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News from Baha'is in jail in December

HRWF (31.12.2019) – Baha'is in Iran have continued to be arrested, sentenced to prison terms and sometimes released on bail after a period of pretrial detention without criminal charges being dropped. The official charges are usually: forming an illegal cult, membership in the deviant Baha'i sect, membership in an anti-Islamic group, participation in illegal assemblies, propaganda against the regime, posing a threat to the holy regime of the Islamic Republic by teaching Baha'i ideas, acting against national security, espionage, and so on. Many Baha'I women are behind bars in Iran.

Release of Shahnam Jadhvani sentenced in 2012

Sen's Daily (30.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/35c3RQ0> - **Shahnam Jadhvani**, a Baha'i from Minudasht, was released from Gonbad prison on December 28. He and his wife **Shohreh Samimi** were arrested in Minudasht in October 2012. Around the same time, 20 other Baha'is were arrested in Golestan Province by agents from the Ministry of Intelligence, acting without warrants. Many Baha'i homes were searched, with the seizure of computers, books and family photo albums. Mr. Jadhvani was sentenced to eleven years in prison by Judge Mohsen Qadbari, on charges of "membership in the Baha'i organisation, and

propaganda against the regime and in favor of the Baha'i Faith by participating in the Ruhi programme in Golestan province."

His wife was sentenced to nine years in prison by the same judge. The other Baha'is arrested at that time were initially given very long sentences, but these were all reduced by the Review Court to less than two years, except that the Review Court did not at that time announce its decision on the cases of Mr. Jadhbani and his wife. **Later the Review Court reduced his sentence to 15 months, on the charges of membership of the Baha'i organisation and six months for participating in Ruhi classes.** Sentences are normally served concurrently, so the longer sentence applies, but Mr. Jadhbani has served not fifteen but rather 19 months. The report does not indicate why neither this "section 134" rule regarding concurrent sentences, nor the provision for release after serving half of one's sentence, was applied in his case.

Sentences reduced for nine Baha'is in Birjand



Sen's Daily (25.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2MKwjSW> - The Review Court for South Khorasan Province has reduced the long sentences handed down by a Revolutionary Court to nine Baha'is. **Behman Saalahi, Khalil Malaaki, Bizhan Ahmadi and Saagher Mohammadi** have been sentenced to **four years in prison.**

Shayda Abedi has a three-year sentence.

Firuz Ahmadi, Simin Mohammadi and Maryam Mokhtaari have been sentenced to two years in prison.

The ninth person in this report is **Sohrab Malaaki, sentenced to three and a half years in prison.** But in HRANA's previous report on July 8 this year, the ninth person was **Rafa'at Taalebi-fard.** There is no explanation of why the name of the ninth person has changed.

The Revolutionary Court had sentenced all nine to five years on the charge of membership of the illegal and subversive Baha'i organisation, and one year on a charge of propaganda against the regime in the form of teaching the Baha'i Faith. The sentences are concurrent. The Revolutionary Court also ordered the confiscation of donations they had collected [from Baha'is] during the 19th-day Feast for the affairs of the Bahai community in Birjand. The Review Court confirmed this confiscation.

Eight of the defendants were arrested in raids of 15 Baha'i homes on the morning of October 21, 2017, but Shayda Abedi was arrested in Birjand on October 29. They were freed on bail

individually, from November 18 to November 24. Although the nine Baha'is were arrested on a Baha'i Holy day (marking the Birth of the Bab), from the fact that so many homes were raided it appears that the Baha'is had not gathered to celebrate the day but were remembering the occasion separately in their homes.

Sentences of 10, 5 and 3 years reduced for 3 Baha'is in Semnan



Campaign for Prisoners of Conscience (18.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/39sDWak> - The Review Court has reduced

- the sentence of **Ardeshir Fenaa'eyan** from **ten years in prison and one year of exile to six years in prison;**
- the sentence of **Behnaam Eskandreyan** from **five years in prison and two years' exclusion from the city of Semnan to three years and six months in prison;**
- and the sentence of **Yalda Firouzeyaan** from **five years in prison and two years' exclusion from Semnan to two years and six months in prison.**

They were notified of their sentences on December 16. They were charged with "membership of illegal groups acting against national security" and "acting against national security through propaganda and organizational activities."

They were not allowed a lawyer during their detention. They were arrested by teams of four to six masked agents from the Ministry of Intelligence in Semnan, in simultaneous raids on their homes at 8 a.m. on April 30 and have been detained since then (not released on bail, which is usual). Mr. Fenaa'eyan has previously served six months in prison for his Baha'i beliefs. He began his sentence in January 2014. Immediately after his release, the Ministry of Intelligence sent him to the army to undertake his military service.

Peymaan Damashqi begins 6-month sentence



Sen' Daily (12.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/35cc8n2> - On November 30, **Peymaan Damashqi**, a Baha'i from Karaj, was summoned to Ghezel Hesar prison in Karaj to begin a **6-month sentence** on the charge of "propaganda against the regime in the form of promoting the Baha'i Faith in cyberspace." I previously reported that he was sentenced to one year in prison by the Revolutionary Court, in a 10-minute trial. On November 13, this was reduced to six months, by the Provincial Review Court, although neither the defendant nor his lawyer knew of the Review Court hearing.

Baha'i prisoners, and other prisoners of conscience in Karaj, are usually sent to Raja'i Shahr prison: Ghezel Hesar has been for people who have actually committed a crime. It is Iran's largest prison. Mr. Damashqi had asked to be imprisoned with the other Baha'i men in Raja'i Shahr but was told that Raja'i Shahr was for prisoners whose files were supervised by the Ministry of Intelligence, whereas his case fell under the Revolutionary Court. His lawyer said that he may have been sent to Ghezel Hesar because his sentence was short.

Mozhgaan Ahmadzaadeh sentenced to 6 months in Qaemshahr

Sen's Daily (06.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/39tjyWk> - **Mozhgaan Ahmadzaadeh-Fedaa'i**, a Baha'i from Qaemshahr whose arrest was not previously reported on Sen's Daily, has been sentenced to **six months in prison** by the Revolutionary Court, on the charge of propaganda against the regime.

She was informed of the sentence on December 2. She was arrested on December 26 last year, when she was driving with her family to a garden they have on the outskirts of Qaemshahr. Her car was surrounded and stopped by four security agency cars. They took her back to her home, which was searched by eight agents. They seized three mobile telephones, a tablet computer, a computer, some flash drives, CD, prayer books, photographs of their children and some religious images. She was taken to the Ministry of Intelligence detention facility, where she was held in solitary confinement for interrogation for one week.

She was bailed on January 2, 2019. She was tried by the revolutionary court on November 13, 2019. She has three children; the youngest has just started primary school.

Sentences of Kimia Mostafavi and Kiaana Rezvaani reduced to 6 months

Sen's Daily/ HRANA (05.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2Q80Qu4> - On December 2, Kimia Mostafavi and Kiaana Rezvaani were informed that **their five-year sentences have been reduced to six months** by the Provincial Review Court for Kerman.

