



THE SENTINEL PROJECT
FOR GENOCIDE PREVENTION

Monthly Summary: Iranian Bahá'í Situation of Concern

January 2013

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THE SENTINEL PROJECT FOR GENOCIDE PREVENTION IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION DEVOTED TO EFFECTIVE EARLY WARNING OF GENOCIDE AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES BEFORE LIVES ARE LOST.

WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS THROUGH THE CREATIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND COOPERATION WITH THREATENED GROUPS.



Summary of Incident Types

1. *Polarization Events (sentencing, expulsions, arrest, prison transfer, summons)* - These are actions by the government that 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. *Release on Bail*
3. *Update*
4. *International / Political Events*

Commentary and Analysis

5. Analyst commentary and observations
6. Statistics / Infographics
7. One Month Comparison
8. One Year Comparison



1. Polarization

Arrests

- A Bahá'í resident of Babolsar, Shekiba Vahdat, was arrested, released and then arrested once more. Vahdat received a summons to the Ministry of Intelligence on 1 January 2013 after which she was detained for two days. During this period her home was searched and some personal items were confiscated. Vahdat was arrested again on 11 January 2013 in Tabriz. There is currently no information available regarding her whereabouts or her condition.

Source: [HRANA](#) 12 January 2013

- Two arrests were made in the county of Nur (Mazandaran Province). Security agents visited the home of Bahá'í citizen Shayda Ta'id. The agents searched her home and then arrested her and her guest, Bayan Baba'l, who is from Qaemshahr. The two were taken to the Ministry of Intelligence in Sari and were able to contact their families three days later.

Source: [HRANA](#) 25 January 2013

- Ministry of Intelligence agents visited the workplace of Fardin Aghasi a member of the Bahá'í faith who was searched and then arrested on 30 January 2013 in Urmia (West Azerbaijan). Agents went to his home, searched it and seizing books and images that related to the Bahá'í faith. Aghasi's wife, Farhnaz Maqdam, was also arrested. The couple have had one telephone call with their family since their arrest.

Source: [HRANA](#) 9 February 2012

Raid

- 13 security forces comprised of seven men each carried out a systematic and coordinated search and raid of 13 homes in Qorveh (Kurdistan province). All of the homes were given a thorough search. Books, religious pictures, cameras and computer equipment were seized. The homeowners of the houses raided were all of the Bahá'í faith. Their names are as follows; Khalil Eghdamian, Kambiz Eghdamian, Saeed Mansouri, Behnam Eghdamian, Mehrdad Zarei, Tayeb Salehi, Faez Salehi, Mehdi Leghaei, Attaullah Kosari, Ziaullah Kosari, Kiomars Osafi, Koroush Osafi and Saeed Khadem.

Source: [HRANA](#) 20 January 2013

Prison Transfer

- Two infant children in the care of their imprisoned mothers were transferred to a hospital in Semnan. Rosam Nik-Ain, a 12-month old child, was in prison with his mother, Zahra Nik-Ain, and was recently transferred to the Emir al-Mumenin hospital on 18 December 2012. He was suffering from a severe ear



infection and fever. Nik-Ain repeatedly asked for a furlough so that she could treat her child, however her request was denied. She was later escorted by prison guard for two brief visits to the hospital. A recent report on 2 January 2013 indicates that Nik-Ain was given five days to spend with her son. She currently serves a 23-month sentence for the charge of “propaganda against the regime,” “participating in the Bahá’í ‘19th-day feast’”, participating in Ruhi classes and organizing morality classes for Bahá’í children.

On 26 December 2013 Barman Ehsani, the 6-month old child of Taraneh Torabi who currently imprisoned in Semnan, was taken to the Fatemiyyeh hospital to be treated for a lung infection. Torabi is serving a 30-month prison sentence for “propaganda against the regime” and participation in Bahá’í activities.

Source: [HRANA](#) 2 January 2013

Questioning

- Munireh Shah- Muhammadi was summoned by the Ministry of Intelligence in Qazvin. Her home was searched in June 2009 and religious books, a computer and other personal items were seized. She was held for a day for interrogation. Another Bahá’í from Qazvin, Behnam Momtazi, was arrested on 11 December 2013 and later freed on bail. There were six other Bahá’ís that were summoned and interrogated within this time period. However it is not confirmed whether their summons occurred in January or December. The names reported are as follows; Vahid Faroughi, Wasal Momtazi, Novid Mola’i, Mehrzad Zahra’i, Mas`ud Behrami and Mas`ud Bahaquli. These Bahá’ís were interrogated both orally and in writing, some were also asked to pledge that they would not pursue cultural or publicity work.

