



Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom

Statement on Iran

As representatives of the international community who value and seek to protect the fundamental freedom of religion or belief, we strongly oppose the Iranian government's severe violations and abuses of religious freedom.

In Iran, blasphemy, apostasy from Islam, and proselytization of Muslims are crimes punishable by death. Many Iranians are languishing in jails, including the Great Tehran Penitentiary and Evin Prison, simply for exercising their fundamental freedom to worship, observe, practice, and teach their faiths.

Unrecognized religious minorities, including Baha'is and Christian converts, are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and unjust imprisonment. The Iranian government regularly employs anti-Baha'i rhetoric, closes Baha'i businesses, and denies Baha'is access to education. Dozens of Baha'is remain detained in Iran on specious charges. Security services frequently raid house churches and interrogate congregants. Judge Mashallah Ahmadzadeh and other revolutionary court judges have handed down severe prison sentences to members of religious minorities, including Christian pastors Youcef Nadarkhani and Victor Bet-Tamraz, on contrived charges related to their peaceful religious activities. Last year, the Iranian government sentenced more than 200 Gonabadi Sufis to lengthy prison terms and other harsh punishments after security forces cracked down on Gonabadi Sufis peacefully protesting the detention of one of their fellow faith members.

We call on the Iranian government to release all prisoners of conscience and vacate all charges inconsistent with the universal human right of religious freedom. We urge Iran to ensure fair trial guarantees, in accordance with its human rights obligations, and afford all detainees access to medical care. We stand with Iranians of all beliefs, and hope someday soon they will be free to follow their consciences in peace.

Co-Signatories: Bahrain, Canada, Israel, Kosovo, Marshall Islands, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United States of America