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Inflammatory speech by the Houthi leader targets Bahá'ís in Yemen with genocidal intent

Bahá'í International Community (19.04.2018) - In a televised speech broadcasted to a wide audience within and outside of Yemen, the leader of the Houthis vehemently vilified and denounced the Bahá'í Faith, further intensifying the ongoing persecution of the Bahá'ís in that country.

On 23 March 2018, Mr. Abdel-Malek al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthis in Yemen, gave a speech on the occasion of the first Friday of the Islamic month of Rajab, which commemorates the introduction of Islam to Yemen, to rally Yemenis against foreign powers and ideologies.

In the course of his speech, Mr. al-Houthi employed a rhetoric reminiscent of statements made by the Supreme Leaders of Iran in former and recent times and strongly denounced the Bahá'í Faith. Mr. al-Houthi warned Yemenis of the "satanic" Bahá'í "movement" that is "waging a war of doctrine" against Islam. He described Bahá'ís as infidels and deniers of Islam and the Prophet and he spread other falsehoods about the Faith and its relationship to western countries and Israel. Finally, he urged Yemenis to defend their country from the Bahá'ís and members of other religious minorities under the pretext that, "those who destroy the faith in people are no less evil and dangerous than those who kill people with their bombs".

Within days of his speech, over twenty news sites reiterated his negative comments about the Bahá'í Faith, and a prominent Houthi writer and strategist commented on social media that "we will butcher every Bahá'í". Similar sentiments were expressed by religious authorities in Sana'a including the Mufti of Yemen, Shams al-Din Muhammad Sharaf al-Din, who received his education in Iran and was appointed by the Houthis last year. He spent a portion of his weekly Friday talk, aired live on television and radio on 30 March, cautioning Yemenis across the country of the influence of the Bahá'ís. Furthermore, the Ministry of Information held the first in a series of workshops to train Yemenis active on social and traditional media on how to respond to the war of doctrine waged by the Bahá'ís. Other similar seminars, conferences and workshops were also organized by the Ministry of Information and government universities in Sana'a, Hudaidah, Dhamar, Imran, and Hujjah. Finally, a few days ago a Yemeni TV program named "Frankly" dedicated an episode to attack human rights organizations and the Bahá'í Faith, specifically referring to individual Bahá'ís by name and displaying their photographs.

"Not only is the content of Mr. al-Houthi's speech deeply concerning, but also its context and some of its immediate consequences," explained Ms. Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations. "Mr. al-Houthi's influence over a large number of armed followers as well as the echoing of his sentiments by the highest religious authority in Yemen, by other government officials, and by others on traditional and social media all imply that Mr. al-Houthi's latest speech is a call for mass atrocity crimes against a religious minority which is genocidal in intent."

Ms. Dugal further stated, "In order to avoid disastrous consequences for thousands of Yemeni Bahá'ís, the international community must condemn these latest actions by Mr. al-Houthi in the strongest terms, to demand an end to the spread of vitriolic, false rhetoric, and incitement to hatred against the Bahá'ís, and to call for the immediate release of all Bahá'ís imprisoned in Yemen."

These latest developments constitute a severe escalation of the systematic pattern of activity undertaken by the authorities in Sana'a to oppress the Yemeni Bahá'ís—a pattern punctuated by the mass arrest in August 2016 of over 60 women, men, and children participating in an educational gathering organized by Bahá'ís; the call in April 2017 for the arrest of over two dozen prominent members of the Bahá'í community and the subsequent detention of several Bahá'ís, including members of Bahá'í institutions; and the court pronouncement in January 2018 for the public execution of Mr. Hamed bin Haydara, a Bahá'í detained since 2013 for his religious beliefs, and the dissolution of all Bahá'í Assemblies in Yemen. Despite mounting pressure, at present, six Bahá'ís remain in prison, Mr. Haydara's death sentence remains to be repealed, and some prominent Yemeni lawyers have refused to accept his appeal case in the fear of possible repercussions. Reports further indicate that the Houthis are monitoring and seeking to identify the Bahá'ís.

Several independent sources have repeatedly confirmed that Iranian authorities are directing efforts to persecute the Bahá'ís in Yemen. Multiple reports further indicate that high-ranking officials in the National Security Bureau are maintaining pressure on the Bahá'í community as a result of instructions from Iran despite repeated appeals by prominent Yemenis, including some among the Houthis, for the release of the imprisoned Bahá'ís.

Houthi militias rule in favor of executing Baha'i detainee

Iran Press Watch (03.01.2018) - <http://bit.ly/2AGRtIt> - Houthi militia in Yemen have sentenced detainee Hammed bin Haidara to death on the backdrop of his Baha'i beliefs and decided to shut down all Baha'i quarters in the country.

The judgment issued by the Houthi-controlled Criminal Court in Sanaa also confiscated the funds of Hammed bin Haidara, and shut all Baha'i centers in the country.

Houthi militias continue to persecute the Baha'i minority with arrests and raids, most recently with the issuance of the death sentence against Haidara, despite the United Nations Human Rights Council's decision in late September, with a unanimous vote, to release all Baha'i detainees in Yemen.

The Yemeni initiative to defend the rights of the Baha'is considered the Haidara case as a step in a series of systematic violations against the Baha'i minority in Yemen, aiming at eradicating them along with obliterating the intellectual and religious diversity in Yemen.

A statement said on Tuesday that: "This is an Iranian agenda intending to persecute Baha'is by the Houthi agents, in a clear and serious violation of human rights and the Yemeni constitution."

According to the initiative, the Baha'i detainee was sentenced to death after having spent four years in prison during which he was subjected to severe torture, ill-treatment and solitary confinement. He was forced to sign false confessions under torture.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion said earlier that the persecution of Baha'is in Iran had been reflected in the pattern of persecution that this

group is facing in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, which is controlled by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia.

Militias have abducted dozens of Baha'is without any charge; amid fears that this death sentence could prelude to discrimination against this minority.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (ONCHR) pointed out that the number of Baha'is in Yemen is estimated at about 2000 people live in several Yemeni provinces.
