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Erfan-e Halgheh



Ministry of Immigration
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Disclaimer

This report was written in accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology.¹ The report is based on written sources as well as approved minutes from a meeting with an oral source. Statements from the source are used in the report and the statements are referenced.

This report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed in the report and should be weighed against other available country of origin information on Erfan-e Hagheh.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations or analysis. The information in the report does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

¹ European Union: European Asylum Support Office (EASO), EASO Country of Origin Information report methodology, 10 July 2012. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ffc33d32.html> [accessed 24 May 2019]

Introduction

This report focuses on the spiritual movement *Erfan-e Halgheh* (EH) in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The report is based on information from written sources about EH, including the group's own media outlets, as well as approved minutes from a meeting with Alireza Shiralipour Dalvi, former member of EH's Coordination Committee in the city of Tabriz in Iran. The interview was conducted on 12 April 2019 in Frankfurt, Germany.

The purpose of this research is to provide general background information about EH as well as information related to recurring questions regarding Iranian asylum-seekers in Denmark claiming affiliation to EH.

The report contains information about the foundation and teachings of EH, its social outreach and activities in Iran and the Iranian government's position and treatment of its followers.

The sources used are referenced in footnotes and an appendix with a list of the sources is provided.

Alireza Shiralipour Dalvi is referenced in the report according to his own request. Dalvi was informed about the purpose of the research and that his statements would be included in a public report. The minutes from the meetings with Dalvi were forwarded to him for approval, giving him a chance to amend, comment or correct his statements. Dalvi has approved his statements. His statements are found in their full extent in Annex A of this report.

For the sake of reader-friendliness, transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the meeting minutes in Annex A have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to Dalvi's statements in the footnotes. The intention hereby is to make it easier to find the exact place of a statement in the meeting minutes.

Executive Summary

Erfan-e Halgheh (EH) is a spiritual movement in Iran which promotes ideas and practices that seek to establish a connection between the individual and “the Interuniversal Consciousness” i.e. a consciousness governing the universe. Healing of different types of diseases is one of the ways through which EH intends to raise awareness about this universal consciousness.

Until 2010, the EH followers did not face major issues with the Iranian authorities with regard to their activities in Iran. Since then, there have been cases of arrests and harassment of the followers and their activities have been forbidden. The founder of the movement was in prison for eight years and was released in April 2019.

1. What is Erfan-e Halgheh?

Erfan-e Halegheh, EH, (Persian for ‘Mysticism of the Ring’) is a spiritual movement in Iran.² EH is also described by sources as "a spiritual doctrine", "a mystical outlook", a "mysticism", a "philosophy" or "a school of thought" or "belief structure". EH is also known under the names ‘Interuniversalism’, ‘Interuniversal Mysticism’ or ‘Cosmic Mysticism (*Erfan-e Keyhani*)’.³ It was established by Mohamed Ali Taheri who claimed that he received “divines inspirations” in 1978.⁴

EH is not a confessional belief. It means that people do not convert to it, and anyone from any faith can join EH.⁵ According to Alireza Shiralipour Dalvi, former member of EH’s Coordination Committee in the city of Tabriz in Iran, EH is neither a religion nor a religious sect. EH does not relate to people’s religion and belief and everyone from every religion can join EH and benefit from its teachings.⁶

The ultimate goal of EH is, according to Dalvi, to reach unity with God through gaining knowledge about ‘the Interuniversal Intelligence/Consciousness’, i.e. a ‘Divine’ intelligence/consciousness governing the universe, and establishing connection to it (*Ettetal*). Healing of different types of diseases is one of the ways through which EH intends to raise awareness about ‘the Interuniversal Consciousness’ and to prove the benefit people can get from connecting with it.⁷

On the website of California-based Interuniversalism Inc., which is one of the centres outside Iran run by EH followers, one read that the ultimate goal for the individual in EH is to achieve perfection (so-called *Kamal*) through certain practices and methods.⁸ *Kamal* is a spiritual and mental state that is only achieved collectively, which means that every member of EH has to take care of the overall wellbeing of the community and society as a whole as a prerequisite to reach that state.⁹

EH is non-violent and it does not actively and directly challenge the legitimacy of the ruling authorities in Iran.¹⁰

EH’s teachings have a large social appeal given its combination of a belief system and practice of personal inward religious experience. EH is not against religious rituals and formalities, such as the Islamic five daily

² US Department of State, *2017 Report on International Religious Freedom – Iran*, 29 May 2018 <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1436871.html> [accessed on 24 May 2019]

³ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Iran: Situation and treatment of practitioners of Interuniversalism (Erfan Halgheh) (2010-October 2013)*, 6 November 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/532017354.html> [accessed 24 May 2019]

⁴ Doostdar, Alireza Mohammadi, *Fantasies of Reason: Science, Superstition, and the Supernatural in Iran*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University. April 2012 https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9282603/MohammadiDoostdar_gsas.harvard_0084L_10215.pdf [accessed on 24 May 2019]

⁵ The website of California-based Interuniversalism Inc. <https://www.interuniversalism.org/faq> [accessed 24 May 2019]

⁶ Dalvi: 1

⁷ Davi: 2

⁸ Interuniversalism Inc., California, <https://www.interuniversalism.org/about> [accessed 24 May 2019]

⁹ Human Rights Without Frontier (HRWF), *Erfan-e Halgheh Followers* <https://hrwf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2017-Erfan-e-Halghe.pdf> [accessed 24 May 2019]

¹⁰ Ibid.

prayers or the observance of the holy month of Ramadan, but it stresses that the practitioner should rely on the meaning of these religious rituals.¹¹

EH's inspiration of the Sufi strand of Islam is reflected in that its teachings has a universal appeal and is accessible to everyone regardless of race, nationality, education or religious belief.¹² Sufism is generally denounced by Shia clerics, prayer leaders and the Iranian government.^{13 14}

1.1. 'Halgheh'

'Halgheh' means 'ring' in Persian. In EH's cosmology, *Halgheh* refers to the relationship among three elements that together constitutes a ring or a *Halgheh* ('circle of unity'):

- a) 'The Interuniversal Consciousness' (*Sho'ur Keyhani*), which according to EH is the same as for instance The Holy Spirit (*Ruh al-Qudus*) in Christianity or *Jibra'il* (i.e. the angel through whom prophet Mohammad communicated with God) or *yaddullah* ('the Hand of God') in Islam,
- b) A person who needs to be connected to 'the Interuniversal Consciousness', for instance a patient who can be cured by being connected to the Interuniversal Consciousness'
- c) A person who is capable of connecting ('*Ertebat'*/'*Ettesal'*) to the Interuniversal Consciousness', and who can facilitate the connection between the person who is in need of being connected and 'the Interuniversal Consciousness'

There are different 'rings', each with a certain function, for instance, there is a 'ring' for healing certain diseases (*Faradarmani*), another 'ring' for control of mind etc. Until now, about 60 rings have been identified and introduced to the followers of EH.¹⁵

1.2. *Faradarmani* and *Psymontology*

Faradarmani is a type of complementary therapy (alternative medicine) which is totally spiritual- (*Erfan*-) based in nature and is considered as a subdivision of EH. Through *Faradarmani*, people suffering from bodily/psychical and psychosomatic diseases can be cured.

Whereas *Faradarmani* mainly focuses on problems with the physical body and psychical diseases, *Psymontology* primarily deals with curing mental diseases. *Psymontology* is used to cure mental and mentosomatic diseases. *Faradarmani* and *Psymontology* complete each other and make up a complete treatment system.¹⁶

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Iran 2017 International Religious Freedom

¹⁴ According to Oxford Islamic Studies Online, "Sufism can be described broadly as the intensification of Islamic faith and practice, or the tendency among Muslims to strive for a personal engagement with the Divine Reality". And according to the cited source it's says that "the frequent attacks on Sufism have many causes, not least of which is the social and political influence of Sufi teachers, which often threatened the power and privileges of the jurists and even the rulers" http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0759?_hi=1&_pos=4 [accessed on 24 May 2019]

¹⁵ Dalvi: 4-5

¹⁶ Dalvi: 8-9

1.3. Organisation

In 2006, EH was registered with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Iran under the name of the Cultural-Artistic Institute of Inter-universalism (Ring) (*Moasses-e Farhangi-Honari-e Shabakey-e Keyhani (Halgheh)*).¹⁷ Hereby, EH followers were officially allowed to conduct their activities. One year later, the license of institute was not renewed and EH's presence in Iran as an official organisation came to an end.¹⁸

Currently, EH followers are not organised within a formal organisational structure. Due to potential risks for EH followers in Iran, the source refrained to disclose whether or how EH activities are organised in Iran at the moment.¹⁹

The EH founder, Mohammad Ali Taheri, issued a membership card to his followers where the individual's name and the courses passed by him or her was noted.²⁰ Since 2010, where Taheri was arrested, the card has been issued by EH instructors to EH followers who attend the courses. The issuance of the cards takes place independently by the individual instructor as there is no official organisation authorising it. Apart from these cards, no other documents proving membership of or affiliation to EH are issued in Iran.²¹

There are EH centres in Canada, Sweden, UK and Austria that are active in spreading EH ideas and philosophy. None of these centres functions as EH main centre outside Iran and there is no hierarchical relation among them. In addition to these centres, there are several unorganised groups and individuals, like the source himself, who are active in awareness raising and other activities regarding EH.

