Iranian Bahá’í SOC Monthly Report

**January 2012**

Prepared by Troy Powell & Shayan Edalati

Last Update September 6th, 2013,

**Summary of Incident Types**

1. Polarization events (Business Closure, Arrest Expulsion, House Raid, Sentencing, Search/Seizure) – These are actions by the government which appear calculated to separate Bahá’í citizens from mainstream Iranian society, therefore weakening their community and preventing Muslim Iranians from sympathizing with them.
2. Dehumanization
3. Preparation Event –
4. International/Political Events

**Commentary and Analysis**

1. Analyst Commentary and Analysis
2. Graphs and Statistics
3. Monthly Threatwiki Regional Visualization
4. **Polarization**

**House Raid / Search / Seizure / Arrest**

* In recent weeks, more than 30 Bahá’ís in the regions of Sari and Rasht have been summoned and interrogated in order to pressure them to leave the country. Officials in Sari have been visiting the businesses operated by Bahá'ís and searching them, and summoning some of the Bahá’ís. At the same time, reports from Rasht suggest that in recent weeks the Ministry of Intelligence has summoned numerous members of Bahá'í families and questioned them about their homes and places of business, income, religious ceremonies (“feasts”), the names of other Bahá’ís living in Rasht, and other religious questions.

 Source: [CHRR](http://www.chrr.biz/spip.php?article16849) 2 January 2012

 Threatwiki Address: [IRN-315](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=315)

* On January 6th security forces raided the home of Bakhtiyar Rasekhi. The raid was described as carried out in an offensive and illegal way. Videos were confiscated as well as pictures of Bahá’í youth before dispersing a meeting that was taking place. The agents spent several hours searching the home before arresting Mr Rasehki and his wife and daughter. Three days later there still was no word on where the family was being held.

Source: [RAHANA](http://networkedblogs.com/szLqp) 11 January 2012

Threatwiki Address: [IRN-306](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=306)

* In the morning of January 11 the home ‘Adalat and Faramraz Firuzzayan was raided by security forces. The agents searched the house, confiscated personal belongings such as; a computer, and religious books before arresting the pair. Their whereabouts are currently unknown. The two Bahá’ís were previously subject to economic pressure. The well on their agricultural property was closed, which lead to a loss of crops. At this time at least 10 Bahá’ís in Semnan are either under arrest or inprisoned. Five Bahá’í businesses have been closed.

Source: [RAHANA](https://www.wrike.com/webdav/8ae424c8625e428bac7678f96028147d_Ll88SkxfZvPr/February%202012%20Monthly%20Report.docx) 11 January 2012

Threatwiki Address : [IRN-307](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=307)

* Six Agents from the Ministry of Intelligence broke into the home of Enayatullah Sana’I a Bahá’í author and poet from Sari on January 21st. A number of religious books were confiscated as well as CDs and tapes. Enayatullah was not home at the time of the raid, so he was not arrested as a result. His home was previously raided on August 2011 he was subjected to violence which caused his eardrum to burst.

Source: [RAHANA](http://networkedblogs.com/t59og) 22 January 2012

Threatwiki Address: [IRN-308](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=308)

**Business Closure**

* On January 5th security forces visited the trading property of Arman Safa’i, a Bahá’í resident who comes from Sari. A laptop containing financial information was taken on the pretext that there was music on it. Despite no faults being found, Safa’i’s business was shut down regardless. Additionally all legal dues were paid and the business was operating in accordance to its issued licence.

Source: [HRANA](http://networkedblogs.com/szLy4) 5 January 2012

Threatwiki Address: [IRN-310](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=310)

**Sentencing**

* Shahrukh Ta’ef, a Bahá’í residing in in Tehran has been summoned to Evin prison to begin serving his four-year sentence. Shahrukh charge was “membership of the Bahá’í community” He was arrested January 14th 2009 after a raid on his home. Shahrukh was placed on solitary confinement until March 18th 2009 when he was released on bail.