Source: [HRANA](#) 20 January 2013

Detention

- Shahin Negari, a teacher of the Bahá’í Institute of Higher Learning, was detained in Tehran on 12 January 2013. Security agents went to his home and arrested him in order for him to begin serving his sentence of four years. Negari was freed on bail on 28 June 2011; however his whereabouts are currently unknown.



Shanin Negari

Source: [HRANA](#) 13 January 2013



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Sentencing

- Back in August 23, 2011, 35 social activists were arrested after providing aid to Eastern Azerbaijan areas that had been affected by recent Earthquake. Five Bahais; Novid Khanjani, Shayan Vahdati, Mithaq Afshar, Farid Ruhani and Vahid Khalus were among the arrestees. A court in Tabriz has sentenced Hamid Masibiyani to two years and six months, Behrouz `Alavi to two years and three months, and Seyyid Husayn Raunaqi-Mulki and Behram Shoja`i (شجاعی بهرام) to two years in prison for their part in the aid effort. Fifteen others were sentenced to six months, including two Bahais: Shayan Vahdati, Farid Ruhani. All those sentenced were sentenced for assembly and collusion to commit crimes against national security. Officials had previously accused them of propaganda for the Bahai Faith and Wahhabi Islam, spying for foreign media and distributing spoiled food.

Source: [PCED](#) 15 January 2015

Sentence Beginning

- Anisa Fana'ayan, a Bahá'í from Semnan, was summoned to Semnan prison on 19 January 2013 to commence her 22-month sentence. Fana'ayan is charged with propaganda against the regime and participation in Bahá'í administration.



Anisa Fana'ayan

Source: [HRANA](#) 12 January 2013

Expulsion

- Mithaq Imam Verdi, a student from Tehran's the K.N. Toosi University of Technology, was expelled on account of "adherence to the Bahá'í faith." Verdi was summoned two weeks prior to the final examinations of his first year of Bachelor studies. He was summoned to the University's security office and was told indirectly that he was expelled. Staff at the University commented on the decision deeming it "bizarre and illogical."



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Mithaq Imam Verdi

Source: [PCED](#) 1 January 2013

- Bahá'í student Milad Samimi Darzi was expelled from Tabari University in Babol in Mazandaran Province. Milad was in the fifth semester of an interior design program and was expelled due to his Bahá'í beliefs. Darzi was summoned on 1 January 2013 to the University Security Office, where his student card was seized and he was revoked access to the university campus. Two days prior to his end-of-term examinations he was summoned again to the security office where he received word of his expulsion after waiting two hours. Darzi questioned the decision and asked for a reason for his expulsion. He was told it was due to his bad attitude, and then was forbidden from saying goodbye to his classmates. Darzi also asked for copies of his exam and class results and was subsequently informed by University officials that they would not bear the University seal.

Another Bahá'í student, Shekufeh Darakhshaniyan, was expelled from the Tabari University in Babol. Darakhshaniyan was in the same program as Milad Samami Darzi. She was expelled on 5 January 2013 because of her Bahá'í beliefs. Darakhshaniyan was summoned by the head of the University Security Office on 1 January 2013. When she went to the education department on 5 January 2013 she received a letter which informed her that she and her cousin, Milad Samami Darzi, were being expelled because of their Bahá'í Beliefs. Furthermore, she was informed that there would be no written evidence of the expulsion provided and that their study results would not bear the University seal. Darakhshaniyan was recognized as an outstanding student having some of the highest grades amongst her peers.



Milad Samimi Darzi



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Source: [PCED](#) 8 January 2013

Source: [PCED](#) 14 January 2013

- Two brothers, Sama and Sirius Sabeti, were expelled from the Tabari University in Babol. Sama Sabeti was in his third semester of a Civil Engineering course, his brother Sirius was in his seventh semester of an architecture course. The brothers were instructed by telephone to report to the University Security Office on 10 January 2013. After doing so they were informed that they were barred from the University campus. They were also told by the head of security that they had been expelled because of their Bahá'í beliefs. The brothers later returned to the University to get a transcript of their school records. Multiple attempts resulted in them being informed that expelled students would not be issued transcripts.