Dalvi was not aware of any EH centre outside issuing recommendation letters or any other documents proving affiliation of a person to EH. However, the source was not certain about that and did not rule out the possibility that one of the centres in Canada, Sweden, UK or Austria could issue such documents. The source himself once wrote a handwritten note for someone which proved the person's participation in EH courses.²²

2. Followers of Erfan-e Halgheh and their activities in Iran

2.1. Followers

Despite the opposition EH and its followers have met from the Iranian authorities, its founder, Mohamed Ali Taheri, has had significant success in advocating his ideas and reaching a broad public. EH is estimated to have 20.000 instructors worldwide. The movement has especially had a great appeal to the youth who consider the Iranian government's official version of religious and theological matters violent and intrusive.²³ The EH followers promote Mohamed Ali Taheri's work both inside and outside the country.

¹⁷ See Appendix 2, Document 6: License issued by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to the Cultural-Artistic Institute of Inter-universalism (Ring) (*Moasses-e Farhangi-Honari-e Shabakey-e Keyhani (Halgheh)*).

¹⁸ Dalvi: 10

¹⁹ Dalvi: 11

²⁰ See Appendix 2, Document 1: Membership card issued until 2010 by Mohammad Ali Taheri

²¹ Dalvi: 12

²² Dalvi: 13-14

²³ Human Rights Without Frontier (HRWF), *Erfan-e Halgheh Followers* <https://hrwf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2017-Erfan-e-Halghe.pdf> [accessed 24 May 2019]

They use internet platforms; they distribute his works by holding sessions and by teaching healing methods.²⁴

Most of the participants in EH courses have been women (about 60 percent), which has sometimes contributed to the widely-held misperception that EH is focusing on women as its target group. In general, participants in EH courses do not have a certain profile as one finds people with different social and religious backgrounds among participants: academics, uneducated, religious, non-religious, priests, Christians, Hindu, Baha'is etc.²⁵

2.2. Activities

In addition to running courses, EH followers conduct charity and humanitarian activities in Iran such as collecting aid for flood or earthquake victims. Moreover, people who have participated in EH courses may spontaneously hold meetings where they discuss mystical and spiritual issues. EH followers have also arranged protests against the arrest of the founder, Taheri.²⁶

2.2.1. Courses

EH courses comprise eight modules. Each module takes about one and half month (Six weeks) to complete. There is no test of any kind when a participant completes a module. The first module is about *Faradarmani*.²⁷

In each module, a number of 'rings' are introduced and presented to the participants and the instructor responsible for the module empowers them to establish connection to 'the Interuniversal Consciousness' in order to benefit from the 'rings' introduced during the course.²⁸

Parallel to these eight modules, there are three other modules which the participants can attend together with the eight modules. These modules are called 'Defensive Radiation' ('*Tasha'sho-e Defa'i*'), *Psymentology* and *Farapezeshki*.²⁹

Those, who are willing to become instructors (*masters*), are spiritually empowered to master certain 'rings' which enable them to work as instructors. Instructors are not divided into different grades and there is no hierarchical structure among them. Instructors are issued certificates documenting their instruction skills.³⁰ These certificates are found in Appendix 2 of this report.

For more details on EH courses, see the minutes from the meeting with Alireza Shiralipour Dalvi in Appendix 1.

²⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Iran: Situation and treatment of practitioners of Interuniversalism (Erfan Halgheh) (2010-October 2013)*, 6 November 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/532017354.html> [accessed 24 May 2019]

²⁵ Dalvi: 23

²⁶ Dalvi: 15

²⁷ Dalvi: 16, 18

²⁸ Dalvi: 17

²⁹ Dalvi: 20

³⁰ Dalvi: 21

3. Erfan-e Halgheh and the Iranian authorities

3.1. The authorities' position

Until 2007, EH followers did not face any problems with the authorities in Iran, and the authorities did not perceive EH ideas as deviating from or opposed to the official dominating Shi'a belief of the country. There were even influential persons among the authorities who supported the ideas promoted by EH-follower and protected them. After 2007, the regime started perceiving EH as 'fake mysticism' (*'Erfan-e Kazeb'*) and a sect and putting its followers under increasing pressure. A possible reason for this change of policy was the growing support which EH enjoyed in the country, which caused the security services to start considering EH a security threat. It is assumed by the EH followers that millions of Iranians have attended EH courses, however, there is no confirmed statistics of this.³¹

