



THE SENTINEL PROJECT FOR GENOCIDE PREVENTION

Monthly Summary: Iranian Bahá'í Situation of Concern

April 2012

Prepared by Troy Powell

Summary of Incident Types

1. *Polarization events (sentencing, expulsions, arrest, prison transfer, summons)* - These are actions by the government which appear calculated to separate Bahá'í citizens from mainstream Iranian society, thereby weakening their community and socially isolating them to prevent Muslim Iranians from sympathizing with them.
2. *Preparation/Denial Events.* In Gregory Stanton's 8 stage model *preparation* involves the identification and separation of individuals due to their ethnic or religious identities. With *denial*, although it typically occurs after a genocide has taken place, it is important to note that it like the rest of the stages in Stanton's model is a non-linear aspect of a genocidal operating process and can co-occur intermittently with any others on the spectrum.
3. *International/political events* - As tensions increase between Iran, its neighbours, and the international community over its nuclear program, the implications for human rights - particularly those of minority groups - within the country remain unclear.
4. *Internet Censorship* - Recently the Iranian regime have ramped up their efforts to control and censor internet communications. The recent announcement of a national information network is perhaps the most ambitious project to date in the pursuit of this goal.
5. *Releases on bail*

1. Polarization

Search/Arrests

- A Bahá'í resident, Negar Mulkzadeh, of Mashhad was summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence and subsequently arrested. Her whereabouts are currently unknown. Mulkzadeh was among the group of Bahá'ís who were involved in a handicrafts exhibition raising money for the disadvantaged (see **February Report**). An arrest of ten Bahá'ís occurred at the exhibition which was taking place at a private residence. Six of the ten Bahá'ís have been released after a month of being detained. The remaining four are still imprisoned.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 2 April 2012



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- A Bahá'í resident of Karaj Sarir Sadeqi was arrested at his residence. Sadeqi's relatives claimed that the security forces present possessed a warrant from the Public Prosecutor. It is alleged that his arrest is connected to the arrest of 14 Bahá'ís that occurred in Shiraz on 3 February 2012 (**See February Report**).
Source: [HRANA](#) - 8 April 2012

It was later reported that Sarir was transferred to Detention Centre 100 in Shiraz. Sarir's relatives state that he has been subject to psychological pressure and is afflicted with breathing problems and heart palpitations.

Source: [PCED](#) 19 April 2012



- A Bahá'í couple named Housmand Sana'i and his wife Sho'aleh Shahidi were previously arrested at their home in Bojnourd by security forces possessing a warrant to search the home with arrest. Sho'aleh was released after 8 hours, but has subsequently been summoned, re-arrested (on 14 April 2012) and imprisoned. On the following day the couple's son Shayan Sana'i was also summoned and arrested. The charge for the couple and their son was "teaching the Bahá'í Faith" as proclaimed by the prosecutor.
Source: [HRANA](#) - 7, 14 April 2012.
- A Bahá'í resident of Qaemshahr, Anis Moti'i was arrested. His whereabouts are unknown. His brother Amin was also abused by security forces.
Source: [Khabar Navard Blog](#) - 18 April 2012

It was also reported that Intelligence agents and officers from the local government (approximately 30) had searched the album binding workshop where Anis Moti'i was employed in Qaemshahr. Despite being able to show his licence to operate the workshop officials closed his business anyway. Moti'i was apparently arrested on the grounds that a private individual had made a complaint about him.



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Source: [HRANA](#) - 19 April 2012

Additionally, state officials visited the offices of Anis' father the owner of the business. It has also been reported that the Anis' brother



- On 12 April 2012 Farnak Heyani Derakshan had her home searched by security forces and was arrested after having cassette tapes, religious literature, and her computer confiscated. On the previous day, Farnak had been summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence and was subjected to a lengthy interrogation before being released and instructed to come back on the following day. Farnak was taken to Shahid Kuchui Prison in Sari but was transferred the next day to a prison in Qaemshahr.

Security forces searched the home Mehnam Derakshan in Tenakabon on the 15th of April, personal effects and religious items were seized before her arrest. Her whereabouts are currently unknown.

Source: [HRANA](#): 19 April 2012

Sentencing

- Iqan Shahidi a Bahá'í activist who fought for equal educational rights was summoned to Tehran's Evin Prison to begin serving his 5-year sentence. Iqan was previously free on bail on condition that he answered his summons. His sentence was confirmed by the review court and Shahidi has been charged with "membership of an illegal organization" the Committee for the Right to Education (PCED). It was later reported by Khabar Navard that Iqan has been transferred to Raja'i Shahr Prison.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 6 April 2012





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- Two Bahá'í women from Semnan have been tried and sentenced. Shohreh A'zami-Kasa'i was first arrested last year and subsequently released on bail. She has been tried and sentenced to five years on the charge of "Membership of the Bahá'í community." Anisa Fana'ayan, a Bahá'í from Semnan, was tried on 9 April 2012 and has been awaiting sentencing. Last November the Ministry of Intelligence arrested and interrogated her for 15 days despite the fact that she cares for two young children aged 2 and 7 years old. A'zami-Kasa'i's husband Siamek Iqani has been serving a 3-year sentence in Semnan Prison. In the last 3 years A'zami-Kasa'i's trial marks the eleventh Bahá'í female of the province to receive sentencing. Sentences for the other women range from 1 to 7 years in duration.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 26 April 2012

Prison Transfer

- Shahram Chiniyan, a Bahá'í resident of Tehran, has been transferred from Evin prison to Raja'l Shahr Prison. Chiniyan was sentenced to 70 lashes and 8 years in prison for the charge of insulting Islam. Chiniyan was first arrested in March 2009 and released a year later, having to use his business licence as bail. It is alleged that a complaint linking Chiniyan to his charge was made by a neighbour.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 15 April 2012

- A Bahá'í family - Bakhtiyar Rasekhi, Farhnaz Na'imi, and their daughter Farin Rahimi - who were previously detained on 5 January 2012 after security agents searched and raided their home the family has been transferred after their initial imprisonment. Bakhtiyar was taken to the men's section of the Shahab Prison in Kerman, and his wife and daughter were taken to the general detention of the women's section in the same prison.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 16 April 2012

- Two Bahá'ís who have been detained for more than two months, Eyman Rahmat-Penah and Sina Sarikhani, have been transferred and confined to a prison wing known for its severe conditions. The two men disobeyed an order from the prayer leader of the prison that Bahá'ís should have no interaction with non-Bahá'í inmates. After a few warnings reinforced by the prison's administrative officials, the Bahá'í inmates were moved to wings 10 and 11 of Adel Abad Prison where prisoners with serious contagious diseases are held.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 16 April 2012



Prison Detention / Health Conditions

- It has been reported that there has been mounting repression on the Bahá'ís of Shiraz. A group of Bahá'í prisoners who have been placed in temporary detention for over two months (which exceeds the period specified by court order) remain detained. On 7 April 2012, four of these Bahá'ís - Kavus Samimi, Kambiz Habibi, Mazhgan Amadi, and Farshid Yazdani - were taken to Detention Centre 100 in Shiraz and there has been no word about their status. They were prohibited from having any contact with other detainees. A lawyer for some of the Bahá'ís was told on 9 April 2012 that their detention would be extended for 2 months.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 9 April 2012

- A Bahá'í prisoner who is a part of a group arrested and imprisoned earlier (**see March Report**) named Sam Jaberi is reported to be in poor health. Prison officials have not taken measures for him to receive proper treatment. Despite communications from Jaberi's family regarding his medical conditions, a letter from a physician confirming Jaberi's need for immediate treatment as well as a letter from a solicitor requesting Jaberi's transfer to a hospital, a judge has refused to make the corresponding order. Jaberi suffers from back pain, respiratory problems, and high blood pressure

Source: [HRANA](#) - 16 April 2012



Expulsion

- It has been reported that in February two children were expelled from a school Najafabad. The expulsions followed a public meeting called by the Chief of Police in which the Bahá'í faith was said to cause moral corruption. Interestingly, the parents of the now expelled children objected to this claim and also garnered some support from Muslim parents present at the meeting.