They were exonerated of the charge of "membership of the Baha'i organisation," and sentenced to six months for "propaganda against the regime." The review court hearing was held on November 9, and — unusually — the accused were allowed a lawyer. Mr. Mohammad-Madi `Erfaanayaan represented them. Kiani Rezvaani is a Baha'i student excluded from university with the excuse of a faulty file, the excuse used to bar Bahais from tertiary education in Iran.

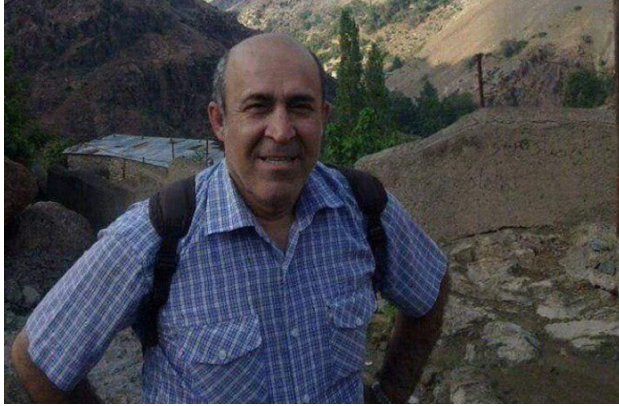
Ali Ahmadi sentenced to 11 years in prison



Sen's Daily (04.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2SGIhk6> - Mr. `Ali Ahmadi, a Baha'i from Qaemshahr, has been sentenced by the Revolutionary Court of Qaemshahr to **eleven years in prison** for "propaganda against the regime." He was informed of his sentence on December 2. He was arrested on November 20, 2018, by agents who insulting his religious beliefs and calling him "unclean" and "Bahai dog." They also seized some religious books mobile phone and computer. He was freed on bail on January 2, 2019, after posting bail of 150 million tumans (31,000 euros; \$US 35,000).

This is the fifth time he has been arrested in the past ten years: On the first occasion he was sentenced to 10 months in prison, and on the second occasion he was acquitted. In 2011 he was arrested with two others and charged with participation in Bahai activities. A previous report said that he is also known as Cheragh-`Ali Ahmadi.

Hassan Momtaaz Sarvestaani sentenced to 5 years in 2017 granted early release



Sen's Daily (03.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/39kR0OZ> - **Hassan Momtaaz Sarvestaani**, a Baha'i from Shiraz who began his **five-year sentence** in 2017, has been granted early release. He had been transferred from Shiraz to Evin Prison in Tehran, to receive medical treatment at a hospital in Tehran, and was released from Evin Prison on December 3.

Mr. Sarvestaani was a teacher of Persian literature for the Baha'i Open University (BIHE). He was first arrested in 2011 and was one of ten Baha'is associated with the BIHE who were tried in Tehran on March 12, 2013. His sentence was handed down by Judge Maqiseh, a notorious abuser of human rights, on February 25, 2014, and confirmed by the review court. He began his sentence in 2017, in Adel Abaad prison in Shiraz, and was transferred to Evin prison in Tehran on February 26, 2019. On August 10 this year he was granted a short medical furlough. I have no record of when this furlough ended, but the current report says that he was released from Evin Prison.

Induced death of the leader of the Gonabadi Sufi Order

IOPHR (24.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2MEhXTU> - Dr. Noor Ali Tabandeh, also known by his spiritual title 'Majzoub Ali Shah' the spiritual leader of the Gonabadi Sufi Order in Iran, passed away on 24 December 2019 in Mehr Hospital of Tehran, following 2 years of being held under house arrest. Dr. Tabandeh was held under inhumane conditions, with severe mental and physical torture inflicted upon him by the Iranian regime, without access to proper medical care, and strictly controlled contact with the outside world.

The last two years of Dr. Tabandeh's life were completely controlled by the Iranian Regime, to the point where multiple disturbing video clips of Dr. Tabandeh were being released, each time unveiling the extent of the horrific tortures he was subjected to.

In a video statement, Dr. Tabandeh mentioned 'they are after my life, and they want to kill me'.

Following this, a few months ago, it was announced by a General Practitioner that Dr. Tabandeh is being poisoned slowly. As a supporting evidence, in a video statement, Dr. Tabandeh stated clearly "they (the regime) give me poison, but expect me to consume it, and pretend that it is honey".

Another time, Dr. Tabandeh explicitly stated, "I don't know what they put in my medication but they constantly make me drowsy and fall unconscious." Also, in another video, Dr. Tabandeh stated, "I want to talk (to my followers), but I can't, because they give me medication which makes me fall asleep".

Two years ago, immediately after the house arrest of Dr. Tabandeh started, a video clip was released in which he clearly explains that the doctors have examined him and announced that he does not suffer from any illnesses and that he will live a long and healthy life. It is clear from this that any incident of sudden deterioration of his health and his subsequent death is out of the ordinary, and a direct result of the cruel treatment of Dr. Tabandeh during his two years under house arrest.

The constant suppression of Gonabadi Sufis in Iran over the last 40 years, and the increasing severity in the crackdown on Sufis in the last two years, including the cruel house arrest of Dr. Tabandeh has led to the deterioration of his health in recent weeks. He spent the last few weeks under Intensive Care Unit in Mehr hospital in Tehran, due to severity of his condition, before passing away.

Dr Tabandeh's body according to reports has been taken for burial to his hometown of Beydokht, in Khorasan province of Iran.

The spiritual leader of over 8 million Gonabadi Sufis in Iran, was placed under a house arrest on February of 2018, during which time the Iranian Regime's severe crackdown on Gonabadi Sufis resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of an unprecedented number of Sufis, and the subsequent killing of Sufis such as Mohammad Raji and Mohammad Salas.

After the ongoing suppression of Gonabadi Sufis for over 40 years since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in February 2018, the Iranian regime threatened to prosecute Dr. Tabandeh and eradicate Sufism from Iran, in what the regime described as the ethnic cleansing of Gonabadi Sufis. As a result, many Sufis gathered to peacefully protest this plan by the Iranian Regime and attempted to protect their leader's house.

Dr. Tabandeh who was a lawyer and Judge prior to becoming the spiritual leader of Gonabadi Sufis, was a strong advocate for human rights, and was imprisoned by the current Iranian regime for protesting the undemocratic actions of the regime.

During his time as the spiritual leader of the Gonabadi Sufis, the Iranian regime consistently put him and his followers under immense pressure, by destroying their houses of worship, repressing, and arresting many of his followers.

Gonabadi Sufis who number in millions, have consistently resisted the extreme interpretation of Islam by the Iranian Regime, and advocate for the separation of state and religion. Gonabadi Sufis have been on the frontline to create social harmony and peace amongst all sections of society and respect for human rights of each person regardless of faith, gender or race. Because of these beliefs, which are opposed by the Iranian regime's extreme ideology, the Sufis have been heavily oppressed.

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News from Baha'is in jail in November

HRWF (30.11.2019) – Baha'is in Iran have continued to be arrested, sentenced to prison terms and sometimes released on bail after a period of pretrial detention without criminal

charges being dropped. The official charges are usually: forming an illegal cult, membership in the deviant Baha'i sect, membership in an anti-Islamic group, participation in illegal assemblies, propaganda against the regime, posing a threat to the holy regime of the Islamic Republic by teaching Baha'i ideas, acting against national security, espionage, and so on.