Source: [PCED](#) 27 January 2013

- It was reported that a university in Isfahan included the category “Bahá'í” to the choice of recognized religions on its registration form. Ruya Eshraqi, a Bahá'í registrant, made this selection on her form and was expelled immediately as a result. Eshraqi tried to re-enrol twice without success.

Source: [Bahá'í News Service \(Persian\)](#) 14 January 2013

2. *Prison Release*

- Didar Ra'ufi was released from the Raja'I Shah Prison on 27 January 2013 after serving his three-year sentence in full. He was sentenced for membership of the Bahá'í community and teaching the Bahá'í faith.

Source: [PCED](#) 27 January 2013

3. *Update*

- There is still no news regarding the charges or whereabouts of Farshid Dadar, a Bahá'í citizen who was arrested in Zahedan on 23 December 2012.



Farshid Dadar



Source: [HRANA](#) January 2013

- ‘Adel Na’imi has been held in solitary confinement since his arrest in early July 2012. ‘Adel was among the 20 Bahá’ís arrested in a wave of arrests that took place in Tehran, Mashhad and Shiraz. He is currently in block 309 of Evin prison in Tehran. It is important to note ‘Adel has not been moved to the general wing in block 350, where prisoners of conscience are typically housed. ‘Adel suffers from diabetes.

Source: [PCED](#) 13 January 2013

- On 21 October 2012 Ramin Shahyari and his brother Farzin were arrested in the city of Elamshahr, Tehran province. The Bahá’í brothers were later taken to Evin prison. The brothers were summoned by the Revolutionary Court and were arrested upon their arrival. During their 3-month imprisonment the brothers were only permitted to contact their family members once.

Source: [HRANA](#) 13 January 2013

4. *International / Political*

- On 1 January 2012, The United States House of Representatives passed Resolution 134 that condemns the Iranian government for their state-sponsored persecution of the Iranian minority as well as its continued violation of the International Convention on Human Rights. Resolution 134 (H.Res 134) is the 12th House resolution that addresses the oppression of the Bahá’ís of Iran. Mr. Kenneth E. Bowers, Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly, confirmed that this action has been affirming to the Bahá’í community. He expressed, “We are convinced that this continued international pressure has kept the situation for the Bahá’ís in Iran from getting much worse. The resolution passed also called upon the President, Secretary of State and other nations to condemn the ongoing persecution of the Bahá’ís, demanding the release of religious prisoners.” The resolution also urged the President and Secretary of State utilize measures “to sanction officials of the Government of Iran and other individuals directly responsible for egregious human rights violations in Iran.” Anthony Vance, the Director of Public Affairs for the Bahá’ís of the United States, warns that the number of imprisoned Bahá’ís in Iran has reached 116, more than double the amount in 2011 which saw 56 Bahá’ís imprisoned.

Source: [Bahá’í Faith](#) 2 January 2013

- Egypt’s Minister of Education, Ibrahim Ghoneim, told the Akbar-Youm newspaper that Bahá’ís will not be enrolled in Egyptian Public Schools as that would violate the country’s constitution; “The Constitution only recognizes the three Abrahamic religions, and as religion is a subject taught in schools, they do not meet the requirements for enrolment.”



Source: [Egypt Today](#) 6 January 2013

- Iranian media announced that nuclear talks between Iran and world powers which were supposed to take place in January 2013 have been postponed. Both the Mehr and Fars news agencies reported that the world powers are not prepared for January negotiations and that an alternative date has been set for February. A Spokesperson for the head of the G5 negotiations claimed that Iran is attempting to delay the talks. On the same day (January 23) Iranian Foreign Minister, Akbar Salehi, announced that he had called on Egyptian authorities to host the talks between Iran and the world powers. Michael Mann, the spokesperson to the G5, and head of negotiations, Catherine Ashton, stated the following, “We proposed concrete dates and venues in December. Ever since then we have been very surprised to see Iran come back to us again and again with new preconditions on the modalities of the talks, for example by changing the venue and delaying their responses.”

