

# Summary Report

January – March 2009

## Arrests, Incarcerations, and Raids

- On **January 4**, Mr. Adel Fana'ian, Mr. Abbas Nourani, and Mr. Taher Eskandarian of Semnan were all detained. In Qa'emshahr, the homes of the Sanai, Asadi, Nokhah and Fanaian families were all raided and searched. More on this located [here](#).
- On **January 15**, Ms. Jinous Sobhani, Mr. Shahrokh Taefi, Mr. Didar Raoufi, Mr. Payam Aghsani, and Mr. Azizollah Samandari were all arrested. Mr. Golshan Sobhani was also arrested but was released a few hours later. Personal belongings such as photographs, computers, and Bahá'í books were confiscated. On that same date, eight Baha'í women on the Persian Gulf island of Kish were arrested for allegedly proselytizing the Baha'í Faith through distribution of Baha'í books as well as using their “sexual charms to lure young Muslims.” A young, unidentified Baha'í woman visiting Tehran from Shiraz was also taken into custody on this date. More on this located [here](#).
- On **January 18**, five Bahá'í women from Qa'emshahr – Taraneh Sanai, Shahnaz Sa'adati, Amelia Fanaian, Anisa Fanaian, and Farzaneh Ahmadzadegan – were all arrested.
- On **January 26**, the homes of ten Bahá'í families in the city of Mashhad were attacked and their personal belongings – including pictures of religious figures and texts, computers, and even religious jewelry – were confiscated. Among those attacked were Mr. Sirous Zabihi, Mr. Soheil Nasirzadeh, and Mr. Davar Nabilzadeh. In addition, Ms. Sima Eshraghi and Mr. Jalayer Vahdat were arrested and transferred to an undisclosed location on this date. More on this located [here](#).
- On **February 1**, Mr. Nima Haghar was summoned by the Ministry of Intelligence to arrive at the Vali-Asr Square office in Tehran for questioning. Shortly after arriving at this location, Mr. Haghar was arrested and transferred to an undisclosed location. No further information is available about Mr. Haghar's fate or reason for arrest. More on this located [here](#).
- On **February 15**, Torreh Taqi-Zadeh, a Bahá'í from Sari, was arrested without charge after being summoned to the Intelligence Ministry's press office. Security officials had raided her house on February 9<sup>th</sup>, during which they confiscated books, religious images and other personal items.
- On **March 8**, Mrs. Shirin Furughian (Samimi) of Sari was taken into custody by agents of the Intelligence Ministry and taken to the Ministry's prison in Kachui. More about this report can be found [here](#).
- On **March 9**, a Baha'í youth of 24 years age by the name of Pooya Tebyanian was arrested by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence at his place of work. More details on this arrest [here](#).

- On **March 18**, Mrs. Haleh Hooshmandi-Salehi and Mr. Farham Masumi of Shiraz were arrested.
- A store owned by Mr. Afshin Iqani was attacked and half of his merchandise confiscated.

### Destruction and Defamation of Bahá'í Properties

- On **January 19**, a previously desecrated cemetery at Qa'emshahr was further destroyed and flattened at around midnight. This was the fourth attack in eight months on this cemetery, and it resulted in almost total destruction of the site. More on this located [here](#).
- On **February 19**, unknown vandals desecrated the Bahá'í cemetery in Semnan. Further details as well as pictures are located [here](#).
- On the morning of **February 25**, an unknown group used explosives (primarily Molotov cocktails) to attack several Baha'i homes in Semnan in a deeply alarming assault. More on this disturbing news [here](#).
- On the morning of **March 15**, hate-statements were sprayed on exterior walls of many Bahá'í homes in Semnan. Pictures and further details [here](#).

### Denial of Education

- On **January 14**, nine Baha'i students were dismissed from the University of Kerman on the grounds of belief in the Baha'i Faith. The names of the expelled students are as follows: Bita Momtazi, Sepehr Qodrat, Mahnoosh Dehqan, Ghazal Sadeqi, Daniel Mottahari, Liva Baghi, Nilofar Kan'ani, Nasim Mo'attar, and Arman Roshani.
- In **March**, Faran Khavan-Yaghma was expelled from Mazandaran University because he was a Bahá'í. Faran explains his situation in-depth [here](#).
- On **March 1**, Miss Minoo Shahriari was expelled from the University of Semnan on the grounds that she was a Bahá'í. Minoo's report can be found [here](#).
- On **March 4**, Sina Dana, Sama' Nurani and Faraz Vazirzadeh were expelled from Sahand University in Tabriz on the grounds that they were Bahá'ís. More background on this event [here](#).

### Deprivation of Livelihood

- On **March 9**, a shop owned by Mr. Behfar Khanjani was shut and sealed despite the fact that he had business and commercial licenses.
- On **March 10**, Mrs. Shamil Pirasteh received news from the Edareh Amaken [Buildings and Municipality] of Semnan that her shop must be vacated in one week and then be sealed

because her shop did not qualify for selling cloths. Her business license was also terminated. Further information and pictures of the shop [here](#).

### The Yaran (“Friends of Iran”)

- Since **February 11**, Iranian news sources such as ISNA (Iranian Student News Agency) have stated that the seven incarcerated Bahá’í leaders will be facing their trial soon, but it has not occurred to this date.
- On **March 5**, the Universal House of Justice informed the international Bahá’í community that the Yaran ceased their administrative functions. More on this [here](#).

