



# Family's fight for justice continues

On May 22 this year, Farhad Sedghi, the brother of well-known local businessman Nasser Sedghi, was arrested in his home country of Iran – another victim of the thirty year campaign of religious persecution waged by that country's extremist Islamic regime against people of the Baha'i faith.

**F**OLLOWING his brother's arrest, Nasser and his wife Farzan spoke with Weekender about their fears for Farhad – an accountant, university lecturer and researcher – who continues to be detained without charge in an Iranian prison after “well-orchestrated offensive” against Baha'i academics in which more than 30 homes across Iran were raided and computers, books and personal documents seized.

For many weeks, Farhad's immediate family were denied contact by the authorities whose continued psychological abuse has taken a great emotional toll.

This week, Nasser told Weekender that although his brother's wife and children have now been allowed two visits, the Iranian government continues its campaign of “dirty tricks”, including being non-responsive, against the detainees and their families.

Even more worrying is the news this week that the “cases” are to be handed over to Iran's so-called Revolutionary Court.

“This is bad news,” says Nasser. “Very bad news. The standard court in Iran is bad enough, but the Revolutionary Court has absolutely no compassion and no logic applied. If a lawyer is defending the case, there is no guarantee for his (the lawyer's) safety, as he could be imprisoned on similar charges of the accused.”

“We are gravely concerned. The unpredictability of the situation is beyond imagination. This is an awful, ongoing dilemma for our family.”

Compounding the desperation of the family's waiting game, is the difficulty in gleaning comprehensive and detailed information, such as the control the Iranian authorities exert over communications.

“The two times his wife has been to see him, their conversations have been closely monitored, and all their telephone lines are monitored, as is their internet and email. They have to be very, very careful with their communications with us, so it makes it very hard for us to know exactly what is going on.”

Nasser says the pressure being brought to bear on the Iranian authorities by foreign governments, Australia's included, is helping to ensure the spotlight remains trained on the injustices being committed against Baha'is in the birth nation of the faith.

“I had a letter, through (Parkes MP) Mark Coulton from Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd, saying they are aware of the situation and of the mentality of the Iranian regime. So we hope that if we continue to communicate our concerns in a peaceful way that we can keep the pressure up.

“Farzan and I are so grateful for all the support the community of Dubbo has given us, and we hope that people will continue to write and email their concerns to Mark Coulton. The more pressure we can bring to bear the better.”

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**THE following is Nasser Sedghi's heartfelt appeal for pressure to be exerted in the fight for justice for not only his brother, Farhad, but for all the other non-Muslim minorities including members of the Baha'i community in Iran.**

This is a heart-to-heart appeal to the Iranian authorities – in particular to those individuals who carry out the acts of unspeakable cruelty against their innocent and defenceless Baha'i citizens. The Iranian authorities have the moral and legal obligation to safeguard justice and fairness in the society and to stop the ongoing brutal persecution of the Baha'is, the followers of the largest religious minority in their country. The Baha'is, both individually and collectively, have conducted themselves with dignity since inception of the faith more than 160 years ago in Iran, its birth place.

On Sunday, May 22, 2011, a coordinated series of raids were carried out by the Iranian authorities on the homes of several Baha'is in different major cities in Iran, targeting the administrators and officials of the online Baha'i university. This body has provided higher education programmes for young Baha'is who are barred from university studies in Iran due to their religious convictions.

My brother, Farhad Sedghi, a voluntary faculty member of this online university, was among 15 Baha'is arrested and so far his wife and family members have only been able to see him twice and then only under very restricted and controlled circumstances. No official reason has been given for his arrest, but most likely it will be in the same as those charges levelled against all the other Baha'is who are imprisoned in different parts of Iran – that is, “spreading corruption on earth, posing danger to the security of country” and so forth.

This swift and arbitrary arrest and imprisonment has no legal grounds, but has attracted a total lack of response from the authorities in relation to justice and a total lack of interest from the authorities with regard to the laying formal charges with the courts. These system-generated obstacles are the source of enormous frustration and psychological torture for our family, in particular Farhad's wife. The inhuman treatment of the prisoners' family members, when they are trying to exercise their universally accepted rights to visit their

loved ones or find out about the charges against them, cannot be justified to anyone with basic human feelings.

False, and intentionally contradictory, promises to the innocent prisoners and their family members are a form of psychological torture being practiced by the authorities.

For example, several times my brother's wife has been notified that she would be able to see Farhad, and seemingly Farhad was told the same. However, after many hours of waiting in front of the Evin Prison, our family members' excitement turned to disappointment and anxiety as contact was denied with no explanation given. The frustration and trauma for prisoners must be much worse as they are not able to express themselves or make a complaint.

My brother, Farhad, is a man of dignity and throughout his life has been a role model for many young people. He is a dedicated and hardworking man, and service to his country and its people has always been his top priority. Farhad is a highly qualified academic, well-known for his trustworthiness and many other virtues in his private and public life.

It is ironic that all those arrested were involved in providing much-needed higher education to young people, helping them to build the capacity to serve their country and its people with selfless dedication.

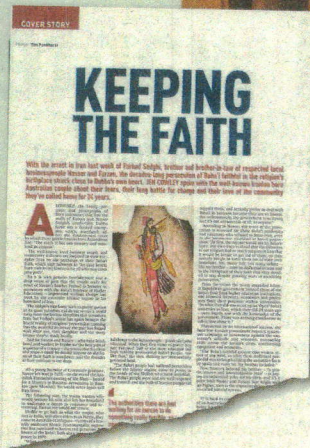
There are a number of baseless accusations and a great deal of misinformation about the Baha'i faith continually being spread by the authorities in Iran, against which Baha'is do not have the opportunity to defend themselves or provide a response within that country.

Baha'i is a peaceful faith, the foundation of which is based on the teachings of its founder Baha'u'llah, including that followers should “consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship”.

My wife Farzan and I have felt such friendliness and fellowship in the support we have received from our community of Dubbo in the 23 years since we settled here and particularly in the months since my brother Farhad's arrest in Iran, and we thank the community for its continued support.

Baha'is in Iran are continuing to show that friendliness and fellowship even under such oppressive circumstances – and rest assured that Baha'is never give up on divine justice and will continue to demonstrate friendliness and fellowship towards all.

\* If you would like to show your support, email Federal Member for Parkes, Mark Coulton at [mark.coulton.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:mark.coulton.mp@aph.gov.au) requesting that concerns be forwarded to the Australian Government over Iran's persecution of people of the Baha'i faith.



• The initial story featured in Dubbo Weekender on 04.06.2011