

URGENT ACTION

SEVEN BAHAI'S LEADERS RISK EXECUTION

The seven members of Iran's Baha'i religious minority are scheduled for trial on 11 July. If convicted, they could face the death penalty.

The detainees' families were told in May that they were now facing the additional charge of *mofsed fil arz* (being corrupt on earth), which can carry the death penalty, and that a new date for their trial has been set. They are scheduled to appear on 11 July before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran where they are likely to be charged with *mofsed fil arz*, as well as "espionage for Israel", "insulting religious sanctities" and "propaganda against the system." Their lawyers have never been able to visit them since their arrest, though they have been allowed family visits.

The seven are members of a group responsible for the Baha'i community's religious and administrative affairs in Iran. They are held in Section 209 of Evin Prison, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence. Six of the group's leaders - Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Vahid Tizfahm - were arrested following raids on their homes by officers from the Ministry of Intelligence on 14 May 2008. A seventh person, acting as a secretary for the group, Mahvash Sabet, had been arrested on 5 March 2008. Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Jamaloddin Khanjani had previously been arrested for their activities on behalf of the Baha'i community. The Baha'i faith is not recognized under the Iranian Constitution.

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

- ✓ calling on the Iranian authorities to release the seven members of the Baha'i minority (naming them) whom Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience held because of their beliefs or peaceful activities on behalf of the Baha'i community;
- ✓ calling on them to drop the charges against the seven, which Amnesty International consider as politically motivated;
- ✓ expressing concern that if convicted of the charges they are said to be facing the seven could be sentenced to death;
- ✓ calling on the authorities to ensure that the seven are protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- ✓ urging the authorities to ensure that the seven are given regular access to their families, lawyers of their choice and any medical treatment they may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 AUGUST 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
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
via website:
[http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?
p=letter](http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter) (English)
[http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?
p=letter](http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=letter)
(Persian)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
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**)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Director, Human Rights Headquarters of
Iran
Mohammad Javad Larijani
Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-
e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737
Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 3390 4986 (please keep
trying)
Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir
(In the subject line write: **FAO Javad
Larijani**)
Salutation: Dear Mr Larijani

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

This is the fourth update of UA 128/08 (MDE 13/068/2008,
15 May 2008).

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The range of crimes punishable by death in Iran is extraordinarily wide, and includes vaguely worded charges, such as "enmity against God" (*moharebeh ba Khoda*) and "being corrupt on earth" (*mofsed fil arz*), which are used against people accused of taking up arms against the state, robbery or spying. These are regarded as crimes against God and as such are not subject to pardon. Offences for which judges may impose the death penalty include those relating to national security.

Under Article 502 of the Penal Code, those convicted of espionage can be sentenced to between one and five years' imprisonment. The more serious charge of "cooperating with foreign states to harm national security" could be considered to be an instance of *moharebeh* (enmity against God) and *ifsad fil arz* (corruption on earth) which are dealt with under Articles 183 to 195 of the Penal Code and attract one of four penalties – execution, cross-amputation, crucifixion or banishment, although the death penalty is the most common punishment applied; or under Article 508, for which the sentence could be from 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. Telecommunications salesman Ali Ashtari was hanged in November 2008 after being convicted of espionage for Israel. Anything about his trial?

The Baha'i faith was founded about 150 years ago in Iran and has since spread around the world. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the Baha'i community has been systematically harassed and persecuted. There are over 300,000 Baha'is in Iran, but their religion is not recognized under the Iranian Constitution, which only recognizes Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Baha'is in Iran are subject to discriminatory laws and regulations which violate their right to practise their religion freely, as set out in Article 18(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party. The Iranian authorities also deny Baha'is equal rights to education, to work and to a decent standard of living by restricting their access to employment and benefits such as pensions. They are not permitted to meet, to hold religious ceremonies or to practise their religion communally. Since President Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005, dozens of Baha'is have been arrested.

Members of the Baha'i community in Iran profess their allegiance to the state and deny that they are involved in any subversive acts against the government, which they say would be against their religion. The Baha'i International Community believes that the allegations of espionage for Israel which have over the years been made against the community in Iran stem solely from the fact that the Baha'i World Centre is in Israel.

Further Information on UA 128/08 (MDE 13/068/2008, 15 May 2008).

UA Number: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Index Number:
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