By the end of 1984, more than 190 had been killed, the great majority by execution. Some Bahá'ís were tortured to death. In fact, torture was routinely used to force Bahá'í prisoners 'to change faith, to confess links with the deposed monarchic régime or to confess spying for the benefit of foreign Powers' (UN Special Representative on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran 1989: para. 54).

Early on, in their hunt for prominent Bahá'ís, including members of Bahá'í institutions, government agencies and forces were greatly assisted by those who had been members of the Hojatiyyeh Society, an anti-Bahá'í organization established in the 1950s under the Pahlavi regime. The society had infiltrated the Bahá'í community before the Islamic Revolution and had in late 1977 stolen Bahá'í membership lists, which were now shared with other anti-Bahá'í elements in the new regime.

In 1979 the Umaná Company, which held title to all Bahá'í endowments in Iran, and the Nawnahálán Company, the Bahá'í community's central financial institution, were confiscated, dispossessing the Bahá'ís of their religious and communal sites and depriving over 15,000 members of the community of their savings and pension benefits; the Bahá'í hospital in Tehran, the Mitháqiyyih Hospital, was also confiscated (Universal House of Justice 1979; Martin 1984: 41). In that year also began seizure of Bahá'í religious and cultural sites, administrative centres,

cemeteries, as well as private property. Many Bahá'í holy places, including the House of the Báb in Shiraz, the Bahá'ís' holiest shrine in Iran, and Bahá'u'lláh's ancestral home in Tákur, were demolished.

In December 1979 the Constitution of the Islamic Republic was adopted, which explicitly stated that 'Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities' (Article 13). It thus denied the Bahá'ís the status of a religious minority and provided a legal basis for discrimination against them. In the following year, the authorities launched a 'cultural revolution', during which universities were closed and 'un-Islamic' elements, including Bahá'í faculty and students, were expelled. In 1981, a circular from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs announced the government's policy that followers of the Bahá'í Faith were to be dismissed from public office (UN Special Rapporteur on the Question of Religious Intolerance 1996: para. 64). Earlier, in 1979, an edict from the Ministry of Education had instructed the dismissal of all Bahá'í teachers (Martin 1984: 46). It is estimated that in all over 10,000 Bahá'ís were expelled from their employment in the first years after the victory of the revolution (Kazemzadeh 2000: 544).

On 29 August 1983, the Iranian Attorney General announced a ban on Bahá'í administration and community activities in the country, criminalizing membership in Bahá'í institutions. Following his announcement, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, the elected governing body of the Iranian Bahá'í community, instructed the dissolution of all local Spiritual Assemblies in Iran and then itself formally disbanded (UN Special Representative on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran 1987: paras. 82–83, 85). The government's ban on Bahá'í administration has remained in effect since then.

In 1984, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Representative to monitor the human rights situation in Iran. This development seems to have prompted the authorities to reconsider their tactics for persecuting the Bahá'í community so as to avoid, as much as possible, continued international outcry. The next two years witnessed a marked decline in the number of executions of Bahá'ís, and by the end of 1989, the number of Bahá'í prisoners had also decreased significantly.

By the early 1990s, the authorities had developed a comprehensive strategy for the repression of the Bahá'ís. A secret memorandum dated 25 February 1991, prepared at the instruction of and endorsed by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, set forth the guidelines of this strategy. The government was to deal with the Bahá'ís in such a way that their progress and development were blocked; they were to be denied employment if they identified themselves as Bahá'ís; they were to be denied positions of influence; and they were to be expelled from universities during the admission process or during their studies. The memorandum also called for a plan to be devised in order to confront and destroy the cultural roots of the Bahá'ís outside Iran (Bahá'í International Community [henceforth BIC] 2016a: 92–95; UN Special Representative on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran 1993: para. 310). Clearly, the objective was to force Iranian Bahá'ís to either abandon their faith and embrace Islam or become a community drained of all vitality. In the years since 1991, the government's objective and overall strategy have remained unchanged.