The Iranian regime want EH followers to stop spreading, according the authorities, alternative interpretations of the Twelver version of Shia Islam and demand that EH followers should promote the regime's understanding of Shia Islam through their courses. One of the authorities said once to the source that the regime did not have a problem with EH holding courses in which people with other religious background participated as long as the participants were turned into Twelver Shia Muslims through the courses. EH has rejected to meet the regime's demand for promoting a certain religion or version of Islam as EH is essentially opposed to focusing on people's religion or beliefs. Both the police and the security services have told EH followers that it is forbidden to run or participate in EH courses.³²

Even though the founder Mohamed Ali Taheri has stated that the EH teaching is in accordance with the dominant version of Shiite Islam, the Iranian government has tried to curb the spread of EH and its followers as it considers the movement as a danger to the stability and power of the state³³

Taheri has challenged the government's perception of religion by propagating the idea that Muslims should be apt to the condition of their inner self and not be satisfied with the outer practices of the Islamic religion like prayers, dress code etc.³⁴ In addition, Taheri's teachings have questioned the government's approach to Islam is his views on the application of Islamic criminal law, including apostasy and blasphemy.³⁵

In a speech held by Ayatollah Khamenei, he dismissed what he called "fake schools of mysticism" and identified them as "enemies and tools that undermine religion among youth". EH is characterized by state-funded news agencies and government websites as a "*fergh-e zalle*" (false cult) and their followers have been accused of practicing exorcism and explaining disease and illness by the presence of a ghost in the body³⁶

³¹ Dalvi: 25

³² Dalvi: 26

³³ Human Rights Without Frontier (HRWF), *Erfan-e Halgheh Followers* <https://hrwf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2017-Erfan-e-Halghe.pdf> [accessed 24 May 2019]

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Human Rights Without Frontier (HRWF), *Erfan-e Halgheh Followers* <https://hrwf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2017-Erfan-e-Halghe.pdf> [accessed 24 May 2019]

3.2. Treatment by the authorities

3.2.1. *Treatment of Mohammad Ali Taheri*

The founder of EH, Mohammad Ali Taheri, was arrested in 2011 and charged with “insulting Islamic sanctities” and “spreading corruption on earth. He was sentenced to death in 2015 and 2017 but the verdict was overturned both times by the appeal court, and the sentence changed to imprisonment.³⁷ Taheri was released in April 2019 after eight years in prison.³⁸

3.2.2. *Treatment of EH followers*

It is particularly individuals who have been very active within EH are targeted by the Iranian authorities, including instructors at EH courses. Generally, the level of persecution of EH followers depends on the level of activity and how open and visible the activity is. Some of the EH followers who have participated in public protests against the arrest of Mohammad Ali Taheri and have distributed flyers in this regard, have been subjected to arrest and harassment.³⁹

However, there have been cases of low-profiled persons being arbitrarily arrested or harassed by the authorities, for example those who participate in EH courses. Sometimes, the regime sends its agents under cover to participate in EH courses in order to provoke the participants to say or do something against the regime which can be used later as an excuse to arrest them.⁴⁰

Arrested EH followers are often put under pressure, including mental pressure, by the authorities during the arrest. The length of detention and the extent of pressure to which an arrested EH follower is subjected depends on the evidence the authorities have collected against him or her. Usually, arrested EH followers are released after two-three months. However, the source knew of an EH activist who was very active in lobbying for the release of Taheri among the authorities, and she was sentenced in absentia to six years imprisonment, two years exile and lashes for her activities.⁴¹

There is no gender pattern with regard to the profile of the targeted EH followers as one finds both men and women among those who are arrested.⁴²

Citing Fars News Agency, BBC Persian reported on 5 February 2015 that 16 EH trainers were in total sentenced to 37 years imprisonment and a 130 mio. tomans fine (about 13.000 USD) for blasphemy, acquiring of unlawful wealth and possession of alcoholic drinks.⁴³

³⁷ Radio Farda, *Iranian Spiritual Leader Sentenced For "Insulting Islam"*, 18 April 2018, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iranian-spiritual-leader-sentenced-for-insulting-islam-/29441035.html> [accessed on 24 May 2019]

³⁸ Radio Farda, *Leader Of 'Deviant' Iran Sect Freed After Years In Prison*, 23 April 2019, accessible at: <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/leader-of-deviant-iran-sect-freed-after-years-in-prison/29899270.html> [accessed on 24 May 2019]