Source: [Radio Zamaneh](#) 26 January 2013

Commentary and Analysis

5. Analyst Observations

The growing amount of international concern with respect to the state of humanitarian affairs in Iran is very encouraging. As noted in past reports we have been very concerned that the realpolitik agenda in the context of Iran (i.e. its nuclear program) would overshadow the repression of Iran’s minority groups. It is still uncertain how much this international concern will offset the dominance of the realpolitik agenda regarding Iran; however it is a step in the right direction towards raising the imperative of protecting Iran’s most vulnerable community.

The affirmation to the Bahá’í community regarding international awareness has basis in historical fact. In his paper on the ideological genocide of the Bahá’ís in Iran, Friedrich Affolter highlights the continued support and concern for the Bahá’ís by the international community as one of the key reasons for its resilience in the face of mounting historical repression. The cosmopolitan ethos of the Bahá’í theology has also been a factor that has contributed to this support.

Whatever their intentions with their nuclear facilities, The Iranian Regime appears to be placing a premium on not appearing as the aggressor on the international stage and cementing strategic partnerships with like-minded regional allies. Iran’s request to have their nuclear negotiations hosted by Egypt, a country that mirrors its own repression of the Bahá’í minority, may be indicative of this. Early last year we reported that Iran has been seeking to ingratiate itself with Egypt after diplomatic relations with the country had cooled. Egypt’s recent announcement regarding its constitutional stance on its own religious minorities may embolden Iran to exploit this common ground and to rebuff international criticism where its humanitarian record is concerned.



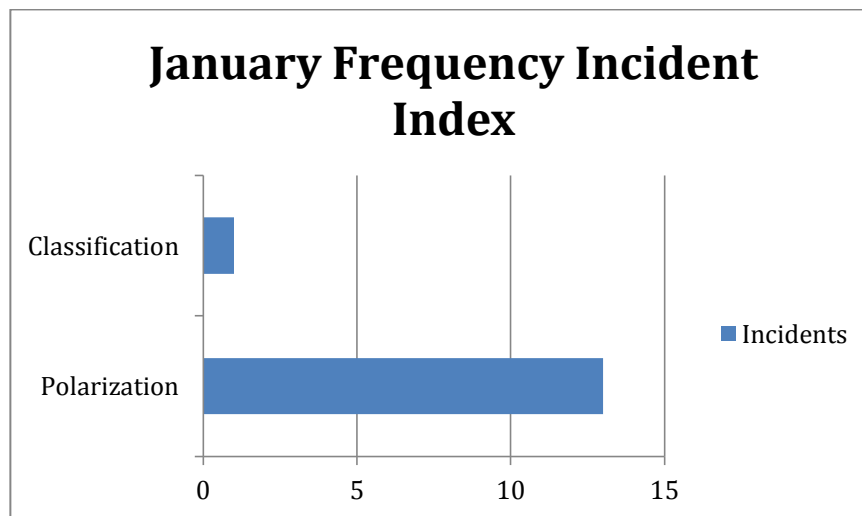
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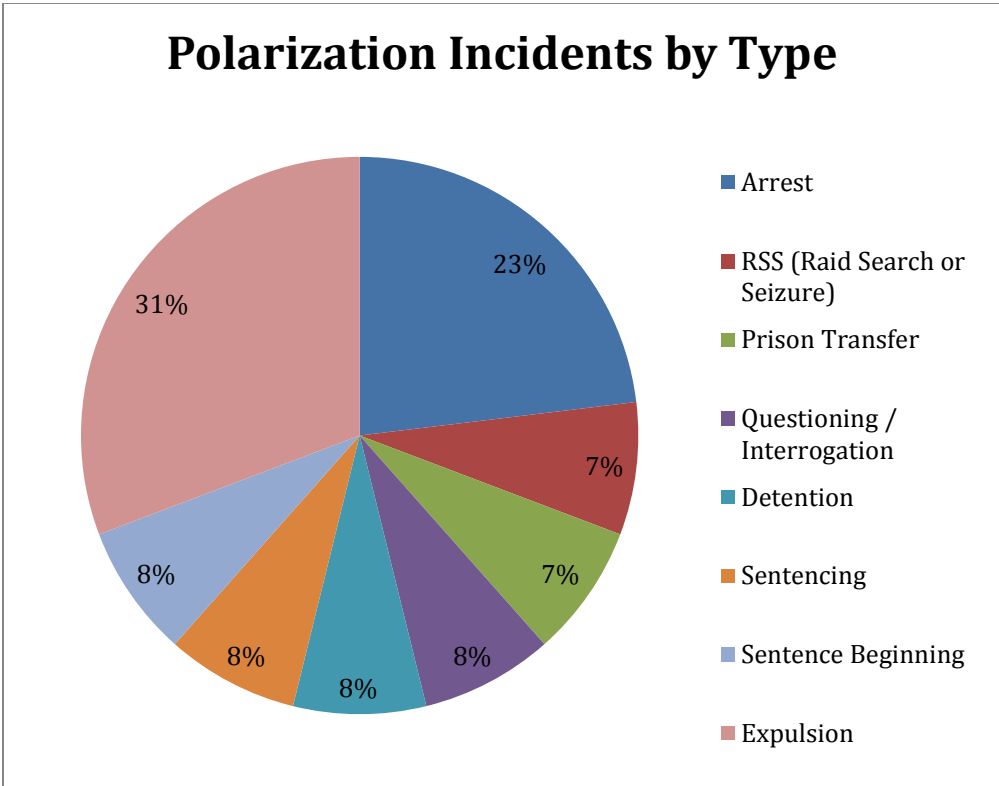
It is important to note that despite the historical resilience of the Bahá'í community in light of sustained international awareness, the very existence and theology of the Bahá'í remains both an ontological threat and confirmation of violent Islamic messianism and apocalyptic edicts. The presence of infidels who deviate from the “divine path” has been identified in the Quran as an indication that the end-times are near, a period destined to provide justification for Islamic methodology and ideology. In a way the mutually-reinforcing effects of Bahá'í resilience, and the messianic ethos in Islam where infidels are concerned, creates a vicious cycle. Monitoring and prevention efforts should focus on subtle yet significant shifts in anti-Bahá'í persecution, identifying any flashpoints that could trigger this vicious cycle into escalated violence.