### Victorious Moments, Releases, and Public Support for Bahá’ís

- In **February**, a number of distinguished Indians sent an open letter condemning Bahá’í persecution in Iran to the Bahá’í community. The letter and its signatories can be seen [here](#).
- On **February 2**, The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center publicly condemned the persecution of the Bahá’ís in Iran. More information on this [here](#).
- On **February 3**, four Bahá’í individuals who had been incarcerated since January 18 – Mrs. Farzaneh Ahmadzadeh (Fanaian), Ms. Amelia Fanaian (daughter of Farzaneh Ahmadzadeh), Mrs. Shahnaz Sa’adati (Nawkhah), and Mrs. Taraneh Sanai (Ataeian) – were released on providing surety.
- On **February 4**, an open letter (often referred to as the “We Are Ashamed” letter) was sent throughout the world to the international Bahá’í community. The content of the letter essentially states that the signatories – primarily Iranian intellectuals of all sorts - are ashamed for the cruel injustices which have been perpetrated upon the Baha’is in the last century and a half in Iran. The letter can be read [here](#). There is also a website dedicated to this letter, whose signatories are increasing daily, at: <http://www.we-are-ashamed.com/>
- On **February 5**, Amnesty International released a statement underscoring their biggest concerns with Iran, among them being the treatment of religious minorities like the Bahá’ís. More on this [here](#).
- On **February 6**, the aforementioned open letter from Iranian intellectuals to the Bahá’í community was featured on CNN, giving the letter and the issue of Bahá’í persecution in Iran widespread public attention. The CNN report can be located [here](#).
- On **February 13**, the U.S. State Department condemned the trumped up charges leveled against the Yaran. The statement can be read [here](#). On this day, Amnesty International also launched an urgent action update exclusively devoted to the latest news about the Bahá’í leaders in Iran. An elaboration of this can be found [here](#).
- On **February 15**, the United States House of Representatives introduced a resolution, H.Res.175, on the persecution of the Baha’is in Iran. More information on this resolution can be found [here](#).

- On **February 16**, the former Iranian president Abolhassan Banisadr held an interview with *Radio France Internationale* and overtly supported freedom of expression for Iranian Bahá'ís. IPW's coverage on this story [here](#).
- On **February 17**, Bahá'í actor Rainn Wilson made a statement that was featured on CNN which condemned religious persecution in Iran. The transcript can be found [here](#). On that day, the European Union also issued a statement regarding the trial of the Yaran, which can be read [here](#).
- On **February 18**, journalists and writers from the Kurdistan region issued a statement of support for Bahá'ís in Iran. The document can be read in full [here](#). On that day, U.S. Congressman Mark Kirk also condemned the impending trial of the Yaran as well as general persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran, which can be read [here](#).
- On **February 19**, the Simon Wiesenthal Center published a press release condemning the “delusional” persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran. The press release can be found [here](#).
- On **February 21**, the United Republicans of Iran called for an immediate release of the Yaran. Their statement can be read [here](#).
- On **February 24**, the Iranian Minorities' Human Rights Organization publicly condemned the trial of the Yaran. Their statement can be read [here](#).
- On **February 25**, the Bahá'í comedian Omid Djalili published a statement on his website talking about Bahá'í persecution in Iran as well as the trial of the Yaran. IPW has coverage of this [here](#).
- On **February 26**, 15 of Britain's top comedians wrote an open letter calling for the Iranian government to respect the human rights of its citizens, particularly the Yaran. The letter can be read in full [here](#). On that same day, the Canadian Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Human Rights sent a strongly worded motion to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which can be read [here](#).
- On **February 27**, the Board of Deputies of the Jewish Community in the United Kingdom president, Henry Grunwald QC, wrote to Foreign Secretary David Miliband with a renewed call to the government to support the persecuted Bahá'ís in Iran. More on Mr. Grunwald's statements [here](#).
- In **March**, the United Religions Initiative (URI) based in Brasília, the capital of Brazil, has sent two open letters asking for the immediate release of the Baha'ís in Iran, one to the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the other to the Iranian Ambassador to Brazil. You can read the details of the letters and download their contents [here](#).
- On **March 9**, all of the Yaran were allowed to have their relatives visit them in prison. On that same day, S. Res. 71 was also introduced to the U.S. Senate regarding the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran. You can access the text of the resolution [here](#) and learn how to support it [here](#).
- On **March 11**, a prominent group of more than sixty professors and scholars who specialize in Middle Eastern and Iranian Studies added their voices in protest over the persecution of the

Bahá'ís in Iran and asked the Iranian government to accord its Bahá'ís citizens their full civil rights and freedoms. The statement can be read in English as well as several other languages [here](#). On that same day, Ms. Jinous Sobhani, Mr. Didar Raoufi, Mr. Payam Aghsani, Mr. Aziz Samandari and Mr. Nima Haghgar were all released from prison.

- On **March 12**, a concern about the Iranian Bahá'í community was raised at the UN Human Rights Council. More on this event [here](#). On that day, Australian Member of Parliament Andrew Robb also delivered a speech calling on the Australian government to urge the release of the Yaran and to implore the Iranian government to allow Baha'is the right to 'freedom of thought, conscience and religion'. The speech was delivered in the House of Parliament, and it can be read [here](#).
- On **March 13**, Brazilian Congressman Pompeo de Mattos released an open letter to the legal authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran which mentioned the circumstances of the Trial of the Yaran. The open letter can be read in full [here](#).
- On **March 16**, Egyptian Bahá'ís were finally given the right to leave the religious field blank on identification cards, allowing them to gain civil rights after a five-year long legal battle. Full coverage of the story can be read [here](#).
- On **March 17**, Mr. Shahroukh Taef was released from prison on bail.