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The parents who made the initial objections made complaints about the Police Chief's behaviour both to the school's administration and the Office for Supervising Education. On the following day, the children of the parents received an abrupt expulsion. At the Office for Supervising Education the parents were told that Bahá'ís had no rights to their religion. This was presumably done in privacy so that other parents wouldn't discover they were Bahá'ís. The parents tried to resolve the issue at the Office for Supervising Education in Isfahan and were again unsuccessful. The expulsion has been confirmed by educational officials and the parents have been instructed to enrol their children at another school.

Source: [Bahá'í News Service](#) - 26 March 2012.

- A Bahá'í undergraduate student was expelled from Kerman Medical University. Elhan Mehrebani-Yazdi had only one term of theory and an internship remaining to finish her degree requirements. Elhan received a letter citing her adherence to the Bahá'í faith as the reason for her expulsion.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 19 April 2012

Business Closure

- It was reported that on 18 February 2012 an operating licence for the business of Ali Tabiyaniyan, a Bahá'í resident of Semnan, was revoked by local officials. The stated cause for the revoked licence was "violations" but no details on the nature of these violations were provided. Officials eventually admitted that the orders "came from above" and that the local officials themselves were not responsible.

Source: [Khabar Navard](#) - 7 April 2012

- Local officials in the Semnan region revoked the business licence of Farhad Fana'ayan, whose business was initially closed on 26 October 2012. The business licence was revoked without explanation but Fana'ayan was told that he would not receive any further licences to conduct his business in Semnan.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 25 April 2012

2. Preparation/Denial Events

- On the morning of 18 April 2012 a Muslim-Bahá'í inter-religious couple - who are expecting a child - were arrested in their home. Sahel Miri and his wife Raheleh Ma'sumi had their home searched before they were taken away as part of the arrest of four Bahá'ís in Qaemshahr. It has now emerged that the primary charge has been laid against Miri and that it relates to the fact that he married a Muslim and allegedly caused her to change her religion. The accusation has since been denied by officials at the Ministry of Intelligence however it's been reported that the Ministry has been urging the parents of



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Ma'sumi to file a complaint citing Bahá'í conversion against their son-in-law. The Ministry of Intelligence have denied an attempt to release Ma'sumi on bail, despite the fact that her family members have offered to post bail twice. The situation is emotionally charged due partially to the fact that Islamic law forbids the marriage of non-Muslim men to Muslim women. The whereabouts of the couple is currently unknown.

Source: [CNN iReport](#) - 18 April 2012.

3. International/Political events

- Western Sanctions coupled with the recent expulsion of Iranian banks from SWIFT, the global platform for financial transactions, is expected to have a significant impact on the Iranian economy. On 17 March 2012, SWIFT disconnected 30 Iranian banks from its global network, which is compounded by United States economic sanctions which have targeted 23 banks in the country. As a result of the SWIFT sanctions on Iran, cash transaction costs have risen significantly. Other impacts include factories struggling to procure spare parts and materials. Additionally, cheaper Chinese goods have begun to penetrate the market, thus undermining local Iranian industry. Despite these consequences, Iranian officials remain determined. Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi referred to the sanctions as "minor problems" insisting on the country's capability to bypass international pressures. The majority of Iran's revenue comes from its oil, and the country has recently signed barter agreements with buyers in India and other countries in an attempt to bypass the sanctions.

Source: [VOA](#) - 4 April 2012

- The imprisonment and repression of the seven Bahá'í leaders received worldwide attention on day that marked their 10,000th day in prison. The initiative raising awareness for Bahá'í leaders was put together by the [United4Iran](#) organization.

Source: [Bahá'í World News Service](#) - 3 April 2012

- In what has been heralded as a rare show of cooperation in Istanbul, Iran and several world powers marked their first meeting over the pressing nuclear in more than a year. Progress appeared to be made as all parties to the meeting agreed to meet again on 23 May 2012. Despite the apparent progress, challenges still remain regarding what measures Iran must take to convince the international community that its nuclear enrichment program is benign.

Source: [Associated Press](#) - 14 April 2012.