There was a slight improvement in the situation of the Bahá'í community after the moderate and reformist cleric Mohammad Khatami was elected president in 1997; he was re-elected in 2001. His administration made an effort to curb the persecution of the Bahá'ís. Early during his presidency, however, there were two major incidents of human rights violations against the Bahá'ís. In 1998, Mr. Ruhollah Rohani was executed and two other Bahá'ís were sentenced to death. Mr. Rohani was accused of converting a Muslim woman to the Bahá'í Faith; the woman herself, however, maintained that she had already been a Bahá'í (Universal House of Justice

1998; BIC 2008: 27–28). In that same year, a coordinated attack was launched on the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE), the community's informal university. The BIHE had been established in 1987—with the assistance of Bahá'í professionals and university professors who had been dismissed from their jobs because of their faith—to provide higher education to young Bahá'ís, after it had become clear that the government had no intention of changing its policy of excluding Bahá'ís from universities. By 1998, the BIHE had become a full-fledged university with more than 900 students studying under more than 150 instructors. During the attack, government agents raided over 500 homes, arrested at least 36 members of the faculty and staff of the BIHE, and confiscated equipment and records, including large photocopying units, libraries, and computers (BIC 2005: 19).

Later during Khatami's presidency, several Bahá'ís who were awaiting execution had their sentences commuted to imprisonment, some Bahá'í prisoners were released, and many Bahá'ís who had previously been denied business licenses were able to obtain them. Moreover, it became much easier for Bahá'ís to obtain passports for travelling abroad; they could register their marriages; and according to the UN Special Representative, there were reports that religion would no longer be requested at the time of registration of birth, divorce, or death (Kazemzadeh 2000: 556; Ghanea 2002: 149; UN Special Representative on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran 2001: para. 74). The situation of the Bahá'í community took a turn for the worse after President Khatami left office in 2005.

From 2005 to the present: intensification of persecution

The persecution of the Bahá'ís has intensified since 2005. In 2008, during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–2013), the seven members of the Yárán (literally, 'the Friends')—a national-level ad hoc group that, in the absence of an elected governing body, had been created with the knowledge and approval of the authorities to tend to the social and spiritual needs of the Bahá'í community—were arrested. Two years later they were each sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment on trumped-up charges that included espionage for Israel and propaganda activities against the regime. Their sentences were later reduced to ten years, and they were released after serving their terms.

In the past 15 years, many other Bahá'ís have been detained on account of their beliefs. From 2005 until August 2013, when President Hassan Rouhani assumed office, more than 700 Bahá'ís were arrested (BIC 2015, 2016a: 19, chart). Between August 2013 and August 2020, at least 498 Bahá'ís were arrested and 95 were summoned to prison. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the number of lengthy prison sentences handed down by the courts has increased. For example, four Bahá'í women who had been arrested by the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Shiraz for teaching and counselling children in pre-schools and day care facilities received prison sentences between six and 13 years (BIC 2020). Arrests and detentions are accompanied by harassment and ill treatment. Many are 'kept in solitary confinement for long periods and are often detained for weeks or months before being released on bail' (BIC 2020).

While no official executions have occurred since 1998, Bahá'ís continue to be killed for their faith. Since 2005 at least ten Bahá'ís have been murdered or died under suspicious circumstances. For example, on 15 December 2005, Mr. Zabihullah Mahrami, 'who had been jailed for more than 10 years on charges of apostasy, died in prison under mysterious circumstances'. On 24 August 2013, the body of Mr. Ataollah Rezvani was found shot in the head in his car; he was murdered 'after months of harassment and government interrogation'. On 26 September 2016, Mr. Farhang Amiri was stabbed to death outside his home by two brothers; 'the two men later

reportedly confessed, saying they killed him because he was an apostate and they wanted to go to heaven' (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2006: 179, 2014: 60, 2017: 47).