Abbaas Taa'ef in pre-trial detention for 2 months

Sen's Daily (26.11.2019) - <https://bitly.com> - Abbaas Taa'ef, a Baha'i from Tehran, was freed on bail from Evin Prison on 25 November. He was arrested by agents from the Ministry of Intelligence on 27 September. The agents searched his home and workplace and seized a laptop, mobile phone and some ID documents and some of his personal effects. His office, which is his workplace, has been sealed by the authorities. He suffers from heart disease, kidney disease, and diabetes.

Sentences confirmed for 7 Baha'is from Bushehr: 3 years

Sen's Daily (22.11.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2OeMWXW> - The Review court has confirmed the three-year sentences of seven Bahais from Bushehr. They are Minou Reyaazati, Asadollah Jaaberi and his wife Ehteraam Shakhi, Leqa Faraamarzi, Emaad Jaaberi and Puneh Naashari. All seven were arrested in raids on Bahai homes in Bushehr on February 15, 2018. Their homes were thoroughly searched, and personal effects such as laptops, books, flash drives, external hard drives, and family photograph albums were seized. Emaad Jaaberi and Puneh Naashari (were released on bail on March 6 and the remaining five on March 13, 2018. Bail was set at 250 million tumans (53,000 EUR; \$US 66,000).

Samin Maqsudi goes to jail for 5 years

Sen's Daily (11.11.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2OeNVaA> - Samin Maqsudi, a Baha'i from Tehran, began her sentence in the women's wing of Evin Prison on November 9. She was charged with participating in Baha'i activities. The charges relate to her commemoration, in her own home, of the bicentennial of the birth of Baha'u'llah, on October 21, 2017. She was initially sentenced on May 21, 2018, by Judge Moqiseh, a notorious abuser of human rights, and of judicial procedures, who was responsible for the imprisonment of the seven "Yaran." The Review Court for Tehran Province, headed by Judge Zargar, confirmed the 5-year sentence in September this year.

Ghazaaleh Baaqeri-Taari, also from Tehran, was arrested on the same day and sentenced to five years in prison for celebrating the birth of Baha'u'llah.

Recommended reading

Increased persecution of Iran's Baha'I community in 2019 (USCIRF)
<https://bit.ly/37t2jDT>

The Baha'is of Iran, a persecuted community (Baha'I International Community)
https://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/iran/overview_of_persecution-0119_2.pdf

Situation of Baha'is in Iran (Baha'I International Community)
<https://www.bic.org/focus-areas/situation-iranian-bahais/current-situation>

News from Baha'is in jail in October

HRWF (31.10.2019) – Baha'is in Iran have continued to be arrested, sentenced to prison terms and released on bail without criminal charges being dropped. Baha'is in Iran have continued to be arrested, sentenced to prison terms and sometimes released on bail without criminal charges being dropped. The official charges are usually: forming an illegal cult, membership in the deviant Baha'i sect, membership in an anti-Islamic group, participation in illegal assemblies, propaganda against the regime, posing a threat to the holy regime of the Islamic Republic by teaching Baha'i ideas, acting against national security, espionage, and so on.

Three Baha'is in Semnan given long sentences

Sen's Daily (29.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2NqtS7t> - The Revolutionary Court in Semnan has sentenced three Baha'is who were arrested on April 30 to ten years in prison on charges of "membership of illegal groups acting against national security" and "acting against national security through propaganda and organizational activities." Ardeshir Fena'eyan, who is 30 years old, has been sentenced to ten years in prison and one year exile in the town of Khash in Sistan and Baluchestan Province; Behnaam Eskandreyan and Yalda Firouzeyaan, aged 20, have been sentenced to five years in prison and two years' exclusion from the city of Semnan. They were arrested by teams of four to six masked agents from the Ministry of Intelligence in Semnan, in simultaneous raids on their homes at 8 a.m. on April 30.

Ataa-ollah Zafar: 3 weeks in prison

Sen's Daily (20.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2JkM8Oq> - Mr. Ataa-ollah Zaffar was released from Evin prison "in recent days," after about three weeks in detention. His family obtained his release following serious concerns about his health in detention.

On 27 September, security agents raided a number of Baha'i homes in Tehran and Karaj, seizing various personal effects. Behrouz Asadollah-zaadeh and Mr. Zafar are among those whose homes were searched. Mr. Zafar was then arrested. At least five other Baha'i homes were raided, and agents went to the home of Waliollah Qademiyaan to search it, but found nobody home.

Fuzhaan Rashidi: conditional release after 1 year in jail

Sen's Daily (16.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2JjHD6J> - Fuzhaan Rashidi has been granted a conditional early release after serving just over one third of her three-year sentence. She was released from Esfahan prison on 15 October. She and her recently-married husband Milaad Daavadaan were among a group of people arrested Baharestan, near Isfahan, on 23 September 2018, by agents from the Ministry of Intelligence. Milaad Daavadaan was sentenced to six years in prison. Fuzhaan Rashidi was sentenced in a Revolutionary Court to three years for "membership of the Baha'i organisation" with a concurrent one-year sentence for "propaganda against the regime." This was confirmed by the Review Court.

Two Baha'is sentenced for internet postings

Sen's Daily (14.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2BCMj3q> - On 21 September, Paymaan Damashqi, a Baha'i from Karaj, was sentenced to one year in prison by the Revolutionary Court. The trial, lasting less than 10 minutes, was held on 19 September. The trial is reported to have taken place at both the Prosecutor's office and the revolutionary court, suggesting that the Prosecutor also acted as Judge, which would be highly unusual. A relative said that Mr. Damsashqi did not accept the charge of "propaganda against the regime" and did not know

what it was based on. Therefore, he has not, thus far, made any comment on it himself. He was initially summoned in writing by the Police in Karaj in February this year. When he went to the Police station, his mobile telephone was confiscated and he was questioned for half an hour. He was told that he had posted an article entitled "Justice" under the pen-name "A certain Baha'i", and the use of this name constituted, indirectly, propaganda for the Baha'i Faith. When he asked to see the article attributed to him, the interrogator refused.

The Judge offered him release on bail of 50 million tumans, but he was not able to pay that amount. Two days later he was released when the business licence of a friend was accepted as bail.

In recent days, Sima Behrouzi was sentenced to three months in prison in the Revolutionary Court of Yazd, presided over by Judge Dashtipour. She was charged with membership of a group opposing the regime. She was summoned in writing by the Police in Yazd on 20 March this year, and questioned about her membership of Telegram groups. After some time she was summoned to Branch 4 of the Revolutionary Court, and charged with "membership of a group opposed to the regime" and "propaganda in support of a group opposed to the regime." Bail was set at 250 million tumans, which she could not provide, but she was released on bail two days later. On 2 July 2019, she was summoned to a hearing on August 18 at the Revolutionary Court. The summons specified the charges as "membership of the Baha'i community," and "Baha'i propaganda." The sentence, of three months in prison, was announced in the last week of September.