³⁹ Dalvi: 27

⁴⁰ Dalvi: 28

⁴¹ Dalvi: 29

⁴² Dalvi: 30

⁴³ BBC Persian, *16 Erfan-e Hagheh trainers were sentenced to 37 years imprisonment in total*, 5 February 2015, accessible at: http://www.bbc.com/persian/iran/2015/02/150205_nm_erfan_prison_taheri [accessed on 24 May 2019]

Iran International cited on 19 July 2017 Tasnim News Agency for reporting that 11 EH members and sympathizers were arrested in Najaf-Abad, Iran. One of the arrestees was a trainer (instructor).⁴⁴

In October 2018, BBC Persian reported that 12 EH followers were arrested by the security service of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Forces (*Ettela'at-e Sepah*) in Isfahan in Iran including two EH leaders. The security service officials said that the EH followers held courses in Isfahan and the security service had monitored the courses.⁴⁵

4. Prevalence of social discrimination or violence against the followers

Although conservative pro-government Muslims view the group and its activities in a negative manner and it has been observed that local clerics sometimes incite violence against groups like EH, it is unknown whether the EH followers have been subjected to violence from such conservative groups.⁴⁶

EH is generally a well-reputed movement in the Iranian society. Apart from the small religious, conservative groups, who have a negative attitude towards EH, there is no social discrimination against EH followers.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Iran International, *Arrest of Erfan-e Hagheh supporters in Najaf-Abad*, 19 July 2017

<https://iranintl.com/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA/%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%B7%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%C2%AB%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%82%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%86%D8%AC%D9%81%E2%80%8C%D8%A2%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AF> [accessed on 24 May 2019]

⁴⁵ BBC Persian, The Revolutionary Guards's intelligence arrested 12 follower of Erfan-e Halgheh, 23 November 2018, accessible at: <http://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-46320387> [accessed on 24 May 2019]

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Dalvi: 31

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Oral Sources

Alireza Shiralipour Dalvi, former member of Erfan-e Halgheh's Coordination Committee in Tabriz, Iran. Frankfurt, Germany

Appendix 1: Meeting minutes

Meeting with Alireza Shiralipour Dalvi, former member of Erfan-e Halgheh's Coordination Committee in Tabriz, Iran. Frankfurt, Germany 12 April 2019

About the source

Alireza Shiralipour Dalvi has been active within Erfan-e Halgheh (EH) since 2004. In 2005, he completed EH instructor course and became an EH instructor. He was trained personally by the founder of EH, Mohammad Ali Taheri. In 2007, he became member of EH Coordination Committee in the city of Tabriz in Iran and was active in the committee until 2010 when the authorities arrested EH founder, Mohammad Ali Taheri, and raided the source's house.

Erfan-e Halgheh

1. EH is neither a religion nor a religious sect. EH does not relate to people's religion and belief and everyone from every religion can join EH and gain from its teachings. EH is a spiritual, gnostic (*Erfani*) school whose subjects are theoretically presented and practically experienced. *Erfan* means to reach illumination, enlightenment and clarity of vision about the existence and the universe through immersing oneself in love (*Eshgh*). Such results can definitely not be attained through the world of logic, science and knowledge.
2. The ultimate goal of EH is to reach unity with God through gaining knowledge about 'the Interuniversal Consciousness', i.e. the Divine Intelligence/Consciousness governing the universe, and establishing connection to it (*Ettesal*). There are benefits that people can have through this knowledge and through connection with 'the Interuniversal Intelligence/Consciousness'. Healing is only one of the ways through which EH intends to raise awareness about 'the Interuniversal Consciousness' and to prove the benefit people can get from it.

Cosmology of Erfan-e Halgheh

3. Everything in the universe consists of three elements: matter, energy and information/data (intelligence/awareness/consciousness), like a computer which consists of hardware, software and the electricity which runs the computer. Without the software (i.e. data/information/intelligence/awareness), for instance Windows, the computer will not be able to operate despite having all the physical elements and the energy, i.e. the electricity, necessary to run it. The total sum of all awareness (information) embedded in every substance in the universe makes up 'the Interuniversal Consciousness' (*Sho'ur-e Keyhani*), and everyone in the world is potentially capable of connecting to 'the Interuniversal Consciousness'. Man can benefit from connecting to 'the Interuniversal Consciousness' in many different ways, e.g. a patient can be healed.