There has been no change in the government's policy of economic strangulation of the Bahá'ís. In addition to barring them from all jobs in the civil service and putting pressure on private-sector employers to dismiss their Bahá'í employees, the government has aimed to block the Bahá'ís from certain occupations, including high-earning businesses. Between August 2013 and August 2020, there were at least 1,080 incidents of economic persecution or discrimination of Bahá'ís, including arbitrary shop closures, unjust dismissals, and the actual or threatened revocation of business licenses. Of the approximately 739 shops that have been forcibly closed since 2013, many have not been allowed to reopen (BIC 2020). An example of economic persecution of a different kind concerned the Bahá'ís of the village of Ivel in northern Iran. On 13 Ábán 1398 (4 November 2019), a court ruled that their properties must be confiscated (BIC 2020). The ruling also mentioned that the 'misguided Bahá'í sect' (*firqiy-i-dálliy-i-Bahá'íyyat*) was guilty of 'unbelief and impurity' (*kufir va najásat*)—replicating a phrase from one of the anti-Bahá'í fatwas of Ayatollah Khamenei—and their ownership lacked legitimacy. The authorities have also aimed to discourage the public from patronizing Bahá'í-owned shops and businesses through extensive anti-Bahá'í propaganda.

There was a renewed attack on the BIHE in 2011, in which 19 educators and administrators affiliated with the Institute were arrested. Of these, 17 were sentenced to four or five years' imprisonment. They were charged with 'conspiracy against national security by establishing the illegal Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education' or 'membership in the deviant Bahaist sect, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country' (BIC 2016a: 34; Bahá'í World News Service n.d.). The Iranian government has justified its crackdown on the BIHE by claiming that it was 'established illegally' and was 'operating under the guise of educational activities [but] was [furthering the] political and economic goals of an outlawed cult' (UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran 2015: para. 88).

The desecration and destruction of Bahá'í cemeteries and the violation of the Bahá'ís' burial rights have continued. As mentioned earlier, Bahá'í cemeteries across Iran were confiscated following the Islamic Revolution, and some were destroyed, including the Bahá'í cemetery in Tehran, the largest in the country. The authorities have permitted the Bahá'ís to bury their dead at new sites in remote and barren areas, but they have also allowed vandalism of these cemeteries. Since August 2005, there have been at least 83 attacks against Bahá'í cemeteries across Iran (BIC 2020). While vandals have been allowed to act with impunity, Shamim Etehadí, a young Bahá'í who, in December 2012, documented on video the desecration of the third cemetery allocated by the authorities to the Bahá'ís of Yazd and sent it to a London-based Persian-language TV channel, was imprisoned for his action (BIC 2016b).

Since 2005, the government has stepped up its anti-Bahá'í propaganda campaign. It has hoped, at a minimum, to discourage the public from interacting with Bahá'ís by stirring aversion and hatred toward them. Religious decrees issued by prominent clerics, including more than one by Iran's Supreme Leader, declaring Bahá'ís to be unbelievers and ritually impure and enjoining Muslim Iranians to shun them, have intended to achieve the same objective. Through its campaign of demonization of Bahá'ís, the government has also aimed to incite violence against them and then take the posture that it is unable to hold back the public from committing such acts of violence given the legitimacy and depth of its grievances against the Bahá'ís. In 2019, more than 9,511 articles, videos, or web pages appeared in government-controlled or government-sponsored media containing anti-Bahá'í propaganda (BIC 2020). Deteriorating economic conditions in recent years have not prompted the authorities to commit fewer

resources to assaulting the Bahá'ís. This points to the depth of their animosity toward the community and also suggests that they wish to scapegoat the Bahá'ís for their own failure to address the country's immense problems.

Iranian Bahá'ís' response to oppression

Iranian Bahá'ís have met four decades of relentless persecution with 'constructive resilience' (Universal House of Justice 2007; Karlberg 2010; Javaheri 2018). They have not despaired or lost their agency, nor have they allowed hatred and resentment to enter their hearts. They have remained faithful to their beliefs and have continued to live their lives in accordance with the Bahá'í teachings. When all Bahá'í institutions were banned by the authorities, Iranian Bahá'ís found other ways to conduct their collective affairs and attend to the needs of individual members of the community. As circumstances changed, the Yárán was formed with the knowledge of the authorities, and when the members of that group were imprisoned, the Bahá'ís adapted their approach to managing their affairs accordingly. In response to the government's policy of excluding young Bahá'ís from public and private universities, they established their own institution of higher education. In the face of the government's efforts to deprive the Bahá'ís of the means of livelihood, they strengthened their bonds of solidarity and assisted those in need. Furthermore, undeterred by persecution, Iranian Bahá'ís, like Bahá'ís in other parts of the world, have engaged in community-building endeavours. These endeavours are largely educational in nature and aim to foster the spiritual and moral edification of children and junior youth and enhance the capacity of adults to engage in acts of service to the community and the wider society. Additionally, they include devotional gatherings.