In recent years, a number of Baha'is in Yazd have been sentenced for activities on internet.

Three Baha'is sentenced to three years imprisonment: temporarily released after 25 days behind bars



HRANA (12.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/3629B0v> - Three Baha'i residents of Abadan and Ahvaz, Neda Sabeti (Azadi), Ferooz Farzaneh, and Noshin Afshar were each sentenced to a one-year prison term for the charge of "propaganda against the state" by the Revolutionary Court of Abadan.

A closed source told HRANA that their case was opened by the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and during their interrogations, they were under pressure for forced confession. On 6 May 2019, they were arrested at their houses by six

agents of the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Ahvaz and Abadan. They were released on 13 May but were rearrested for an unknown reason on the same day. They were released on bail on 30 May 2019.

Azita Rafizaadeh released at the end of her 4-year sentence

Sen's Daily (10.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2qKszZz> - Azita Rafizaadeh has been released from Evin Prison after serving a four-year sentence for teaching online classes in computer engineering to members of the Baha'i Faith. Under Iran's apartheid system, Baha'is are banned from gaining advanced qualifications in tertiary institutions in Iran, although there is no formal law against teaching one's skills to others. Nevertheless, she was charged with "undermining national security" for teaching at the Baha'I Institute for Higher Education (BIHE). In January, 2018, she was offered prison furlough if she would sign a statement to repent for her work and promise that she will not work with the BIHE again. But she said she had done nothing to repent for." Her husband Peyman Koushk-Baghi was also imprisoned in October 2015, for teaching at the BIHE.

In 2014, Judge Moqisseh of Branch 28 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced Rafizadeh to four years in prison and her husband to five years in prison on the charge of "membership in the illegal and misguided Baha'i group with the aim of acting against national security through illegal activities at the BIHE educational institute."

The imprisoned couple's son, Bashir Koushk-Baghi, has been raised by another Baha'i family.

Nine converts from Rasht get five years each



Iranian Christians request prayer for nine men of the "Church of Iran" denomination who have each received a five-year prison sentence due to their Christian faith and activity.

MEC (18.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2qR78WG> - Abdolreza (Matthias) Haghnejad was arrested on 10 February when Iranian security (Revolutionary Guard) raided the house church gathering in Rasht where pastor Matthias Haghnejad was ministering. Bibles and mobile phones were confiscated. Khalil Dehkanpour, Hossein (Elisha) Kadivar, Kamal Naamanian, Mohammed Vafada, Shahrooz Eslamdous, Babak Hosseinzadeh, Mehdi Khatibi and Behnam Akhlaghi, who are all members of the same church, were also arrested between 31 January and 23 February.

In March, seven of the accused were released on bail of 150 million Toman (US\$12,500), but Matthias and Shahrooz remained detained.

On 24 July, at a preliminary hearing, Pastor Matthias and the eight others were accused of "acting against national security" and "promoting Zionism." Judge Mohammed Moghiseh rejected the lawyer representing five of the defendants. They rejected an alternate appointed by the court. Angered, the judge transferred the five to Evin Prison.

On 28 July, the remaining four, Mohammad, Kamal, Hossein (Elisha) and Khalil appeared in court to face the same charges. Judge Moghiseh stated the Bible had been falsified and the accused were promoting Zionism.

At a final hearing on 23 September the defendants' lawyer was able to attend. The verdict, pronounced on 13 October, saw each receive five years in prison for "acting against national security." The sentences are being appealed.

Pastor sentenced to five years in prison

CSW (18.10.2019) – <https://bit.ly/31N95jC> – Iranian church leader Matthias Haghnejad and eight members of the Church of Iran denomination who were on trial with him have each been sentenced to five years in prison following a short trial on 23 September.

Pastor Haghnejad was arrested by members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard after a church service on 10 February 2019, while Shahrouz Eslamdoust, Babak Hosseinzadeh, Behnam Akhlaghi, Mehdi Khatibi, Mohammad Vafadar, Kamal Naamanian, Hossein Kadivar (Elisha) and Khalil Dehghanpour were detained following a series of arrests in Rasht in early 2019.

During a court hearing for the nine men on 24 July Judge Mohammed Moghiseh, who is notorious for miscarriages of justice, attempted to coerce Pastor Haghnejad, Mr Eslamdoust, Mr Hosseinzadeh, Mr Akhlaghi and Mr Khatibi, who were being represented by Mr Moshgani Farahani, into accepting a court-appointed legal representative. The judge suspended the proceedings, remanding them in custody on significantly increased bail terms when they refused to do so. Judge Moghiseh subsequently resumed the trial of Mr Vafadar, Mr Naamanian, Mr Kadivar (Elisha) and Mr Dehghanpour, who were representing themselves, on 28 July, during which he asserted that the Bible was falsified and called the men "apostates."

During the hearing on 23 September, the defendants' lawyer was allowed to speak briefly. However, Judge Moghiseh is reported not to have responded to his statement. A source informed CSW that "it seemed as if the judge had already made his decision and allowed this process as a formality before pronouncing a pre-determined sentence."

All nine Christians are appealing their sentences; however, Pastor Haghnejad and those who were defended by Mr Farahani were remanded in custody.

CSW's Public Affairs Team Leader Kiri Kankhwende said: "*CSW condemns in the strongest terms the sentences handed to these nine Christians. Once again it is clear from the brevity of the trial and reported lack of interest of the presiding judge that due process was not observed, and that the judge was not impartial. The charges against these Christians are excessive, completely unfounded and constitute a criminalisation of a religion which the Iranian constitution purportedly recognises. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of these nine men, and all who are detained on account of their religion or belief in Iran.*"

Baha'i woman blindfolded during interrogations, imprisoned under "National Security" crimes



Center for Human Rights in Iran (26.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2mcW43Y> - A Baha'i woman has started serving a prison sentence and a Baha'i man was charged with national security crimes for his peaceful social media activities. These cases demonstrate the Iranian judiciary's ongoing persecution campaign against the minority faith.

Mitra Badrnejad (Zohdi), 51, reported to prison in the city of Ahvaz in southwestern Iran on September 22, 2019 to begin serving a one-year prison sentence. Her son, Rouzbeh Zohdi, informed the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) that she was charged with being a follower of the banned faith after being subjected to "psychological torture" in the custody of the Intelligence Ministry.

"My mother's attorney defended her in court and noted that there was no evidence that she had committed any crime," Zohdi said. "But the judge responded, 'I want to go back to the time at the beginning of the [1979] revolution when judges issued much better sentences against you people,'" he said. "What the honorable judge was referring to was the mass execution of Baha'is in the early days of the revolution."

Iran's Constitution does not recognize the Baha'i faith as an official religion (such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism). Although Article 23 states that "no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief," followers of the faith are denied many rights. Baha'is are one of the most severely persecuted religious minorities in the country.

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). Judge Zare 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 confiscated her computers, phones and gold jewelry with Baha'i symbols on it during a raid of her family's home on March 2, 2018 when they arrested Badrnejad.

None of her possessions have been returned.

"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 her sons and she was very afraid. Fortunately it was only psychological torture, not physical."