‘Halgheh’

4. ‘Halgheh’ means ‘ring’ in Persian. In EH’s cosmology, *Halgheh* refers to relationship among three elements that together constitutes a ring or a *Halgheh* (‘circle of unity’):
 - d) ‘The Interuniversal Consciousness’ (*Sho’ur Keyhani*), which according to EH is the same as for instance The Holy Spirit (*Ruh al-Qudus*) in Christianity or *Jibra’il* (i.e. the angel through whom prophet Mohammad communicated with God) or *yaddullah* (‘the Hand of God’) in Islam,
 - e) A person who needs to be connected to ‘the Interuniversal Consciousness’, for instance a patient who can be cured by being connected to the Interuniversal Consciousness’
 - f) A person who is capable of connecting (‘*Ertebat’/‘Ettesal’*) to the Interuniversal Consciousness’, and who can facilitate the connection between the person who is in need of being connected and ‘the Interuniversal Consciousness’

Upon the formation of ‘the ring’, ‘Divine Grace’ immediately flows through it and the necessary actions will be taken.

5. There are different ‘rings’, each with a certain function, for instance, there is a ‘ring’ for healing certain diseases (*Faradarmani*), another ‘ring’ for control of mind etc. Until now, about 60 rings have been identified and introduced to the followers of EH. There are ‘rings’, which are not introduced yet due to the arrest of the founder.

‘Faradarmani’ and ‘Psymentology’

6. While the traditional as well as alternative (e.g. acupuncture) medicine focus on deficiencies in certain malfunctioning parts of the human body, EH has an understanding of man as a complex organism with infinitely elements most of which are not known to science yet.
7. According to EH, there are five types of diseases:
 - i) physical diseases
 - ii) psychical diseases (caused by disturbance in emotional trends)
 - iii) mental diseases (caused by disturbance in perceptions)
 - iv) psychosomatic diseases
 - v) mentosomatic (perceptual complications) diseases
8. *Faradarmani* is a type of complementary therapy (alternative medicine) which is totally *Erfan*-based in nature and is considered as a subdivision of EH. Through *Faradarmani*, people suffering from bodily/psychical and psychosomatic (all kinds) diseases can be cured.
9. Whereas *Faradarmani* mainly focuses on problems with the physical body and psychical diseases, *Psymentology* primarily deals with curing mental diseases. *Psymentology* is used to cure mental and mentosomatic diseases. *Faradarmani* and *Psymentology* complete each other and make up a complete treatment system.

Organisation

10. In 2006, EH was registered with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Iran under the name of 'The Cultural-Artistic Institute of Inter-universalism (Ring)' (*Moasses-e Farhangi-Honari-e Shabakey-e Keyhani (Halgheh)*) (see Appendix 2, Document 6). Hereby, EH followers were officially allowed to conduct their activities. One year later, the license of institute was not renewed and EH's presence in Iran as an official organisation came to an end.
11. Currently, EH followers are not organised within a formal organisational structure. Due to potential risks for EH followers in Iran, the source refrained to disclose whether or how EH activities are organised in Iran at the moment.
12. Until 2010, when the EH founder, Mohammad Ali Taheri, was arrested, he issued a membership card to his followers where the individual's name and the courses passed by him or her was noted (see Appendix 2, document 1). Since 2010, where Taheri was arrested, the card has been issued by EH instructors to EH followers who attend the courses. The issuance of the cards takes place independently by the individual instructor as there is no official organisation authorising it. Apart from these cards, no other documents proving membership of or affiliation to EH are issued in Iran.
13. There are EH centres in Canada, Sweden, UK and Austria that are active in spreading EH ideas and philosophy. None of these centres functions as EH main centre outside Iran and there is no hierarchical relation among them. In addition to these centres, there are several unorganised groups and individuals, like the source himself, who are active in awareness raising and other activities regarding EH.
14. The source is not aware of any EH centre outside issuing recommendation letters or any other documents proving affiliation of a person to EH. However, the source was not certain about that and did not rule out the possibility that one of the centres in Canada, Sweden, UK or Austria could issue such documents. The source himself wrote once a handwritten note for someone which proved the person's participation in EH courses.

Activities in Iran

15. In addition to running courses, EH followers conduct charity and humanitarian activities in Iran such as collecting aid for flood or earthquake victims. Moreover, people who have participated in EH courses may spontaneously hold meetings where they discuss mystical and spiritual issues. EH followers have also arranged protests against the arrest of the founder, Taheri.

EH courses

16. EH courses comprise eight modules. Each module takes about one and half month (Six weeks) to complete. There is no test of any kind when a participant completes a module.