Source: [HRANA](http://networkedblogs.com/t58Ac) 23 January 2012

Threatwiki Address: [IRN-304](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=304)

* A Semnan Bahá’í, Elham Ruzbehi was sentenced to three years in jail. Elham was arrested with a group of other s on March 12 2011 after a raid on her home and seizure of some personal items. Elham was also pregnant at the time. Elham was released on bail but it was reported on November 1 that she was summoned to her local Ministry of Intelligence and interrogated for 2 hours before being released. Her verdict will be determined based on that interrogation. Elham is the sister-in-law to Behram Mut’arefi who has been imprisoned since July 2010. At this time five others are serving a prison sentence in Semnan and one of the Bahá’ís imprisoned in Semnan is from Tehran.

Source: [HRANA](http://networkedblogs.com/tmb4S) 28 January 2012

Threatwiki Address: [IRN-311](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=311)

* Sadaf Thabetayan one of the Bahá’ís arrested in the raids targeting the Bahá’í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) has been sentenced in Tehran to two years in prison. She is from Sari, and was arrested there, along with two other Bahá’ís, but was moved to Tehran. After being interrogated there, she was released on bail, in June 2011. The hearing to determine her sentence was held on January 8.

 Source: [HRANA](http://www.hranews.info/1389-01-27-05-24-07/11234-1.html) 31 January 2012

 Threatwiki Address: [IRN-312](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=312)



Source [HRANA](http://networkedblogs.com/ts8Pc) 31 January 2012

* Foad Khanjani was recently sentenced to four years in prison. Khanjani, a member of the Bahá’í faith, was arrested on March 1st 2010 he was kept in solitary confinement for 25 days while receiving pressure for a televised interview. Khanjani was released on bail May 10th 2010. On the second of January 2011 Judge Moghisseh sentenced Khanjani on the charges of “assembly and collusion with the intent to commit crimes against national security,” and participating in disruption of public order. Foad turned himself in to Evin Prison on the 17th of January to begin serving his four-year prison term. It is also notable Khanjani was dismissed from the Isfahan Industrial Management Organization where he was a student. His dismissal was due to the fact that he was Bahá’í.

 

 Source: [CHRR](http://networkedblogs.com/t8aEX) 24 January 2012

 Threatwiki Address: [IRN-313](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=313)

1. **Dehumanization**
* A local blog in Iran has reported that authorities have been pressuring Bahá’í families in the Sanandaj region and other towns. 12 families of the Bahá’í faith have been summoned and questioned, ultimately pressured to abandon the cemetery known as “Golestan Jovid” located in the village of Hassan Abad, held in the name of one of the Bahá’í families.

Source: [Zandeh Kurdistan Blog](http://networkedblogs.com/t58NY) 23 January 2012

Threatwiki Address: [IRN-314](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=314)

1. **Preparation**
* The Iranian government's systematic strategy to drive Bahá’ís to economic ruin shows no sign of abating. According to reports received by the Bahá’í International Community, a renewed campaign is under way in Kerman, the major city in south central Iran. Bahá’ís in Kerman have also been told that they are not allowed to own a large number of shops on the same street.

 Source: [BWNS](http://news.bahai.org/story/884) 26 January 2012

 Threatwiki Address [IRN-316](http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/iranvisualization?datapoint=316)

1. **International/Political Events**
* On January 6th, U.S. military and Coast Guard ships had two close encounters earlier that month with high-speed Iranian boats in the Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf that exhibited provocative behavior. The USS New Orleans, an amphibious transport ship was sailing through the Strait of Hormuz into the Persian Gulf when three Iranian Navy speedboats rapidly approached within 500 yards of the ship, the official said. The Iranians did not respond to whistle signals or voice queries from the New Orleans. The lack of response disregards standard maritime protocols, the official said. The boats eventually broke away.

 Source: CNN 13 January 2012

* Iran’s currency, the rial, fell to a record low against the dollar on Tuesday following U.S. President Barack Obama signing a bill on imposing fresh sanctions against the country's central bank. The new U.S. sanctions, if fully implemented, could hamper the world's major oil producer's ability to sell oil on international markets. Iran's economy is 60 percent reliant on petrodollars and any sanctions imposed on its oil income will put further pressure on the country's ailing economy. The price of staple foods has increased by up to 40 percent in recent months and many critics have put the blame on increasing isolation brought about by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's economic and foreign policies.

