

CONCLUSION AND
SUMMARY

THE WORLDWIDE BAHÁ'Í community is today one of the most diverse and widespread organizations on earth. Comprising individuals from virtually every nation, ethnic group, trade, profession, and social or economic class, more than five million followers of the Bahá'í Faith reside in at least 235 countries and territories. They represent some 2,100 different tribes, racial and ethnic groups, and come from every religious background: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Sikh, Jain, and animist, as well as from non-religious backgrounds.

Yet in the land where their religion originated, Bahá'ís continue to face a campaign of systematic, centrally directed persecution. At best, by denying them basic rights and freedoms, the government hopes merely to block the growth and development of the Bahá'í community, while keeping it as a ready scapegoat for its own failures. At worst, the government harbors the goal of exterminating the Bahá'í community as a viable entity in Iran and erasing all traces of its culture.

During the 1980s Bahá'ís were executed, tortured, imprisoned, deprived of jobs, pensions and educational opportunities — solely because of their religious beliefs. In the 1990s some aspects of this persecution subsided as a result of international pressure. However, in 1993 came the exposure of a secret governmental plan to suffocate the Bahá'í community.

Subsequent actions — ranging from random killings, revolving door imprisonment, arbitrary arrest and harassment, denial of access to higher education, the destruction of important Bahá'í holy sites, and the continued efforts to deprive Bahá'ís of their livelihood — reveal the Iranian government's intention of continuing its efforts to destroy the Bahá'í community without attracting international attention.

Indeed, as of the time of publication of this booklet, the signs point only towards increasing problems for Iran's innocent Bahá'ís. The arbitrary arrests and detentions of some 35 Bahá'ís around the country in March, April and May 2005 exemplify the worsening situation. Held incommunicado for periods ranging from one week to three months, these prisoners were held without any formal charges while personal possessions were seized by government agents from their homes in wanton searches. Other incidents in Yazd in January and February, involving the beating of several Bahá'ís and the burning of a Bahá'í-owned business, along with other short term arrests and detentions, point to ominous signs for the future.

For most people, whatever their religious background, the continued campaign against the Bahá'ís defies rational explanation. The Bahá'í community in Iran poses no threat to the Iranian authorities. The fundamental principles of the Bahá'í Faith require its followers to be obedient to their government and to avoid partisan political involvement, subversive activity, and all forms of violence.

.....
On the Bahá'í question, the Iranian government has been utterly silent. There has been no admission of the government's campaign against Iran's Bahá'í community and the need for reform that it represents, let alone public statements that might somehow pave the way for recognition of the Bahá'í community's fundamental rights.
.....

.....
*Continued
international
monitoring remains
the only form of
protection for Iran's
Bahá'ís.*
.....

In recent years, Iran has sought to portray itself as ready to rejoin the world community as a respected partner in international affairs, projecting an image of tolerance and civility. President Khatami, for example, spoke of humanity's entry into a "new century of humanity, understanding, and durable peace."

Yet on the Bahá'í question, the Iranian government has been utterly silent. There has been no admission of the government's campaign against Iran's Bahá'í community and the need for reform that it represents, let alone public statements that might somehow pave the way for recognition of the Bahá'í community's fundamental rights.

In this regard, continued international monitoring remains the only form of protection for Iran's Bahá'ís. Any lessening of international support for the Bahá'í community will be perceived by the Iranian authorities as condoning the persecution of the Bahá'ís at the least, and therefore as a license to continue their campaign with impunity.

The Bahá'ís in Iran seek no special privileges. They seek only their rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the right to life, the right to liberty and security of person, the right to education and work, and the right to profess and practice their religion.

What is needed are legal and entirely public steps that will firmly establish the complete emancipation of the Bahá'ís of Iran. Only then can it be said that Iran has truly complied with its oft-stated commitment to universal human rights.