

IRAN: Wave of support in the EU for persecuted Baha'is

[Foreign Minister of Luxembourg writes to Iranian counterpart in wave of support for Iran's persecuted Baha'is](#)

Baha'is International Community (30.07.2020) – <http://www.bic.org/brussels> – The Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Jean Asselborn, [has written](#) to Iran's Foreign Minister, Muhammad Javad Zarif, condemning the recent escalation of the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran, the largest non-Muslim religious minority in the country. The letter is part of a new wave of support for Iran's Baha'is by Members of the European Parliament (EP) as well as numerous parliamentarians and prominent figures in Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Finland and Ireland.

In the letter sent to Mr. Zarif, Mr. Jean Asselborn has expressed his concern regarding the situation of the Baha'is in Iran. He has followed this with a public [statement](#) asserting that the reopening of proceedings against "members of the Baha'i community in recent weeks" and the "incarceration of members of the community" during the COVID-19 pandemic were "particularly worrying".

Since the beginning of 2020 and despite the ongoing health crisis, the Iranian authorities have increased their religiously-motivated prosecution of the Baha'is, targeting over 100 individuals in Bushehr, Fars, Isfahan, Kerman, South Khorasan, Tehran, and Yazd provinces. Moreover, despite international calls to release prisoners of conscience due to the global pandemic, some Baha'is still remain in prison.

At the European Union level, the Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Iran, Cornelia Ernst, has issued a [statement](#) of support, stating that the "intimidation and repression levelled against religious minorities, in particular the Baha'i community, must...end."

The European Parliament's Vice President, Heidi Hautala, together with other EP members, has signed a [joint statement](#) calling on the Iranian authorities to "cease the baseless accusations against Baha'is, to acquit them of all charges and to let them freely practice their faith."

On the national level, a group of over 30 German parliamentarians, human rights defenders, health experts and non-governmental organizations have appealed to the Iranian government in a [letter](#) addressed to President Hassan Rouhani to drop the charges against Iran's Baha'is in the proceedings and to release all remaining prisoners.

The Dutch government has also put the situation of the Baha'i community in Iran on the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Committee for September.

In Ireland, more than 70 politicians and health experts have signed a similar [statement](#), writing that "[a]s we in Ireland begin to be released from lockdown, the Iranian authorities are locking up dozens of Baha'is." The letter has further asked the Iranian government to "end the state-sponsored dehumanisation and persecution of their Baha'i citizens" and to "allow Baha'is their basic human rights".

Parliamentarians in the [UK](#) and [Norway](#) have also called for an end to the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran.

"These strong expressions of support by European officials at the highest levels demonstrate that although the Iranian government has tried, time and time again and city after city, to destroy the Baha'i community as a viable entity," said Rachel Bayani, Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the European Union in Brussels. "These discriminatory policies and actions do not go unnoticed and are condemned the world over".

Outside of Europe, just last month, [a group of 21 senior members of parliament and senators in Canada has made an "urgent demand"](#) to the Iranian government to halt the recent escalation of the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran. In the United States, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom has [expressed concern](#) about the persecution of the Baha'is and various members of congress called for the release of the Baha'is from prison. A [joint letter](#) signed by 19 civil society organizations and addressed to the US Secretary of State has expressed concern regarding the rise in persecution against the Baha'is. This week, too, more than 250 Australian health practitioners have [signed an open letter](#) expressing their concern about the human rights pressures faced by the Baha'i community in Iran.

The Baha'is in Iran have been systematically persecuted since

the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. They are barred from numerous businesses and professions and employment in the public sector.

They are denied the right to study in universities, are routinely arrested, interrogated, and imprisoned, their properties are confiscated, their cemeteries desecrated, and their private livelihoods are often disrupted or blocked—all because of their beliefs. This persecution has been widely documented and condemned by [UN bodies and the international community](#) for four decades.

YEMEN: Six prominent Baha'is released

– BIC (31.07.2020) – www.bic.org/brussels – Six prominent Baha'is imprisoned by the Houthi authorities in Sana'a have today been released, the Baha'i International Community can confirm.

Following these releases, the Baha'i International Community calls for the lifting of all charges against these six individuals and the other Baha'is charged, the return of their assets and properties, and, most importantly, the safeguarding of the rights of all Baha'is in Yemen to live according to their beliefs without risk of persecution.

“We welcome the releases today yet remain gravely concerned,” said Diane Ala'i, Representative of the Baha'i International Community. “As Yemen's search for durable, societal peace continues, Baha'is must be able—like all Yemenis—to practice their faith safely and freely, in keeping with the universal principles of freedom of religion or belief. This is not possible until the charges are lifted.”

“The Baha'i International Community expresses its gratitude to the UN Special Envoy for Yemen as well as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. We also thank those governments and non-governmental organizations that have provided their support throughout this process.”

The six Baha'is—Mr. Hamed bin Haydara, Mr. Waleed Ayyash, Mr. Akram Ayyash, Mr. Kayvan Ghaderi, Mr. Badiullah Sanai, and Mr. Wael al-Arieghie—were wrongfully imprisoned in Sana'a for several years on the basis of their beliefs and made to face a series of baseless charges.

For picture and more information, see <https://news.bahai.org/story/1443/>

IRAN: Baha'i Mitra Badrnzehad released

— Sen's Daily/ Hrana (07.03.2020)
— <https://bit.ly/2UJnihn> — Mitra Badrnezhad-Zohdi was released from Sepidar prison in Ahvaz on 5 March, at the end of her one-year sentence. She was arrested in 2018 and charged with membership of the Baha'i organisation. Initially sentenced to five years in prison by a Revolutionary Court, her sentence was reduced to one year by the Review Court for Khuzestan Province. She began her sentence at the Sepidah Prison in Ahvaz on 21 September 2019, and was granted one 10-day furlough ending on 2 January this year.

Additional information from HRANA

Mitra Badrnejad (Zohdi), 51, reported to prison in the city of Ahvaz, southwestern Iran, on 22 September 2019, to begin serving a one-year prison sentence for being a Baha'i follower after being subjected to “psychological torture” in the custody of the Intelligence Ministry, her son, Rouzbeh Zohdi, informed the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI).

Iran's Constitution does not recognize the Baha'i faith as an official religion (such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism).

Badrnejad was convicted of “membership in the Baha'i organization” and “propaganda against the state” by Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court in Ahvaz presided by Judge Zare (first name unknown), who sentenced her to five years in prison and two years in exile.

Upon appeal, her prison sentence was reduced to one year and the exile sentence was thrown out.

Security agents who confiscated not only her computers and phones but also her gold jewelry with Baha'i symbols on it arrested Badrnejad during a raid on her family's home on 2 March 2018.

"My mother was held in solitary confinement for 50 days in the Intelligence Ministry's detention center and Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz and then released on bail," Zohdi said. "We actually gave the deed to our house as collateral [for bail]."

"My mother said that on all the days when she was interrogated, she sat on a chair, blindfolded, in front of a wall, and her interrogator stood behind her, insulting her with very ugly words. On one occasion, they threatened to deal with her sons and she was very afraid. Fortunately it was only psychological torture, not physical."

Zohdi continued: "As far as I know, my mother's charges were based on Baha'i functions she organized at our home and for having Baha'i books. Baha'is have religious functions every 19 days and some of them were held in my mother's home."