Zohdi continued: "Unfortunately, we weren't given a copy of the verdict. They didn't even give a copy to her attorney. The attorney was only allowed to read the verdict. 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."

Baha'i man charged for peaceful social media activities

Farid Ziragi Moghaddam, a 24-year-old Baha'i cobbler in the city of Birjand, eastern Iran, was charged with "acting against national security" for running two channels promoting his faith on the Telegram messaging app, including Nedaye Solhe Baha'i (Baha'i Voice of Peace).

A source with detailed knowledge of his case told CHRI he was pressured to make a false confession.

"On the morning of [August 4, 2019], two men came to Farid's house, where he lives with his mother, holding a folded piece of paper that they said was a search warrant," a source close to Moghaddam told CHRI on September 22.

"As soon as they came inside, two other men with cameras followed and started filming," added the source who requested anonymity for security reasons. "The four agents searched the house, gathered personal items such as a computer, memory chips and a phone, and blindfolded and handcuffed Farid as if he was a dangerous criminal and took him away."

The source added: "After a few days in detention, he was taken to the Revolutionary Court in Birjand and granted bail set at 150 million tomans (\$35,580 USD). They asked him to write down any complaints and he said he had no complaints... But then he was returned to the Intelligence Ministry's detention center and interrogated for 26 days in a row."

During interrogations, Moghaddam's apprentice was accused of trying to "intensify sanctions against Iran" with his social media posts, according to the source.

Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court in Birjand is currently processing Moghaddam's case.

"The interrogators asked about his contacts with prominent Baha'is and his interviews with foreign media," the source told CHRI. "They said he created channels on Telegram to promote the Baha'i faith, but in reality all of the subscribers to his Baha'i channels were Baha'is who discussed their own issues and beliefs."

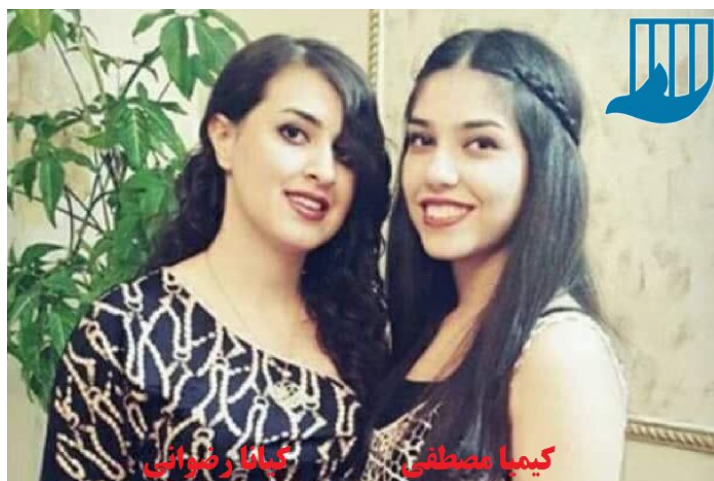
"They told him if he didn't cooperate, they would do something terrible to the Baha'i community and blame it on him and make sure he was excommunicated, but he refused to say anything he didn't believe in," the source added.

"Then one day while he was sitting blindfolded, someone sat on a chair behind him and said he had come from Tehran to help him. He made Farid make a pledge that he would not engage in any propaganda against the state or face severe punishment. Farid had told them that he had never acted against the state and was worried that making the pledge was an admission of guilt that would get him into trouble. They told him if he signed the pledge he would be freed, so he did it, only because he wanted to be released."

The source added: "Farid's family want him to be acquitted because he's innocent... His parents are sick with serious medical issues. In fact, he financially supports the family. He's the only family member who works. The family is not financially secure. His father is deaf, his brother was crippled in an accident, and his mother is unable to work."

Baha'is in jail from August-September

Five years for Baha'i membership.



Kimia Mostafavi and Kiaana Rezvaani

Hrana (23.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2ldmHph> - The Revolutionary Court in Kerman has sentenced Kimia Mostafavi and Kiaana Rezvaani to five years in jail for membership in the Baha'i organisation, and to one year for "propaganda against the regime and in favour of opposition groups." However, prisoners with consecutive sentences only serve the longer sentence. They were arrested in Kerman on 19 January 2019, and were released on bail five days later.

Samin Maqsudi and Ghazaaleh Baaqeri-Taari: 5 years in prison for celebrating the birth of Baha'u'llah

Hrana (22.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2ms1A2s> - The Review Court for Tehran Province, headed by Judge Zargar, has confirmed the 5-year sentence of Samin Maqsudi, a Baha'i from Tehran. She was initially sentenced on 21 May 2018 by Judge Moqiseh, a notorious abuser of human rights and of judicial procedures. This judge was responsible for the imprisonment of the seven "Yaran." She was charged with participating in Baha'i activities.

The charges relate to the commemoration she had in her home for the bicentennial of the birth of Baha'u'llah on 21 October 2017.

Ghazaaleh Baaqeri-Taari, also from Tehran, was arrested on the same day and was sentenced to five years in prison for celebrating the birth of Baha'u'llah.

Parisa Sobhaaneyaan Najafaabaadi: 39 days behind bars to start with

Sens' Daily (19.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2lZSg5N> - Parisa Sobhaaneyaan Najafaabaadi, a Baha'i from the village of Mehrabad which is near Rudehen, has been released on bail from Evin Prison in Tehran pending her trial. She was arrested on 10 August 2019. The agents who arrested her at her home also seized some books and other personal belongings. She was released on 18 September 2019, for bail of 500 million tumans (107,000 euros ; \$US 119,000). The criminal charges were maintained.

Three Tehran Baha'is in Gilavand burial case bailed

Sens' Daily (14.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2lVj9Yp> - Mrs. Munireh Babil-e Soflaa'i, Mrs. Minou Zamaanipour and Mr. Ghollam-hoseyn Mazlumi, were arrested on 10 August 2019 in Gilavand, which is a village in Tehran Province. They were released from Tehran's Evin Prison on 4 September 2019. Their bail was 300 million tumans each (64,000 euros ; \$US 71,000).

Shamsi Aghdasi Azamian, a Baha'i from Gilavand, in Tehran Province, was buried in Gilavand Bahai Cemetery on 24 October 2019. Four days later, her body was exhumed by unknown individuals and abandoned in the deserts on the outskirts of Jaban. Security forces had previously told the Gilavand Baha'is earlier that they had no right to bury their deceased member in Damavand and that they should perform burials only in Tehran. As such, it is a reasonable assumption that government agents exhumed the body and dumped it in the desert. Four days after the burial, police told Mrs. Azamian's son in a phone call that the body of his mother had been found and he should take it to Tehran. He objected since the distance between Gilavand and Tehran is more than an hour, and, according to Baha'i burial rites, the body should not be transported more than an hour. The agents then took the body of Mrs. Azamian to Tehran without the consent of the family.

The charges are maintained.

Abu-Fadl Ansaari: 36 days in prison

Sens' daily (10.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2ma1tZr> - Abu-Fadl Ansaari was released on bail in Karaj on 8 September 2019. He was arrested at his home in Karaj on 3 August 2019 and held in Raja'i Shahr prison. The charges against him are maintained.

