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Iran: Weaponizing Justice System to Persecute Baha'is

(Geneva) –[Iranian](#) authorities are escalating their repression of Baha'is, with a recent series of harsh prison sentences and asset confiscations, the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) and Human Rights Watch said today. Iran's judiciary has been leading the persecution of Baha'is, amid increasing public incitement to discrimination by state officials, hate propaganda, and disinformation targeting the religious minority community.

"Iranian authorities are relentlessly persecuting Baha'is, depriving them of the most basic human rights in what amounts to ongoing [crimes against humanity](#) – solely because of their faith," said [Bahar Saba](#), senior Iran researcher at Human Rights Watch. "There is virtually not a single aspect of the lives of Baha'is in Iran that has not been affected by these egregious violations and crimes under international law."

The latest government crackdown, which intensified following the Israel-Iran conflict in June 2025, has involved arbitrary arrests, interrogations, unjust convictions, and imprisonments, as well as property confiscations.

Between June and November 2025, the BIC documented more than 750 persecutory acts across Iran, three times the number recorded during the same period in 2024. These incidents include over 200 raids on homes and businesses, followed by interrogations, resulting in the detention and arrest of at least 110 Bahá'ís. Revolutionary Courts held hearings for more than 100 individuals and issued new sentences against Bahá'ís, each ranging from two to ten years in prison. At least 45 people were summoned to begin serving their prison sentences during this period.

Among those imprisoned are mothers who have been separated from their young children.

“A justice system that should deliver fairness and neutrality and serve as refuge against oppression instead serves as a weapon of persecution against Baha’is, dissidents, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iran,” said Simin Fahandej, representative of the Baha’i International Community to the United Nations in Geneva.

Judges in Iran have a track record of appalling disregard for due process and extreme religious prejudice against Baha’is, Iran’s largest non-Muslim religious minority. Over the past 45 years, a number of policy documents—developed in accordance with a [1991 memorandum](#) signed by Iran’s supreme leader—have exposed the government’s deliberate and systematic policy to persecute Baha’is, including through the country’s justice system.

In April 2025, the European Union [imposed sanctions](#) on sections of Iran’s judiciary as well as several judges and prosecutors for human rights violations, including the persecution of Baha’is.

“In case after case, the Iranian judiciary has shown itself unwilling to play its sacred duty as a promoter of justice,” Fahandej said. “Instead, it has stained its hands and its record with verdicts reeking of persecution and religious prejudice.” These verdicts have been issued by judges who, time and again, have sought not justice but the suppression of the Baha’i community and are deeply complicit in the state’s machinery of repression.”

The latest wave of persecution against Baha’is has been marked by detentions in circumstances that may amount to enforced disappearances and an escalation in long prison sentences following grossly unfair trials. In some cases, courts have insisted on handing down harsh sentences after the Supreme Court overturned verdicts and ordered retrials, or officials have reopened criminal proceedings against Baha’is following acquittals.

According to information obtained by the BIC, on November 12, security forces in Gorgan, Golestan province, arrested [Farhad Fahandej](#) after searching his home and seizing his personal belongings. His whereabouts, the reason for the arrest, and any charges against him remained unknown for weeks after the arrest. Fahandej had previously spent 15 years in prison in connection with his religious beliefs.

In late October 2025 in Semnan, [Anisa Fanaian](#), a Baha’i woman imprisoned in the past for her faith, was convicted of vaguely worded charges by Branch 10 of the Semnan Appeals Court and sentenced to eight years in prison. The verdict came after the Supreme Court had

overturned a lower court verdict against her, following a judicial [review request](#), and sent the case back for retrial.

In another deeply alarming case that bears all the hallmarks of the state wielding the judiciary as a tool of repression, the authorities have reopened criminal cases against 26 Baha'is in Shiraz. According to information obtained by the BIC, the 26 were acquitted following a Supreme Court's decision that overturned their convictions and sentences in 2022 and ordered a retrial. The re-initiation of criminal proceedings in the case reportedly comes at the request of a former provincial chief justice pursuant to domestic law procedures that strongly suggests the direct involvement of the head of the judiciary. Information obtained by the BIC also indicates that many of the 26 were subjected to torture and ill-treatment at the time of their initial arrests in 2016. In an incident emblematic of judicial officials' violations of the most basic due process guarantees, the former chief justice insulted the defense lawyer in the case during a routine follow-up meeting, threw him out of his office, saying: "They're not suspects, they're criminals."

In a case in Kerman on November 29, 2025, the Human Rights Activists News Agency reported that the Appeal Court in the province had sentenced [Shahram Fallah](#), 64, to nine years and six months in prison – reduced from over 13 years - and a year of internal exile on charges of "deviant educational and propagation activities contrary to Shar'ia" and "forming a group to disrupt national security." The charges mirror those used in other cases to criminalize peaceful Baha'i belief.

In Hamadan, [six Baha'i women](#)—Neda Mohebbi, Atefeh Zahedi, Farideh Ayyoubi, Noura Ayyoubi, Zarrindokht Ahadzadeh, and Jaleh Rezaie—were taken into custody on October 26 to serve their prison terms. Authorities had sentenced five of them to six years in prison and the sixth to a seven-year term. The women, some of them mothers of young children, faced charges of "deviant educational and propagation activities contrary to Shar'ia" and "membership in the Bahá'í sect."

In Karaj, [Nahid Behrouzi](#) was sentenced on October 6 to harsh punishment, including five years in prison and the confiscation of personal property for "deviant educational and propagation activities contrary to the holy Shar'ia." According to information obtained by the BIC, several agents violently arrested her without a warrant on August 29, 2024. She suffered bruises and a nosebleed as a result. She was subsequently detained for 65 days without access to a lawyer or proper medical care. During trial, her lawyer was denied full access to her case file and no evidence was presented to support the charges.

In Shiraz, [Roya Sabet](#), a resident of the UAE who had come to Iran to care for her elderly parents, was arrested on October 25, 2025 by agents of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and transferred to Adelabad

Prison to enforce a 10-year prison sentence she had previously received. Information reviewed by the BIC showed that she had been convicted in May 2025 on baseless charges of “collaboration with citizens of the Israeli government” and “forming a group against national security.” She also faces a two-year travel ban and a five-year ban for online activities.

In another case that is emblematic of the [intensification of the state crackdown on Baha'i women](#), on September 28 , 2025, authorities [upheld](#) prison sentences of between 5 and 10 years against [10 Baha'i women in Isfahan](#), for “propaganda against the Islamic Republic” and “participation in deviant propagation and educational activities contrary to the holy Shari’a.”

Authorities’ policy of [economic dispossession](#) of Baha’is has also continued unabated. In a recent case in Isfahan, the BIC found that authorities had invoked article 49 of the Constitution, a clause enabling the state to seize “illegal” assets, to appropriate the legitimate properties of [20 Baha'is in the province](#) including their homes, vehicles, and bank accounts without due process.

“All individuals involved in crimes under international law committed against Baha’is in Iran, including prosecutorial and judicial officials, should be held accountable,” Saba said.

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