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4. Internet Censorship

- The Fars News Agency has reported that Iranian Minister of Communication and Technology, Reza Taghipour, has announced that a priority for the government this year is to launch the country's National Information Network (NIN). Taghipour proclaimed that the first phase of the NIN project will be launched in June and that the entire project is set to be complete by the end of the year. Taghipour shared his thoughts regarding the project - which will essentially be a government-controlled, Iran-specific internet - noting that the internet can bear cultural, social, and moral harms.

Source: [Radio Zameneh](#) - 4 April 2012

- It has been reported that the proposed NIN will effectively block Iranian access to internet services such as Google, Gmail, Google Plus, Yahoo, and Hotmail. Such restrictions are in line with what Iranian officials are calling their attempt to have a "clean internet." In the first phase of the project, the aforementioned internet services will be blocked and replaced with corresponding national intranet services such as "Iran Mail" and "Iran Search Engine." The Iranian Government has begun its registration procedure for internet users to apply for an Iran Mail ID. This will require official identification information, which includes national ID, address, and full name. The following and final phase of the national network will implement the national intranet framework which will allegedly block all Iranians from greater internet access. This final stage is set to be launched in August of this year.

Source: [International Business Times](#) - 9 April 2012

5. Release on Bail

- Nine Bahá'ís previously arrested in Shiraz (Mezhdeh Falah, Eyman Rahmat-Penah, Mazhgan `Amadi, Farshid Yazdani, Sam Jaberi, Yekta Fahandezh, Sina Sarikhani, Kambiz Habibi, and Kavus Samimi) have now been freed on bail. Their bails were set at 100 million Tuman (62,000 euros; 81,000 USD) each.

Source: [HRANA](#) - 1 April 2012

- In a report on 12 April 2012, the Bahá'í News Service reported that three Bahá'ís - Azatollah Ahmadiyan, Shahzadeh Khalili, and Gholam-Husayn Mokktari - all Bahá'í residents of Masshad, have all been bailed from prison. Bail was set at 100 million tumans each (62,000 euros; 81,000 USD)

Source: [Bahá'í News Service](#) - 6 May 2012



Commentary and Analysis

Over the past few weeks, there has been an increase in anonymous complaints against Bahá'ís (on purported religious grounds) this is an interesting trend, considering the case of the aforementioned student expulsion, where Muslim sympathizers of the Bahá'í faith were present. The fact that the parents received news of their child's expulsions in private and away from the group where they had some support indicates a calculated effort on the part of the country's officials to avoid Muslim- Bahá'í contact or sympathy. Additionally, the government appears to be attempting to manipulate impressions of anti-Bahá'í sentiment. This may be supported by the rise in anonymous complaints to the government against Bahá'ís. This is most evident in this report due to the fact that Iranian officials urged the parents of a Muslim woman to file a Bahá'í religious conversion complaint on their daughter's behalf. The presence of Muslim sympathizers offers a faint glimmer of hope despite the mounting persecution of the Bahá'ís. The existence of such inter-religious solidarity challenges the notion that the Iranian people completely support of the government's perception and treatment of Bahá'ís.

Some of the business closures mentioned in this report (the majority occurring in the Semnan region) follows a trend of mounting business/economic repression of Bahá'ís in the region.

The existence of a preparation/denial event (i.e. the Sahel Miri case) marks a slight yet notable escalation in these processes which has been observed in various regions of Iran. Although the eight-stage model that we apply is non-linear (see Preparation/Denial description above) this particular event is rare compared to the more routine events typically observed in Iran (e.g. arrests, expulsions, prison transfers, raids, questioning). It is also important to note that both the preparation and denial processes usually coincide with the later stages of genocide. Although few of these events have been observed, the occurrence mentioned in this report is worrisome and we will make efforts to watch for them in the future.

Internationally, governments and organizations appear to be divided on the nuclear issue in Iran. Most notably, official representative of the American and Israeli governments have expressed both caution and the need for strict and swift measures in response to Iran's nuclear enrichment program. At the moment, the threat of a political/military conflict over Iran's nuclear program still looms but any decisive or collective action on the issue has yet to be seen. As noted in earlier reports, a military attack on Iran would be a likely trigger for increased persecution and possibly violence against the Bahá'í population.