 Source: [Reuters](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/03/iran-currency-dollar-idUSL6E8C30JN20120103) 3 January 2012

* The EU's 27 foreign ministers, meeting Monday in Brussels, imposed an oil embargo against Iran and froze the assets of its central bank, ramping up sanctions designed to pressure Iranian officials into resuming talks on the country's nuclear program. EU officials say the tighter sanctions are part of a carrot-and-stick approach, an effort to increase pressure while at the same time emphasizing their willingness to talk. Iran threatened to retaliate by closing the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's crude is transported. The escalating confrontation is fraught with risks – of rising energy prices, global financial instability, and potential military activity to keep the strait open.

 Source: [Associated Press/Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/23/eu-iran-oil-embargo_n_1223012.html?ref=world) 23 January 2012

1. **Analyst Commentary and Observations**

The campaign of oppression against the Bahá’ís of Iran continues. Increased pressure on Bahá’ís such as business closures, arrests, home raids, and the ever-present ban on higher education make evident the Iranian regime’s desire to suppress and stifle this religious group in the land of its creation.

The various cases of court sentencing also highlight an important instrument that the regime uses to oppress its population, Bahá’ís included– the judiciary. Whereas the regime could simply harass and secretly detain and imprison its opponents, it chooses to sentence them in court trials- albeit ones which are unfair and do not meet international standards. The Iranian regime uses it to effectively enact its campaign of oppression and to give a veneer of legitimacy to its actions. International and domestic critics are able to see through this. However, the prime role of the highly politicized Iranian judiciary in the persecution of Bahá’ís and other groups needs to be acknowledged by analysts and activists. It functions as the mechanism through which the regime controls its grip over Iranian society. Other institutions and bodies (such as the security and intelligence forces) feed into the judiciary and it in turn complements the actions and goals of the regime. Thus, the judicial apparatus is key to maintaining the extent and severity of the campaign of persecution against the Bahá’ís of Iran.

The actions of the international community this month leave much to be desired from them. A long-standing issue with their concerns over Iran is their almost exclusive concentration on the Iranian government’s nuclear program, evident this month in the form of EU sanctions. This is an issue that regards the disputed claim that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons. What this emphasis leaves out is that there is a clear and present threat from the Iranian government; that threat is against its own people. Human rights violations are often overshadowed in the media and political/diplomatic spaces by the nuclear issue. Therefore, a more multifarious focus by the international community towards issues in Iran is needed and can potentially assist in alleviating the grim human rights situation inside that country.

Another concern with the actions of the international community are the stringent set of sanctions against Iran’s banking and petroleum sector imposed by the European Union and the United States over the last two months. The sanctions imposed by the EU posses the potential to have a greater negative impact on the Iranian economy than sanctions imposed by the United States, as the countries of Western Europe are some of Iran’s most important trading partners. If the pattern of previous sanctions against Iran is to attest, those most hurt by them will be average Iranians and not the cadre of the regime. Those active or aligned with the regime will use their influence and power to find ways to circumvent these sanctions. Average Iranians however, may see their economic standing decline and thus, the gulf in influence and resources between the regime and its oppressed citizenry will widen. This is already evident with the significant record slide in the Iranian rial’s value this month. As a result of these sanctions, there has been a sharp rise in the price of imported medicines, clothing, food and industrial and manufactured goods. This may have a negative impact on the Bahá’ís. As the regime strives to quash their economic livelihood, the sanctions have crippled the Iranian economy and thus made it harder for business and families, Bahá’í and non-Bahá’í, to persist. Ironically the unintended side effects of the sanctions regime placed on Iran coincide with the Iranian government’s desire to economically and socially deprive the Bahá’ís.

**Graphs and Figures**

January 2012 Threatwiki Regional Visualization



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Province/Region/City** | **Events Recorded** | **Event Type** |
| Kerman | 2 Events (irn-316/306) | Preparation, Polarization (Arrest/Raid/Search/Seizure) |
| Semnan | 2 Events (irn-311/307) | Polarization (Sentencing)Polarization (Arrest/Raid/Seizure) |
| Sari | 3 Events(irn 308/312/310) | Polarization (Raid/Seizure)Polarization (Sentencing)Polarization (Business Closure) |
| Tehran | 2 Events (irn-304/315) | Polarization (Sentence Beginning)Polarization (Search/Seizure) |
| Sanandaj | 1 Event (irn-314) | Dehumanization |
| Sari & Rasht | 1 Event (irn-315) | Polarizaiton (Search/Seizure) |