

September 18, 2015

His Excellency Ali Larijani
Speaker of the Iranian Parliament (Majles)
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Your Excellency:

As the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, we write as a network of parliamentarians from diverse political, religious and geographical backgrounds to express grave concerns about limitations on religious freedom in your country. We are alarmed by ongoing reports of violations of this fundamental freedom for religious minorities, including Christians and the Bahá'ís. We respectfully ask you to ensure that all individuals in Iran, be they Muslim, Christian, Bahá'í, Atheist, Zoroastrian, Jew or from another faith, can fully enjoy freedom of religion or belief without fear of violence or discrimination.

We are particularly concerned about Pastor Saeed Abedini, who has been jailed for nearly three years. We understand he has been held in intolerable conditions for merely peacefully exercising his faith in private homes. We specifically request the release of Mr. Abedini, as well as other Christians, including Mr. Behnam Irani and Mr. Farshid Fathi Malayeri who are detained apparently for no other reason than the peaceful exercise of their Christian faith.

We have received reports about the continued harassment and arrest of members of the Sufi Muslim community, including prominent leaders from the Nematollahi Gonabadi Order. We are especially worried about the case of seven Bahá'í leaders, also called the Yaran, who were arrested in 2008 and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment in 2010: Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi; Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani; Mr. Afif Naeimi; Mr. Saeid Rezaie; Mrs. Mahvash Sabet; Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli; and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm. It has come to our attention that they have been harshly treated while in prison and denied the right to temporary leave from prison, which they are legally entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians we understand your position in the Iranian system and the separation of powers from the judiciary and executive branches. At the same time, Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and is therefore obliged to adhere to article 18, which guarantees freedom of religion or belief for everyone. We respectfully petition your prompt intervention in the cases of the seven Bahá'í leaders and the imprisoned Christians, as well as all other prisoners of faith, to ensure they are immediately released, that their human rights are respected, and that Iran lives up to its international obligations.

Sincerely,