Farid Modadam-Ziraki: 37 days in prison

Sens' Daily (09.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2kGWPBD> - On 7 September 2019, Farid Moqadam-Ziraki, a Baha'i from Birjand, was released from detention after posting bail of 150 million tumans (32,000 euros ; \$US 35,000). He was arrested on 3 August 2019 by agents from the Ministry of Intelligence. The agents also searched his home and seized his personal effects. He faces charges of "aggravating the economic sanctions against Iran" and "undermining national security." He was interrogated by the Ministry of Intelligence for 26 days before being transferred to Birjand's Prison.

Rouhaa Emaani: 9 months sentence

Sens' Daily (03.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2lx6f2O> - Mrs. Rouhaa Emaani, from Kerman, was arrested on 3 September 2019 to begin her nine-month prison sentence. Mrs. Emaani was arrested in Yazd during a raid on her home on 12 May 2015, and released on bail on 1 July 2015. She was sentenced by a Revolutionary Court — as is usually the case for Baha'is. Revolutionary Courts try ideological offences, have a single cleric for a judge, and have no fixed procedures.

Ru'in Kohansaal and Ruhollah Zibaa'i: 1 month behind bars

Sens' Daily (02.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2lWp2F0> - According to two separate reports, on 2 September 2019, Ruhollah Zibaa'i and Ru'in Kohansaal were released on bail from Raja'i Shahr prison in Karaj after being detained for one month. They were arrested in Karaj on 3 and 4 August 2019 respectively. Abu-Fadl Ansaari was also arrested on 3 August 2019, which is the same day that agents from the Ministry of Intelligence in Birjand arrested Farid Moqadam-Ziraki. The Provincial command of the Ministry of Intelligence in South Khorasan Province had previously announced that they had arrested an unnamed Baha'i in Birjand who was allegedly attempting to tighten sanctions. Government-sponsored media have also claimed that Mr. Zibaa'i's arrest was in relation to a scheme to tighten the economic sanctions. He is described as conducting business activities in the Alborz and Southern Khorasan provinces.

Other reports speak of a number of Baha'is and people who are affiliated with Baha'is being summoned for questioning in Alborz Province, but no further details are available at present.

The physical condition of both Mr. Zibaa'i and Mr. Ansaari is poor. Mr. Zibaa'i has been released on bail "temporarily" rather than "pending trial," suggesting that this may be a medical release.

Mr. Kohansaal has been bailed pending his trial. It appears that Mr. Ansaari is still being detained. He suffers from a heart condition and has recently had a pacemaker fitted.

The charges against Mr. Kohansaal and Mr. Zibaa'i are maintained.

A bookseller from Iran was arrested on charges of selling 'Bible'

Mustafa Rahimi, a book seller from City of Bukan-Iran, was arrested by the intelligence agencies for selling the Bible, and sentenced to jail

Iranian Christians News Agency (12.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2nLV5Ze> - Reports from Iran indicate that a citizen from Bukan was arrested and imprisoned on charges of selling the Bible.

Mohabat News: Mustafa Rahimi, the son of Ali, was sentenced to six months and one day of imprisonment by 101st Branch of the Bukan Public Revolutionary Court. Sources close to the family of the citizen confirmed his arrest on charges of selling the Bible.

Mustafa Rahimi, who had previously been detained by the intelligence agency on June 11, 2019, was sentenced to a fine and imprisonment but was released on 200 million toman

bail. However, informed sources say that he was summoned to detention a few days later and is held in the Bukan Central Prison.

Bukan is a Kurdish town in West Azerbaijan Province in northwestern Iran. Rahimi had a bookstore in National Bank alley, Bukan. The Islamic Republic of Iran has severely restricted access to books with Christian content, as well as the prohibition of publishing, copying, and selling these books with severe punishment.

Dozens of Iranian citizens have been arrested and sent to prison on charges of acting against national security through the propaganda of Christianity this year. The government severely oppresses and violates the rights of religious minorities, especially Persian-speaking Christians. As a result, for them, there is no other way than to seek asylum in other countries.

Organized pressure on Christians has increased significantly over the past forty years. The anger and violence that erupted after the revolution against the Christians led the Iranians to begin researching Christianity themselves.

Nowadays, Iranian churches are widely recognized worldwide and are among the fastest-growing churches in the world.

Baha'is of Iran suffer most egregious forms of persecution – UN report

Globe Newswire (30.08.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2lvllpE> - The Baha'is of Iran—the largest non-Muslim religious minority in the country—have suffered the “most egregious forms of repression, persecution and victimization” over the last 40 years, notes Javid Rehman, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, adding that the Iranian authorities should ensure that all religious minorities are recognized and able to enjoy the right to freedom of religion or belief.

In his report to the UN General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur outlines a series of human rights violations against the Baha'i community of Iran and other ethnic and religious minorities, and sets out a number of recommendations to the Iranian authorities.

“The absence of constitutional and legal recognition for non-recognized minorities entails denials of fundamental human rights for their followers. Left outside the national legal framework, unrecognized minority religious groups such as Baha'is, Christian converts, [and] Sufis...are the targets of discriminatory legislation and practices,” the report reads. The report adds that the “constant threat of raids, arrests and detention or imprisonment...remain the main features of the country's persecution of Baha'is”, and calls on the Iranian authorities to amend all articles in the Islamic Penal Code that discriminate on the basis of religion or belief.

“Given that the Baha'i Faith is regarded as a ‘misguided sect’ and Baha'i worship and religious practices are deemed heresy, they frequently face charges such as ‘breaching national security’, ‘propaganda against the holy regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran’ or ‘propaganda activities against the regime in the interests of the Baha'i sect,’” the report adds.

The report further outlines:

- Since 1979, more than 200 Baha'is have been executed, solely on the basis of their religious beliefs, with nearly half of them representing the elected members of the local and national Baha'i governing councils. Regarded by the Iranian authorities and by the Iranian criminal justice system as "unprotected infidels", Baha'is have been murdered with impunity and violations of their human rights have not been investigated.
- A total of 95 Baha'is were reportedly arrested in 2018, compared with at least 84 in 2017 and 81 in 2016. This suggests that, while the number of such arbitrary arrests each year may fluctuate, the persecution is not subsiding.
- There have been more than 800 incidents of violations of economic rights of the Baha'is since 2013, including arbitrary shop closures, unfair dismissals from employment and the actual or threatened revocation of business licences.
- Baha'i cemeteries have been desecrated and Baha'is have not been allowed to bury their dead in accordance with their religious laws. Local cemeteries in Tehran and other major cities had been turned into parks and cultural buildings.

First-hand testimonies heard by the Special Rapporteur included accounts of Baha'is arrested by Iranian authorities on the basis of false accusations of spying for foreign states and "using their business to change Islamic culture". The Special Rapporteur also called attention to the denial of access to higher education for Baha'is in the country.

The Baha'i International Community welcomes the publication of the report and calls on the Iranian authorities to implement the recommendations outlined therein.