Iranian Bahá'ís' response to state-sponsored persecution in the Islamic Republic has been guided by certain principles enshrined in the Bahá'í teachings and expounded by the heads of their Faith. These include obedience to 'the laws of the land in which they reside, without allowing their inner religious beliefs to be violated'; the need for means to be consistent with ends, requiring a non-adversarial approach to promoting social change and refusal to participate in partisan political activity; and the view of government as 'a system for maintaining the welfare and orderly progress of a society' (Universal House of Justice 2013; 'Responding to injustice with constructive agency' in this volume; see also Karlberg 2010: 235–236). This principled response has required sacrifices on the part of individual Bahá'ís; they have chosen the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of society over their personal interests and immediate benefits.

Bahá'ís in every land obey their government in their administrative matters, but do not accept that it has a right to dictate to its citizens their beliefs. In 1983 Iranian Bahá'ís disbanded all Bahá'í institutions in Iran after the Attorney General announced a ban on Bahá'í administration. They have also accepted to refrain from teaching their Faith 'in public places, at school, or at work' (Javaheri 2018: 17). They refuse, however, to pledge to not share their beliefs in private conversations with their non-Bahá'í relatives, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances. Under the present circumstances, in which the government is bent on destroying the Bahá'í community as a viable entity in Iran, they also see this as essential to their survival (Universal House of Justice 2015) and are willing to risk arrest and imprisonment for doing so (Yazdani 2018: 171). Given the government's continual campaign of demonization of the Bahá'ís and falsification of their beliefs and their lack of access to a public forum to respond to these attacks, such private conversations also provide an opportunity for individual Bahá'ís to counter false propaganda and correct misconceptions.

Iranian Bahá'ís also view the government's attempt at depriving young Bahá'ís of higher education as an illegal and indefensible act. They established the BIHE, however, only after their

efforts over several years to persuade the authorities to reverse this policy proved ineffective. They also refrained from publicizing it so as not to provoke the authorities. Their sole purpose was to ensure the education of young Bahá'ís; their objective was not defiance or retaliation (Javaheri 2018: 12–13). They have since kept the BIHE operational at great sacrifice, despite the fact that those involved in this endeavour—instructors, administrators, students, and families who have made their homes available to the Institute—have been targeted by the authorities and subjected to arrest and imprisonment. Not only has the community kept this initiative alive, it has even expanded it by recruiting the services of Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í volunteer professors and consultants outside the country, by adding new courses and programmes of study, and by increasing its student body ('Responding to injustice with constructive agency' in this volume). Iranian Bahá'ís' perseverance in maintaining the BIHE is a clear manifestation of their constructive resilience.

The principle that means should be consistent with ends implies that Bahá'ís everywhere abstain from activities that involve conflict and contention, since their overarching goal is to build unity. Conflict and contention are also categorically forbidden in the Bahá'í Writings. In line with this principle, Iranian Bahá'ís have shunned all forms of activity that aim at undermining or overthrowing the current regime. Moreover, their approach to seeking justice—and, more broadly, to promoting social change—has been completely non-adversarial (Karlberg 2010; 'Responding to injustice with constructive agency' in this volume). They use every legal means at their disposal to secure their basic human rights, but do not engage in partisan political activity, since such activity, being premised on the assumption that the interests of various groups of people inherently conflict with each other, entails a contest for power to ensure the supremacy of one group over others.

Bahá'ís in every land view their government as responsible for the wellbeing of all its citizens and are ready to assist it in carrying out this duty. The fact that many at various levels of the state apparatus in Iran have been unyielding in their animosity toward the Bahá'ís has not prevented them from appealing to the authorities to fulfil their responsibilities toward the Bahá'í citizens of the country and to cease persecuting them. They consider the authorities to be fully capable of rectifying their behaviour and see value in reminding them of their moral and legal obligations.

