



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

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COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE - COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

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Iran - ICJ calls on Iranian authorities to cease harassment of Baha'i faith leaders

" The Six leaders of the Baha'i faith in Iran, who were arbitrarily arrested in Tehran on 14 May 2008 and are being held incommunicado, must be released immediately or legally charged with a recognisable offence," said the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today.

An Iranian official told a local news agency that " *the six unofficial leaders of the Baha'i faith in Iran were working against the national interest.*" He added: " *They are arrested for security reasons, not for their faith.*" However, according to reliable information, the ICJ consider there to be sufficient evidence to show that they may have been arrested in relation to their peaceful activities as members of the national coordinating group of Baha'is in Iran.

The detainees, reportedly being held in the offices of the General Intelligence Service, do not have legal representation and are not allowed to communicate with their families. "Unless the Iranian authorities charge them with a recognisable criminal offence and bring them before an independent and impartial tribunal, they must be released at once," said the ICJ. "The grounds for their detention must be immediately made public, and they must be allowed to communicate with their lawyers and their families."

The ICJ calls on the Iranian authorities to conform with its international human rights obligations and to ensure that these individuals are not detained on the basis of their faith. Baha'is freedom of conscience and religion are severely restricted, in clear violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Iran has ratified and is obliged to uphold. The ICCPR specifically stipulates in its article 18 that " *Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.*"

The ICJ urges the Iranian authorities to also respect its Criminal Procedure Code, which gives the arrested person the right to be promptly notified of the reasons for their arrest or detention.

The ICJ calls upon the Iranian authorities to ensure that all the detainees are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given regular access to their families, their lawyers and any medical attention they may require.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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