"The Iranian authorities have repeatedly denied in UN fora and elsewhere that the Baha'is in Iran are persecuted on the basis of their religion. This latest and well documented report sheds light on the reality on the ground. It is our sincere hope that the Iranian government will finally take heed and redress an injustice that is in contradiction with Islamic principles and their human rights obligations. The numbers in the report are but a sampling of the true extent of the persecution which extends to deprive tens of thousands of Baha'is of university education in large numbers of families of a source of income. " said Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations.

"The Baha'is of Iran have no goal other than the well-being of their fellow compatriots and their wider society. We look forward to the day when the senseless persecution against the Baha'is will have ceased and Baha'is and other minorities may live peacefully alongside their fellow citizens."

City council member in Iran sentenced to one-year prison for defending Baha'is

Sensday.wordpress.com/Radio Farda (04.06.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2N8auzm> - A member of Shiraz City Council in Iran was taken from his home to prison to serve a one-year sentence on Sunday June 2, his wife said in a tweet.

Mehdi Haajati was first arrested and detained for ten days last September for defending the rights of the Bahai minority, [a group] which is severely persecuted by the Islamic Republic, especially the conservative clerics and hardliner security force. He was free[d] on bail.

His wife, Zohreh Rastegari, said in her tweet that a day earlier they received a text message that he has been sentenced to one year and they took action to enforce the verdict today.

[S]he told the official government news agency IRNA that Mr. Hajati has been transferred to Abdel Abad prison.

His legal trouble started when last year he tweeted, "In the past ten days I have knocked on many doors to get two Bahai friends released from detention, without success. As long as we face foreign enemies, our generation has a duty to reform the judicial and other procedures that endanger social justice". He was charged with assisting the Baha'is.

4 June update: A combined sitting of the Council and the Mayor has expressed regret at the imprisonment of the Councillor and has called for his release. (In Shiraz, the Mayor is elected by the Council, rather than being appointed by Provincial authorities.)

Iran shuts down church and removes cross

The Jerusalem Post (28.05.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2Mga6hu> - The church was located in the city of Tabriz in northwestern Iran and belonged to the Assyrian Presbyterian community.

Iranian intelligence shut down a Presbyterian church and removed its cross from the bell tower, the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) announced Sunday, reported Iran's Radio Farda.

The church was located in the city of Tabriz in northwestern Iran and it belonged to the Assyrian community.

According to the report, the building was confiscated by the Revolutionary Court in 2011, but its members had been able to continue to use it until earlier this month.

"Intelligence agents stormed the 100-year-old church, officially recognized as a national heritage site in Iran, on Thursday, May 9, changed all the locks, tore down the cross from the church tower, and ordered the churchwarden to leave," Article 18, a non-profit organization based in London announced. The group's stated goal is the protection and promotion of religious freedom in Iran.

Eiko, the state agency responsible for the raid together with the Ministry of Intelligence, is under the direct control of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

According to the report, the congregants were left in shock and have not been allowed to hold services in the building since the raid.

Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Assyrian community in Iran totaled approximately 200,000 people, Radio Farda noted.

However, since then many have fled and in 2015 only 32,000 Assyrians were left in the country, mostly in Tehran.

"Many churches owned by Protestants have been confiscated," explained Article 18's advocacy director, Mansour Borji.

Three Shiraz Baha'is headed to prison to serve sentences

HRA News (11.05.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2LKcm0u> - Yesterday, three Baha'is living in Shiraz, Mahboub Habibi, Pejman Shahriari and Kourosh Rouhani, headed to Adelabad Prison in Shiraz to serve their sentences. Last month, in their appeal process, [these Baha'is were sentenced](#) to six months, six months, and three months and one day of imprisonment respectively.

According to the HRANA, the news arm of Human Rights Activists in Iran, on Tuesday, May 7, 2019, three Baha'i citizens living in [Shiraz](#), Mahboub Habibi, Pejman Shahriari and Kourosh Rouhani, were headed to Adelabad Prison in [Shiraz](#) to serve their sentences.

These individuals were each previously sentenced to a one-year prison term in the lower court by the First Branch of the Revolutionary Court of [Shiraz](#), headed by Judge Mahmoud Sadati, under Article 500 of the Islamic Penal Code, under charges of "propaganda against the regime". On April 17, 2019, in their appeal, Mahboub Habibi and Pejman Shahriari were sentenced to six months each, and Kourosh Rouhani was sentenced to three months and one day in prison.

On August 17, 2018, HRANA reported on the arrest of these Baha'is, along with three other Baha'is, , Dorna Esmaili, Hooman Esmaili and Negar Misaghian, by [Shiraz](#) security forces. After 37 days, Pejman Shahriari and Mahboub Habibi were released on bail on September 30, and another Baha'i, Kourosh Rouhani, was released on bail on September 24, until the end of their trial period.

Baha'is in Iran are systematically deprived of freedoms related to religious beliefs. This systematic deprivation is in direct contradiction of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to both of which Iran is a signatory: "All persons have the right to religious freedom, the right to change their religion or belief, and the freedom to express their belief individually or collectively, in public or in private."

According to unofficial sources in Iran there are more than 300,000 Baha'is living in the country, but the Iranian Constitution recognizes only the religions of Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrian, and does not recognize [the Baha'i Faith](#). This is why for many years Baha'is' rights have been systematically violated in Iran.

Activist who protested against compulsory veil gets one year in prison

Vida Movahedi was arrested last October for showing her head uncovered in Tehran's Enghelab Square. She was convicted of "fomenting corruption and debauchery" on 2 March, but her sentence was made public only recently. She describes her fight as "civic revolt".

AsiaNews.it (15.04.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2V2vnOX> - An Iranian court sentenced a woman to a year's imprisonment after she was convicted of objecting to covering her hair, a controversial issue that has sparked street protests in recent months repressed by force and arrests.

Vida Movahedi was taken into custody last October for showing her head uncovered (pictured) in Enghelab (Revolution) Square, waving her veil and some red balloons, her lawyer Payam Dérafchane told media.

The activist was sentenced for "fomenting corruption and debauchery", he explained in a trial that saw her convicted on 2 March. State news agency IRNA announced the decision only a few days ago.

Movahedi, the mother of a two-year-old girl, had already participated in public protests in late December 2017 in central Tehran, becoming the face and symbol of the struggle against the compulsory veil. Like scores of other women, she was arrested.

At her trial she told the judge that she was "against the compulsory Islamic veil" and that she wanted to express her opinion through a "civic revolt".

According to some sources, she could be released on bail but, so far, the authorities have refused to do so.

For women, covering their heads became compulsory in Iran following the rise to power of the ayatollahs following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The fight against the obligation is nothing new. However, since the beginning of last year the movement has expanded and acquired greater vigour and visibility.

Through videos and messages posted online, activists encourage women to remove their head coverings and post their pictures on social media.

Reacting to the protests, the deputy speaker of the Iranian Parliament suggested in January that a referendum might be held on the issue, but so far, nothing has officially happened.

Baha'i Moin Mohammadi sentenced to 6 years in prison

Iran Press Watch (04.04.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2UmzLbt> - Moin Mohammadi, a Baha'i citizen living in Yazd, has been sentenced to 6 years in prison. He was arrested on his way to work by security forces on January 9, 2019. His family, after realizing that he had not reached his workplace, inquired; after a few hours they realized he had been arrested.