17. In each module, a number of 'rings' are introduced to the participants who are entrusted and empowered by the instructor responsible for the module to establish connection to 'the Interuniversal Consciousness' in order to benefit from the 'rings' introduced during the course.
18. The first module is about *Faradarmani*, which is only taught on the first module. At the beginning of the module, participants sign a certificate which is given to them at the end of the module as confirmation of the completion of the module (see Appendix 2, document 2).
19. By completing the fifth module, participants are given the opportunity to become instructors in *Faradarmani* and instruct new participants in EH courses. Thus, it takes about six-eight months to become a *Faradarmani* instructor. There are individuals who go through all eight modules without becoming instructors. Those who complete module 5 and become *Faradarmani* instructors are issued a certificate of *Faradarmani* instruction (see Appendix 2, document 3).
20. Parallel to these eight modules mentioned above, there are three other modules which the participants can attend together with the eight modules mentioned above. One of these three modules is called 'Defensive Radiation' ('*Tasha'sho-e Defa'l*'). Participants who complete this module are issued a certificate confirming the completion of the module (see Appendix 2, document 4). Those who become instructors in 'Defensive Radiation' ('*Tasha'sho-e Defa'l*'), are also issued a certificate of instruction in this subject (see Appendix 2, document 4). The Two other parallel modules are called *Psymentology* and *Farapezeshki*.
21. Those, who are willing to become instructors (*masters*), are empowered to master certain 'rings' which enable them to work as instructors ('masters'). Instructors are not divided into different grades and there is no hierarchical structure among them.
22. Currently, apart from the documents mentioned above, no other document is issued for participating in EH courses.
23. Most of the participants in EH courses have been women (about 60 percent), which has sometimes contributed to the widely-held misperception that EH is focusing on women as its target group. In general, participants in EH courses do not have a certain profile as one finds people with different social and religious backgrounds among participants: academics, uneducated, religious, non-religious, priests, Christians, Hindu, Baha'is etc.

Expected knowledge of EH followers about EH

24. According to the source, those who have completed Module 1 of EH courses are supposed to have a certificate proving that they have attended the module. These individuals are expected to know the basics about *Faradarmani*.

Treatment by the authorities

25. Until 2007, EH followers did not face any problems with the authorities in Iran, and the authorities did not perceive EH ideas as deviating from or opposed to the official dominating Shi'a belief of the country. There were even influential persons among the authorities who supported the ideas promoted by EH-follower and protected them. After 2007, the regime started perceiving EH as 'fake mysticism' (*'Erfan-e Kazeb'*) and a sect and putting its followers under increasing pressure. A possible reason for this change of policy was the growing support which the movement enjoyed in the country, which caused the security services to start considering the movement a security threat. It is assumed by the EH followers that millions of Iranians have attended EH courses, however, there is no confirmed statistics of this.
26. The Iranian regime want EH followers to stop spreading, according the authorities, alternative interpretations of the Twelver version of Shia Islam and demand that EH followers should promote the regime's understanding of Shia Islam through their courses. One of the authorities said once to the source that the regime did not have a problem with EH holding courses in which people with other religious background participated as long as the participants were turned into Twelver Shia Muslims through the courses. EH has rejected to meet the regime's demand for promoting a certain religion or version of Islam as EH is essentially opposed to focusing on people's religion or beliefs. Both the police and the security services have told EH followers that it is forbidden to run or participate in EH courses.

Targeted profiles

27. It is particularly individuals who have been very active within EH who are targeted by the Iranian authorities, including instructors at EH courses. Generally, the level of persecution of EH followers depends on the level of activity and how open and visible the activity is. Some of the EH followers who have participated in public protests against the arrest of Mohammad Ali Taheri and have distributed flyers in this regard, have been subjected to arrest and harassment.
28. However, there have been cases of low-profiled persons being arbitrarily arrested or harassed by the authorities, for example those who participate in EH courses. Sometimes, the regime sends its agents under cover to participate in EH courses in order to provoke the participants to say or do something against the regime which can be used later as an excuse to arrest them.
29. Arrested EH followers are often put under pressure, including mental pressure, by the authorities during the arrest. The length of detention and the extent to which an arrested EH follower is subjected to pressure depends on the evidence the authorities have collected against him or her. Usually, arrested EH followers are released after two-three months. However, the source knew of an EH activist who was very active in lobbying for the release of Taheri among the authorities, and she was sentenced in absentia to six years imprisonment, two years exile and lashes for her activities.
30. There is no gender pattern with regard to the profile of the targeted EH followers as one finds both men and women among those who are arrested.

Possible social discrimination against EH followers

31. EH is generally a well-reputed movement in the Iranian society. Apart from the small religious, conservative groups, who have a negative attitude towards EH, there is no social discrimination against EH followers.