The oppression of the last 40 years has been more pernicious in many respects, but Iranian Bahá'ís are not new to the experience of persecution. The hostilities they have faced throughout the history of their Faith have not weakened their love for Iran, a land that they consider sacred as the cradle of their Faith and ennobled by the blood of thousands of its martyrs. At various times in the past and under challenging circumstances, Iranian Bahá'ís have found ways to work for the betterment of Iran. For example, as the situation in the country was becoming more desperate after World War I, 'Abdu'l-Bahá counselled the Bahá'ís to devote their energies to the progress and prosperity of Iran, engaging in agriculture, industry, trade, education, and the sciences (*Akhbár-i-Amr* 1923). In the years that followed, Iranian Bahá'ís contributed their share to the progress of their homeland. The present regime has aimed to exclude the Bahá'ís from the previously mentioned sectors, but they have managed to survive and even gone beyond that and found avenues to contribute to the healing and betterment of society, for example, by exhibiting and inspiring hope in the future, demonstrating the equality of women and men, eschewing prejudice, promoting unity, and remaining constructive under trying conditions.

While many of those holding the reins of power remain hostile to the Bahá'ís, a vast shift has been taking place in the attitudes of the Iranian public toward their Bahá'í compatriots. Growing levels of education, access to information and counter-narratives through the Internet and social media, and the oppressive policies of the regime have been important factors contributing to this change. Moreover, the public has witnessed that the Bahá'ís' deeds and way of life match

their words and beliefs. In 1915, when the prominent Shi'ite cleric Shaykh Ahmad Sháhrúdí (d. 1931) was writing his *Háqqu 'l-Mubín*, probably the most extensive anti-Bahá'í polemic published prior to the Islamic Revolution, only five percent of Iranians were literate. At the time, he could cite the abolition of the concept of the ritual impurity of divers things and peoples, the exhortation to associate with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness, and the notion of the freedom of conscience, all enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, as self-evident proofs of the falsehood of the Bahá'í Faith. Other clerics among his contemporaries cited Bahá'í principles like gender equality and universal compulsory education for boys and girls as evidence of the depravity of the Bahá'ís (Eschraghi 2020: 320–322, 324). They took it for granted that their audience would find these Bahá'í beliefs and teachings absurd and revolting. Today many Iranians support such values as freedom of conscience and gender equality. The state has alienated large numbers of Iranians who have faced violent attacks and discrimination on account of their gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, political aspirations, and thirst for freedom. In this context, the Bahá'í message of the oneness of humanity, appreciation of diversity, the equality of women and men, and freedom from all forms of prejudice has been finding traction. The fatwas by senior clerics, including Iran's Supreme Leader, prohibiting the Muslim faithful from interacting with the Bahá'ís and the intense campaign of demonization of Bahá'ís carried out in the media and from the pulpits have not been as effective as the enemies of the Bahá'ís had hoped. A larger segment of the Iranian public is aware of the true nature of the Bahá'ís' beliefs and manners today than before the revolution. The walls of prejudice that appeared unassailable only a generation ago are gradually being breached. In recent years, an increasing number of Iranians have been expressing their support for the Bahá'ís and their right to religious freedom. Reports from Iran even point to a growing number of Iranians of Muslim descent identifying with the Bahá'í Faith.

Iranian Bahá'ís view these significant and encouraging developments as tangible results of their sacrifices in the past 40 years. In one of His letters, Bahá'u'lláh makes the following statement: 'Know thou, of a truth, these great oppressions that have befallen the world are preparing it for the advent of the Most Great Justice' (Shoghi Effendi 1984: 27). Iranian Bahá'ís have faith that their suffering and the suffering of all other victims of oppression in Iran contribute to bringing the day closer when justice will have prevailed in their country. In the decades prior to the Islamic Revolution, Iranian Bahá'ís contributed to such fields as education, public health, and industry. In a future Iran, where the reign of justice has enabled all the diverse groups that make up the Iranian people to live free from oppression, it may be anticipated that the Bahá'ís will work shoulder to shoulder with others for the progress and prosperity of their homeland.

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