Though there is international awareness and support for the Bahá'í community, the threat to their long-term wellbeing should not be discounted.

It is unclear what effect the humanitarian-levelled sanctions will have on Iran. If Iran's obstinacy to past sanctions is any indication, it may not do much other than further exacerbate an economically-volatile status quo.

6. Statistics and Graphs

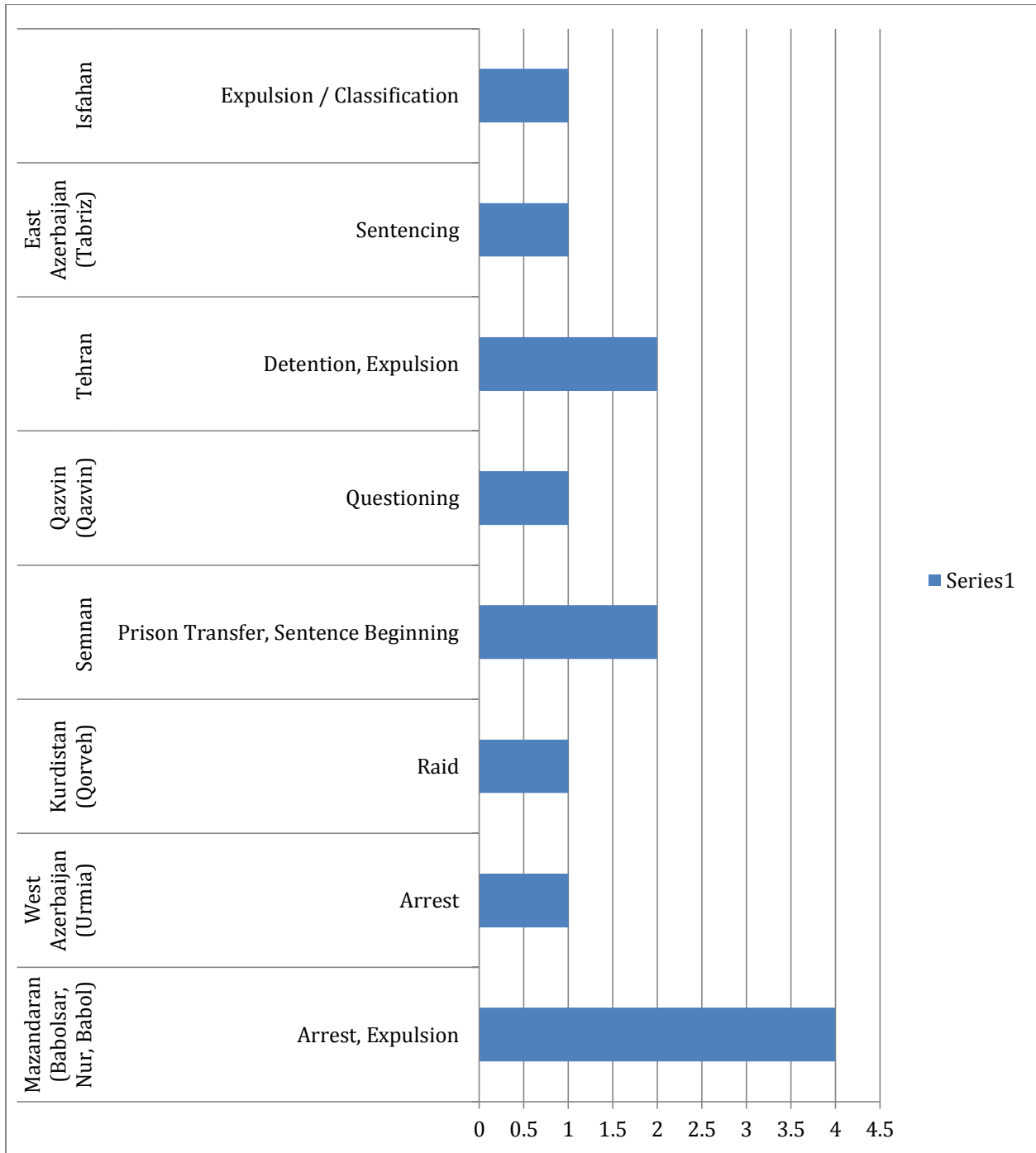




Regional Incident Index



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One Month Comparison

Incident Frequency and Typology

	December 2012	January 2013
Operating Process Factors (8 Stage Model of Genocide)	Classification (Stage 1) Dehumanization (Stage 3) Polarization (Stage 5)	Classification (Stage 1) Polarization (Stage 5)
Frequency	Classification - 1 Event Dehumanization - 1 Event Polarization - 17 Event	Classification - 1 Event Polarization - 14 Events (-3)

Polarization Incidents by Type

	December 2012	January 2013
Most Frequent Occurrence	Arrest (35%)	Expulsion (31%)
Least Frequent Occurrence	Harassment and Business Closure (6% Each)	Raid Search & Seizure, Prison Transfer (7% Each)

	December 2012	January 2013	Recurring Provinces