Appendix 2: Documents

All the documents below are sent to the Danish Immigration Service by Alireza Shiralipour Dalvi, former member of Erfan-e Halgheh's Coordination Committee in Tabriz, Iran.

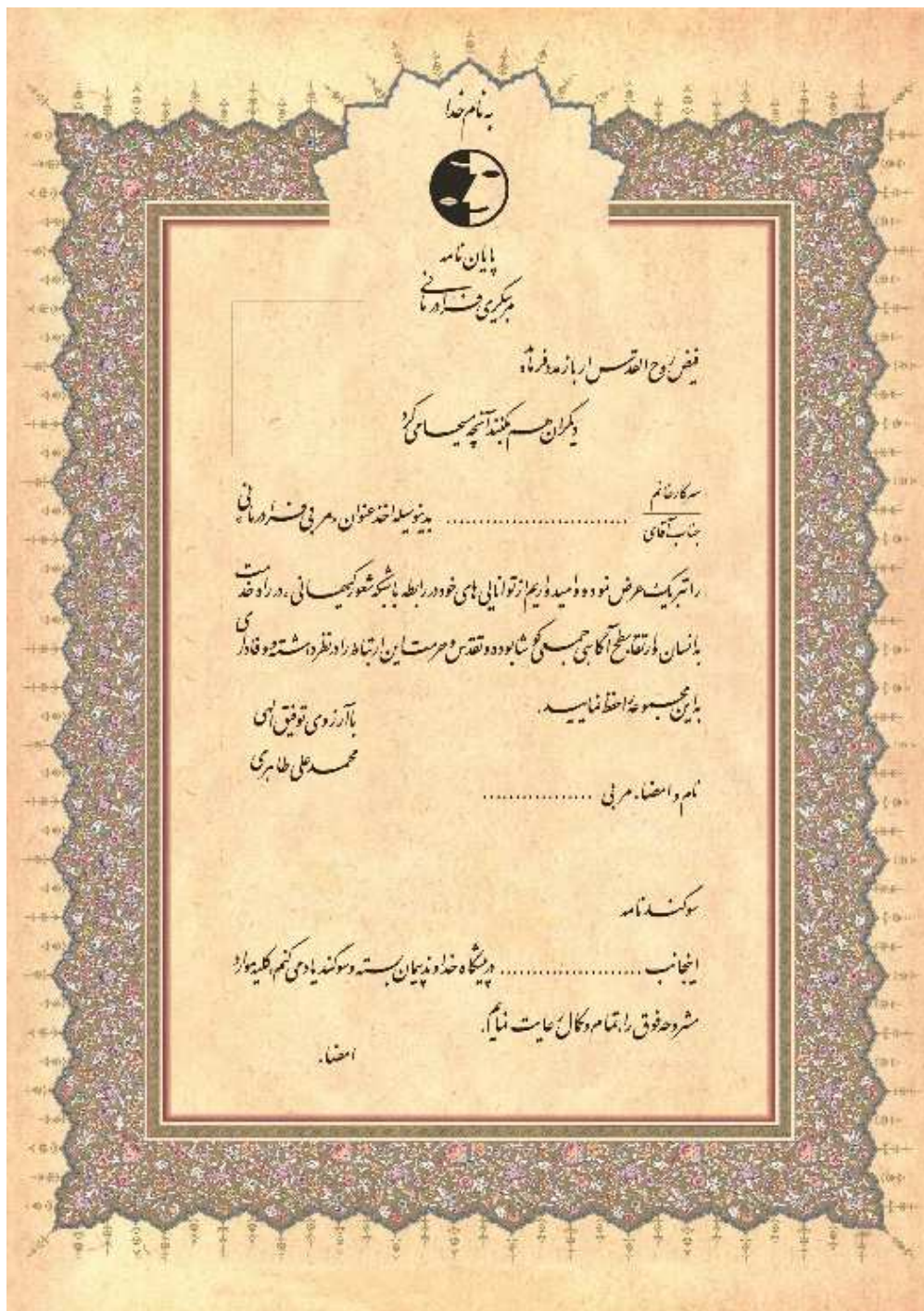
Document 1: membership card issued until 2010 by Mohammad Ali Taheri



Document 2: Certificate issued upon completion of the first module (*Faradarmani*)



Document 3: Certificate of Instruction in *Faradarmani*



Document 4: Certificate of Completion of 'Defensive Radiations' ('Tasha'sho-e Defa'l')



Document 5: Certificate of Instruction in 'Defensive Radiations' ('Tasha'sho-e Defa'')



