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IRAN: FORB Monthly Digest : News about Baha'is and Christians in October

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Baha'is

Four Baha'is bailed in Shiraz

Hrana / Sens Daily (27.10.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/RR8sztv>
– Mo`in Mithaaqi, Negaareh Qaaderi, Haayedeh Forutan and her

son **Mehran Mosallanezhad** were freed on bail on October 26. The first two were arrested in Shiraz on September 22, and Mrs. Mosallanezhad and her son on October 27. They were taken to Facility 201 – run by the city Police, rather than the Ministry of Intelligence – and held in solitary confinement for their interrogations. Bail was set at 800 million tumans each, which (if it is not a mistake for rials) is unusually high: 164,000 euros or \$US 190,000.

Appeal of the Bahais of Ivel against expropriations rejected

Hrana/ Sens Daily (22.10.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/JR8d6xd> – An appeal by the Baha'is of the village of Ivel against the state seizure of their lands and homes has been rejected, without a hearing or a reason. **Mohammad-Hadi `Erfaaneyaana-Kaas**, a lawyer for the judiciary, announced on September 21 that he had decided not to allow a retrial. A lawyer acting for the Baha'is had lodged a request for a new hearing on February 23 this year.

The village has been the scene of severe anti-Bahaism. The Baha'i population of the village was expelled after the 1979 revolution, and some at least of the properties were confiscated. Many of the Baha'is fled to the city of Sari, but some continued to farm land and pick fruit, without living in the village. In 2010, about 50 Baha'i-owned homes were demolished.

Latest in a series of raids on Bahai homes in Shiraz

Hrana/ Sens Daily (18.10.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/KR8fnNd> – On October 16, agents from the Ministry of Intelligence in Shiraz raided the home of **Soroush Abaadi** and **Nora Momtaaziyaan**, their fourth raid on this home in the space of two years. Because of the previous raids, there was little to find in the house, but

they took away Mrs. Momtaaziyaan's mobile telephone and some pieces of paper. Mrs/ Momtaaziyaan has been summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence's Facility 100 for interrogation, on October 21. Mrs. Momtazian's father, **William Momtaaziyaan**, lives in the same block of apartments. His apartment was searched on April 7 this year, when agents seized a computer hard drive, mobile telephones, electronic equipment and Bahai books.

At around 10 am on October 16, agents rang his doorbell and were admitted to the lobby, but they went unannounced to the apartment of Mr Abaadi and Mrs Momtaaziyaan. Mr. Abaadi was not home, and the agents had no female officer with them, but they entered and searched the home, and gave Mrs. Momtaaziyaan a summons. Mr. Abaadi was arrested on October 21, 2019, and the home was searched at that time with the seizure of all electronic devices and some personal effects. He was arrested again on April 6, 2021, and books and electronic devices were again confiscated. He was released on bail on May 8 2021. I do not have a record of the fourth raid on this home that HRANA mentions: it may be the raid on the apartment of Mrs. Momtaaziyaan's father, or perhaps my records are incomplete.

Optician in Qaemshahr fired for Baha'i beliefs

Hrana / Sens Daily (17.10.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/pR8gmbJ> – Six years ago, the optician's business of **Soheil Haqdust** in Qaemshahr was closed down by the authorities because he had taken a free day to observe a Baha'i Holy Day. He went to work in the office of an ophthalmologist in the city, but has now been fired because the Republican Guard put pressure on his employer. Then he was arrested, on the accusation that he had spread information about the closure of his shop, and the businesses of other Baha'is in the Province of Mazandaran. After four days he was freed on bail, and the Revolutionary Court of Sari later sentenced him to one year in prison for

“propaganda against the regime.” The Provincial Review Court reduced this to four months, but in February 2019 he was among those pardoned on the anniversary of the triumph of the 1979 Revolution.

Arsalaan Yazdaani bailed in Tehran (updated)

Hrana / Sens Daily (16.10.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/0R8jQ5p>– **Arsalan Yazdani**, a Baha’i living in Tehran, was released on bail on October 16 after 45 days in detention. He was arrested on September 1, in a raid on the family home, and taken to Evin Prison. The agents also seized some personal effects. On September 30, agents raided his parents’ home and seized more personal belongings. On October 6, an order was issued for the return of some of the materials that had been seized, including their own and their childrens’ laptops and mobile phones.

IranWire later reported that when the agents searched the couple’s home, they did not find any Baha’i books, but he had a collection of old (non-Bahai) books that belonged to his mother. One of these was a life of **Hazrat-e Abbas**, meaning the martyr Al-Abbas ibn Ali, who was martyred in Karbala in the year 689. Being an old book (dating from pre-inflation days!) it had the price printed on the cover: “Bahaa (price): 57 Rials.” The arresting officer thought that “Bahaa” was the same as Baha’i.

Shayda Taa’id released on bail

Hrana / Sens Daily (16.10.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/kR8hKcq> – **Shayda Taa’id**, a Baha’i from **Qaemshahr**, was released on bail on October 4. Bail was set at 900 million tumans (18,400 euros ; \$US 21,400). She was arrested in her home on September 23 this year. Agents searched her home and seized her mobile

phone, electronic devices, books, photographs and writings. She has been imprisoned for her faith before: on January 21, 2013 she was arrested, and three years later was sentenced to one year in prison. She served that sentence in Babol Prison. My information is that she was also arrested in 2010, when she was living in Sari (a short distance from Qaemshahr): I do not know what the outcome of that arrest was.