Number of Provinces	10 Provinces Golestan, Tehran , Mashhad, Sistan & Baluchistan, Alborz, Qazvin , Fars, Isfahan , Mazandaran , Semnan	8 Provinces Isfahan , East Azerbaijan, Tehran , Qazvin , Semnan , Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, Mazandaran	Tehran, Qazvin, Isfahan, Mazandaran, Isfahan, Semnan

One Year Comparison

Incident Frequency and Typology

	January 2012	January 2013
Operating Process Factors (8 Stage Model of Genocide)	Dehumanization (Stage 3) Polarization (Stage 5)	Classification (Stage 1) Polarization (Stage 5)
Frequency	Dehumanization - 1 Event Polarization - 10 Events	Classification - 1 Event Polarization - 14 Events (+ 4)

Polarization Incidents by Type

	January 2012	January 2013
Most Frequent Occurrence	Sentencing (40%)	Expulsion (31%)
Least Frequent Occurrence	Business Closure, Summons/Interrogation, Expulsion, Arrest (10% Each)	Raid Search & Seizure, Prison Transfer (7% Each)

Regional Occurrences by Province



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	January 2012	January 2013	Recurring Provinces
Number of Provinces	7 Provinces (Mazandaran , Gilan, Kurdistan , Semnan , Tehran , Sistan & Baluchestan, Kerman)	8 Provinces (Isfahan, East Azerbaijan, Tehran , Qazvin, Semnan , Kurdistan , West Azerbaijan, Mazandaran)	4 (Mazadaran, Kurdistan, Semnan, Tehran)