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# **IRAN: Religious persecution and issues – Monthly Digest August**

## **Religious persecution and issues – Monthly Digest August**

### **Christians**

#### **Renewed crackdown on Christians in Iran underway**

Catholic Herald (17.08.2023) – Britain is an increasingly impoverished society: spiritually and financially. Still,

anyone born here has won the historic lottery relatively speaking. It is easy for us to forget that harsh persecution, especially of a religious type, is the global norm, not the exception.

Nowhere better demonstrates this than Iran. Once a western-allied kingdom with an increasing respect for free thought and religious minorities, many of which predate the arrival of Islam- since its 1979 Islamic Revolution it has been under the tight grip of a succession of Ayatollahs and crackpot presidents.

Article 18, a British charity that aims to defend and promote religious freedom in Iran, reported that a renewed crackdown on Christianity was underway, with 69 Christians arrested in recent weeks.

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**At least 10 still detained as numbers of arrests and affected cities rise**

Article 18 (10.08.2023) – A clearer picture is beginning to emerge of the dozens of arrests of Christians that took place over a seven-week period in June and July, across as many as 11 Iranian cities.

Article18 previously reported that over 50 Christians had been arrested in the space of seven days in mid-July, across five different cities. The number of confirmed arrests now stands at at least 69, across 11 cities, and with at least 10 of those arrested – four men and six women – still in detention.

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## **Baha'is**

### **Tehran Revolutionary Court sentences Baha'i citizen Nazila Haghar to five years in prison**

Iran Press Watch (30.08.2023) – **Nazila Haghar**, a Baha'i citizen, has received a five-year prison sentence from the Tehran Revolutionary Court, a verdict that was subsequently affirmed on appeal on August 20, 2023.

In a trial in absentia, Haghar was handed down a five-year sentence for “membership in an illegal group aimed at undermining national security.”

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### **Two more Baha'is arrested in ongoing persecutions**

Iran Press Watch (23.08.2023) – Security forces of the Islamic Republic in the city of Semnan violently arrested two members of the persecuted Baha'i religious minority on Monday, IranWire reports.

The first arrest took place at the home of **Anisa Fanaian Iqani**. Agents entered the home without a warrant and for three hours searched the premises, seizing Baha'i books and photographs, mobile phones, laptops, money and gold.

Fanaian Iqani was taken into custody after her house was searched and transported her to an undisclosed location.

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### **Baha'i Citizen Susan Badavam sentenced to over four years in prison**

Iran Press Watch (23.08.2023) – The Rasht Revolutionary Court has handed down a verdict against **Susan Badavam** (Farhangi), a Baha’i citizen, sentencing her to a total of four years and 47 days of imprisonment, coupled with additional social restrictions.

The court’s ruling, delivered to Badavam on Monday, August 21st, includes a sentence of three years, six months, and one day for her alleged “educational activities associated with religious sects and groups contrary to Islamic Sharia,” alongside an additional seven months and 16 days for purportedly “disseminating propaganda against the regime.” Additionally, she has been deprived of some civil rights for a duration of ten years.

If the verdict is upheld on appeal, three years and six months for the first count will be enforceable to her.

Badavam’s arrest dates back to December 19, 2022, when she was apprehended by intelligence agents from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Gilan Province.

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### **Appeal Court confirms six-year sentence for Baha’i Citizen Hooshidar Zarei**

Iran Press Watch ( 17.08.2023) – The Court of Appeals of Fars province has upheld a six-year sentence against Baha’i Citizen **Hooshidar Zarei**. He has also been sentenced to a two-year travel ban, a fine, and other social restrictions.

Zarei has been found guilty of multiple charges including “propaganda against the regime” and “sectarian propaganda in favor of anti-regime groups.”

Zarei will serve five years of his sentence as per Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code.

Zarei was arrested on April 29, 2023, by security forces in Shiraz and was released after 22 days of detention on a 1.2 billion Tomans bail from Adelabad Prison. Zarei, who is approximately 43 years old, is a Judo Coach and a resident of Shiraz.

### **Iran arrests 9 members of Baha'i faith on charges of smuggling medicine and financial wrongdoing**

Apnews (14.08.2023) – Iran's intelligence ministry arrested nine members of the Baha'i faith on charges of smuggling medicine and financial wrongdoing, state media reported on Monday.

State IRAN newspaper said the arrested people, mostly members of one family, had roles in smuggling medicine through a network of dozens of pharmacies. It said they bribed medics to send clients to the pharmacies and were involved in money laundering and tax evasion.

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### **Sentences of 20 years upheld for two Baha'i women**

Iran Press Watch (11.08.2023) – The Tehran Court of Appeal has maintained the original rulings against Baha'i citizens, **Mahvash Sabet** (Shahriari) and **Fariba Kamalabadi**, confirming their 20-year prison terms. Initially, both women were sentenced to ten years, along with additional penalties by the Tehran Revolutionary Court on charges of "forming and leading groups to act against national security."

A source close to Sabet's family revealed to HRANA that Sabet, aged 70, is battling multiple illnesses that have been aggravated by her prolonged imprisonment. Over the past few months, she has faced several hospitalizations.

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### **Baha'i Citizen Sanaz Tafazoli receives lengthy prison sentence**

Iran Press watch (08.08.2023) – The Mashhad Revolutionary Court has handed down a lengthy sentence of ten years and nine months to Sanaz Tafazoli, a Baha'i citizen currently held in Vakilabad prison.

Presiding Judge Hadi Mansouri issued the sentence, comprising six years and six months for “forming a group to act against national security,” three years and seven months for “assembly and collusion against national security,” and eight months for “educational/promotional activities against Sharia.”

During the trial, the presentation of “books and works related to the Baha'i faith” and the establishment of “educational groups for Baha'i children” were cited as evidence for the aforementioned charges.

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### **Nine Baha'i Citizens begin serving prison sentences in Karaj**

Iran Press Watch (08.08.2023) – On Saturday, August 5, 2023, nine Baha'i individuals were incarcerated in Kachooie Prison and the Central Prison of Karaj to commence their prison terms.

According to a reliable source who spoke to HRANA, **Mahsa Tirgar Bahnemiri, Rameleh Tirgarnejad, Elham Shareghi Arani, Nakisa Sadeghi, Sadaf Sheikhzadeh, Shahrzad Mastouri, and Negin Rezaie** were transferred to Kachooie prison, while **Kamyar Habibi** and **Saman Ostovar** were imprisoned in the Central Prison of Karaj.

In mid-June, the Appellate Court of Alborz province upheld a combined 40-year, seven-month sentence against these Baha'is along with four others. They have also received additional punishments as part of their conviction.

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