Mo'in Mohammadi paroled

HRANA/ Sen's Daily (15.10.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/WR7wx1Y> – **Mo'in Mohammadi**, a Baha'i from Yazd, has been told he will serve the remainder of his sentence on parole. He was arrested by agents from the Ministry of Intelligence on January 9, 2019. At the end of March he was sentenced to six years in prison by the Revolutionary Court in Yazd, and was released on bail on April 10. In July, the Review Court for the Province of Yazd reduced his sentence, for "propaganda against the regime" to one year of electronic surveillance by wearing a tracking bracelet. He was required to remain within the city of Yazd and the associated industrial park where he works. The Prosecutor objected to the Review Court's decision and the case was re-tried in Iran's Supreme Court, which overturned the Review Court decision and returned the case to the Revolutionary Court where the Judge sentenced him to the maximum penalty for membership of groups opposed to the regime – 31 months and 16 days – but deducted the 12 months he wore an ankle bracelet to give a sentence of 19 months and 16 days. On May 6 this year he was summoned to the punishments implementation office and told he must report to prison within 10 days.

16 Baha'i students excluded, & a short history of discrimination

HRANA/ Sen's Daily (07.10.2021) – <https://cutt.ly/SR7wRdd> – IranWire has a short history of the various disguises used to exclude Baha'i students from

tertiary education in Iran. Since the results of the 2021 national entrance exams were announced in late September, Baha'i students who obtained passing grades and went to the education assessment site found they were under "General Disqualification." Because of his or her faith, a Baha'i student does not meet one of the general conditions set out for the 2021 entrance exam.

The first paragraph of these general conditions states that the student is required to follow Islam or one of the religions recognized in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. The report lists 16 Baha'is known to have been barred from entering university in this way: Nora Motlagh, Leva Motlagh, Sepehr Nikki, Ava Shahriari, Nora Nabipour, Mesbah Misaghi, Foroutan Rahmani, Rosa Mokhlesi, Nasim Shahriari, Farhan Shizadi, Elena Qolizadeh Roshankoochi, Mahsa Forouhari, Forouzan Nikokar, Parsa Charkhand, Lena Kamjoo and Emilia Hakimian.

Christians

UN told: 'Don't forget Iran's persecuted Christians'

Article 18 (29.10.2021) –
<https://articleeighteen.com/news/9495> – Article18 has partnered with seven other organisations to ask senior UN figures not to forget Iran's persecuted Christians in future reports about the human rights situation in the country.

In their letters sent at the end of October to the UN's secretary-general, António Guterres, and the special rapporteur on human rights in Iran, Javaid Rehman, they asked that in all future reports they "include specific reference to the main victims of FoRB [freedom of religion or belief] violations", including Christians. See their well documented letters here.

Christian prisoners of conscience ask: 'Where can I worship after I'm released?

Article 18 (27.10.2021) – <https://articleeighteen.com/news/9468/> – Three Iranian Christians serving long prison sentences for their membership of a house-church have written a joint letter and recorded video statements, asking where they should worship once they are released.

As the three Christians, **Babak Hosseinzadeh**, **Behnam Akhlaghi**, and **Saheb Fadaie**, point out, the churches of Iran's recognised Christians of Armenian and Assyrian descent are not permitted to welcome Persian-speaking Christians like them, so their only option is to worship in their homes in what have become known as "house-churches".

Christian convert denied parole – he never applied for it

Article 18 (25.10.2021) – <https://articleeighteen.com/news/9449/> – An Iranian Christian convert who has spent more than three years in Tehran's Evin Prison for leading a house-church was told yesterday he has been denied parole for a second time – despite never applying for it.

Zaman (Saheb) Fadaie, who is 40 years old, has been in prison since July 2018, serving what was initially a 10-year sentence, later reduced to six years has consistently refused to apply for conditional release, saying he cannot accept the condition of no further involvement with a house-church.

Christians summoned to Tehran prosecutor for final defence

Article 18 (20.10.2021) –
<https://articleeighteen.com/news/9422/> – Five Iranian Christians who were among dozens arrested during coordinated raids on house-churches in three cities last year were summoned on 16 October to give their final defence before a Tehran prosecutor.

The charges included: “weakening the foundation of the family”, “attracting Muslims to house-churches”, “being members of hostile groups to the Islamic Republic in order to damage national security”, “weakening the belief in Muslim clerics”, “propagating Christian Zionism”, and “establishing and organising corrupt meetings”. They denied all the charges.

Christian convert released on bail after month’s incommunicado detention

Article 18 (04.10.2021) –
<https://articleeighteen.com/news/9337/> – **Ayoob Poor-Rezazadeh** (28), a Christian convert detained incommunicado for almost a month following his arrest by agents of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps has finally been released from custody, albeit only on bail.

He was one of three Christians arrested on the evening of Sunday 5 September in the northern city of Rasht – two at a house-church service, and the third at his home.

Further reading about FORB in Iran on HRWF website

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