Before security forces arrested Mr. Mohammadi, they search his house as well as his father's house, even though the search warrant was only for the house of Mr. Moin Mohammadi himself and not his father. After completing a full inspection of the houses, mobile phones, laptops and a number of books and personal belongings were confiscated. Mr. Mohammadi is said to have been involved with environmental issues; however, at the time of this report, there is no information on the reasons for his arrest or the accusations against him.

Baha'is in Iran are deprived of freedoms related to religious beliefs, a systematic exclusion, although in accordance with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, everyone should have the right to adopt a religion or belief and freedom to manifest this religion or belief, either individually or in community with others, in public or in private.

According to unofficial sources in Iran, there are more than three hundred thousand Baha'is, but the Iranian constitution recognizes only Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism; it does not recognize the Baha'i Faith. For this reason, Baha'is' rights in Iran have been systematically violated in recent years.

22 Baha'is began New Year in prison

By Kian Sabeti

Iran Press Watch (28.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2Z5VLXm> - The last month of the Persian year 1397 (corresponding to 2018-2019 in the Gregorian calendar) was an eventful month for Baha'i prisoners. On one hand, some of them were released; on the other hand, trials, indictments, arrests and searches of their homes continued for these citizens in various cities in Iran.

On February 11th, the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, 17 prisoners who had less than a year remaining of their sentences were pardoned and released in Shiraz, Mashhad, Ghaemshahr, Isfahan, Sanandaj and Yazd.

Pouya Tebyanian, one of the prisoners, was released from prison in Semnan, upon the completion of his seven-year sentence. Shayda Ghodousi, a Baha'i prisoner in Gorgan, who had been sentenced to five years in prison, after serving one-third of her sentence was released on probation in the last days of the Persian year (which ended March 20). Maryam Ghaffar Manesh and Atosa Ahmadaee were also released from Evin prison, after serving respectively 6 months and 45 days of temporary detention.

As reported by Iranwire, on March 11 security agents in Tehran arrested two Baha'i brothers, Hamid Nasseri and Saeed Nasseri. Hamid Nasseri was arrested on the street in front of his business, and Saeed after going to the Evin detention center to inquire about the condition of his brother Hamid and of his wife Afsaneh Emami (Nasseri). At the time of Saeed's arrest, 40 days had passed since the arrest of his wife, Afsaneh Emami (Nasseri). Afsaneh Emami (Nasseri) was release on bail in the final days of the year, but Saeed and Hamid Nasseri still remain in detention.

The sentence against Ghazaleh Bagheri Tari, the Baha'i from Tehran, who was tried in December 2018, was issued in February of this year. She has been sentenced to five years in prison for the crime of "activities against national security because of membership in the Baha'i administration". Ghazaleh Bagheri was arrested by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence in September 2017, during a religious gathering at her home, and was released on bail three weeks later.

Kaviz Nouzdahi is another Baha'I whose sentence was announced in February. A source with knowledge of the case told Iranwire: "The court hearing for Kaviz Nouzdahi was held in late December 2018 in Branch 4 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Mashhad, presided over by Judge Mansouri. Of course, on the day of the hearing the judge was not present, and the hearing was conducted by the court counselor, Mr. Farhikhteh. The charges against Mr. Nouzdahi were "cooperating with hostile foreign governments" and "membership in an anti-regime organization". The judge did not permit the defendant's attorney to be present in court or review the case file. Their excuse was that the attorney named by Mr. Nouzdahi was not on the judiciary's list of approved attorneys, and that the court hearing was conducted without the attorney present. Article 48 of the New Penal Code states that in crimes against domestic or international security as well as organized crime, in the preliminary investigation phase the parties in the case must select their attorney or attorneys from among those approved by the head of the judicial branch.

According to the verdict issued, Kaviz Nouzdahi was acquitted of the charge of cooperation with foreign governments, and was convicted for the charge of membership in an anti-regime organization (i.e., membership in the Baha'i administration), and sentenced to four years in prison.

Another Baha'i citizen, Neda Mokhtari, was also sentenced to four years in prison by the verdict of Branch 5 of the Revolutionary Court of Mashhad presided over by Judge Mazloumi for the crime of "teaching the Baha'i Faith".

Twenty two Baha'i citizens began Naw-Ruz (the Persian New Year) 1398 on March 21, 2019, away from their homes and families in Iranian prisons. They were sentenced in Iranian courts to a total of 105 years of imprisonment. The verdicts against these Baha'is were issued based on articles 498, 499 and 500 of the Islamic Penal Code.

Article 498 of the code states: "Any person with any ideology who forms or leads a group, society or sub-group of more than two people, under any name or title, domestically or abroad, with the goal of disrupting national security, who is not considered a combatant, shall be sentenced to prison for two to ten years."

According to article 499 of this law: "Any person holding a membership in one of the groups, societies or sub-groups mentioned in article 498 shall be sentenced to three months to five years in prison, unless it is proven that they were unaware of its goals." Article 500 also states: "Any person engaged in any way in propaganda activities against the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran, or in favor of anti-regime groups and organizations, shall be sentenced to three months to one year in prison."

The punishment for teaching the Baha'i Faith, membership and activity in this religious community is determined based on these articles of the law.

In Evin prison, four instructors of the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) are currently serving sentences for the crime of teaching youth who were deprived of a university education; Hassan Momtaz, Peyman Kooshkbaghi, and Negin Ghedamian, each with five year prison sentences, and Azita Rafizadeh with a four year prison sentence, are currently in Evin prison. Peyman Kooshkbaghi and his wife Azita Rafizadeh are among the incarcerated married couples who spent the final days of the year away from each other and from their young child.

Adel Naimi with a 10 year sentence, Farhad Fahandej with a 10 year sentence, Vahed Kholousi with a 5 year sentence, and Afshin Seyyed Ahmad with a 3 year sentence, are the four prisoners in Rajai Shahr prison in Karaj. Shahn timer Jazbani is the only Baha'i prisoner in Gonbad-e-Kavoos in Golestan province. He has been sentenced to 5 years in prison.

Isfahan, with 13 Baha'i prisoners, has the highest number of Baha'i prisoners in Iran. Nine of these prisoners were transferred to the Isfahan prison from the town of Baharestan. Of the nine, Sepideh Rouhani, Bahareh Zaini, Foujan Shahidi, each with a 3 year sentence, are incarcerated in Dowlatabad prison in Isfahan. Anousheh Raeineh, Afshin Bolbolan, Milad Davardan, Farhang Sahba and Ali Sani, each with a six year sentence, and Saham Armin, with a 3 year sentence, are the other six prisoners from Baharestan who have been transferred to Dastgerd prison in Isfahan to serve their sentences.

In addition, Sohrab Taghipour, with a 5 year sentence, and Manouchehr Rahmani, Mohsen Mehregani and Farzad Homayouni, each with a 20 month sentence, are four Baha'is from Isfahan who began the Persian New Year in that city's central prison.
