

IRAN: Baha'i leader released from prison in Iran after 10 years; six other Baha'i leaders remain behind bars

Mahvash Sabet, one of the Baha'i Seven prisoners for whose release HRWF campaigned, is finally free, but state-led persecution of the Baha'i community continues.

Center for Human Rights in Iran (18.09.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2hckIyX> – The Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) welcomes the release of the Baha'i leader, Mahvash Sabet, who was unjustly imprisoned in Iran for 10 years on the sole basis of her religion. CHRI calls for the immediate release of the six other Baha'i leaders, who have all been imprisoned in Iran since 2008, and an end to the state-led persecution of the Baha'i community.

“All seven of these individuals, including Mahvash, were unjustly imprisoned to begin with, and should not have spent one day in prison, let alone 10 years,” said Hadi Ghaemi, CHRI's executive director.

“The state's persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran is relentless and in violation of international and Iranian law,” said Ghaemi.

The Baha'i community is one of the most persecuted religious minorities in Iran. Members of the faith are forbidden to publicly practice their religion, are routinely denied employment and education, suffer the confiscation of their property and the closing of their businesses, and its leaders are imprisoned. There are currently some 90 members of the Baha'i faith in prison in Iran due to the practice of their religion.

May 15, 2017, marked the ninth anniversary of the imprisonment of seven leaders of Iran's Baha'i community – Jamaloddin Khanjani, Behrouz Tavakkoli, Saeid Rezaie, Fariba Kamalabadi, Vahid Tizfahm, Afif Naeimi, and Mahvash Sabet. The "Baha'i 7" were each sentenced to 20 years in prison on sham national security-related charges before their sentences were reduced to 10 years upon appeal.

The United Nations has condemned Iran's persecution of its Baha'i community. According to Article 25 of the Charter on Citizens' Rights, which Iranian president Rouhani signed in December 2016, "Citizens have freedom of thought. Inquisition is prohibited, and no one can be persecuted merely for his or her beliefs." However, Baha'i leaders have noted that the persecution of the Baha'i community has actually increased during the Rouhani administration.

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