We write as Parliamentarians to make an urgent demand for the Islamic Republic of Iran to halt the recent escalation of its persecution of the Bahá’í religious minority. Under the cover of the coronavirus pandemic, Iranian authorities have targeted dozens of Bahá’ís for persecution, threatened to “uproot” the community, initiated new prison sentences, and extended a media campaign of hatred. This targeted persecution must stop.

Since the inception of the Bahá’í Faith in 1844, its followers have been persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and executed. They continue to face ongoing, state-sponsored persecution. The tactics of the Iranian government are intended to deprive Bahá’ís of their livelihood, destroy their cultural heritage and prevent their young people of obtaining a higher education. This strategy was outlined in a 1991 memorandum uncovered by the United Nations, which was signed by the highest authorities in Iran – including Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

This persecution has been ramped up amid growing anti-Bahá’í propaganda spread in the news, a marked increase in court summons for Bahá’ís awaiting trial for their beliefs and an official threat to “uproot” the Bahá’í community in Shiraz.

Bahá’í prisoners of conscience have long faced unsanitary conditions in overpopulated prison cells, and the risks to their safety are further exacerbated by the current pandemic. As Canadians and members of a global community, it pains us to see our brothers and sisters languishing in prisons, facing falsified charges, with no legal recourse.

We join the international community in our plea to the Iranian authorities to order the release of all prisoners of conscience, as well as the end of the ongoing maneuvers of intimidation and repression levelled against the Bahá’í community.

Signed,

Ziad Aboultaif
Member of Parliament for Edmonton Manning, Alberta
Shadow Minister for Digital Government

James Bezan
Member of Parliament for Selkirk – Interlake – Eastman, Manitoba
Shadow Minister for National Defence
Vice-Chair, Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN)
Kelly Block
Member of Parliament for Carlton Trail – Eagle Creek, Saskatchewan
Shadow Minister for Public Services and Procurement
Co-Chair, Canadian Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (CANFoRB)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe
Member of Parliament for Lac-Saint-Jean, Quebec
Critic for International Cooperation, International Francophonie and National Defence
Vice-Chair, Subcommittee on International Human Rights (SDIR)

Kerry Diotte
Member of Parliament for Edmonton Griesbach, Alberta
Member, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE)

Ali Ehsassi
Member of Parliament for Willowdale, Ontario
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry

The Honourable Dr. Hedy Fry, P.C.
Member of Parliament for Vancouver Centre, British Columbia
Member, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE)

Garnett Genuis
Member of Parliament for Sherwood Park – Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta
Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism and Canada-China Relations
Member, Subcommittee on International Human Rights (SDIR)

Matthew Green
Member of Parliament for Hamilton Centre, Ontario

Anthony Housefather
Member of Parliament for Mount Royal, Quebec
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour

The Honourable Mobina S.B. Jaffer, Q.C.
Senator for British Columbia

Michael Levitt
Member of Parliament for York Centre, Ontario
Chair, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE)

Elizabeth May
Member of Parliament for Saanich – Gulf Islands, British Columbia
Parliamentary Leader, Green Party

Ron McKinnon
Member of Parliament for Coquitlam – Port Coquitlam, British Columbia
Chair, Standing Committee on Health (HESA)
The Honourable Marilou McPhedran, C.M.
Senator for Manitoba

The Honourable Kim Pate, C.M.
Senator for Ontario

Scott Reid
Member of Parliament for Lanark – Frontenac – Kingston, Ontario

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro, P.C.
Member of Parliament for Humber River – Black Creek, Ontario
Chair, Standing Committee on International Trade (CIIT)

Francesco Sorbara
Member of Parliament for Vaughan – Woodbridge, Ontario
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue

David Sweet
Member of Parliament for Flamborough – Glenbrook, Ontario
Shadow Minister for International Human Rights and Religious Freedom
Vice-Chair, Subcommittee on International Human Rights (SDIR)

Cathay Wagantall
Member of Parliament for Yorkton – Melville, Saskatchewan
Deputy Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs