

Iran's False Claims

At international meetings, Iranian officials claim Bahá'ís have “all citizenship rights.” This is untrue.

At the United Nations and in other international forums, Iranian government representatives have claimed that Bahá'ís are not discriminated against in Iran. They say Bahá'ís are able to freely attend university. They say Bahá'ís face no economic persecution, suggesting that many are wealthy. And if they are in prison, Iranian officials say, it is for crimes like spying or acting against the regime, not religious belief.

In general terms, here is what Iranian officials claim – supported by direct quotations from Mohammad Javad Larijani, the Secretary of the Iran's High Council for Human Rights – side by side with the facts.

THE CLAIMS

- Bahá'ís face no official discrimination. Rather, Iranian officials allege that Bahá'ís enjoy the same rights as other Iranians.

“You know Bahá'ís are a minority in Iran, and... they are dealt under the so-called citizen's contract. Under this citizenship contract, they enjoy all the privileges of any citizen in Iran.” – Mohammad Javad Larijani to the UN Human Rights Council, 31 October 2014

THE FACTS

- Bahá'ís are deprived of virtually all citizenship rights. They have no constitutional protection and are subject to a well-documented government policy of discrimination.

- If Bahá'ís are arrested or imprisoned, it is for political or other crimes, not for legitimate religious belief.

"No Iranian citizen has been arrested or put in jail because of being a member of the Bahá'í community... Iran's judiciary deals with them as it does regarding other citizens if they commit a crime." – Dr. Larijani, quoted by the Iranian Students' News Agency on 15 May 2011.

- Bahá'ís face no discrimination in economic activity and, in fact, are wealthy and prosperous.

"Bahá'ís are very much affluent people economically in Iran. They have huge companies. And a lot of successful business." – Dr. Larijani, Press TV interview, 6 March 2016.

- Iran recognizes its obligations to educate all its citizens, and Bahá'ís are free to attend university.

"They have professors at universities. They have students at university. So they enjoy all the possibilities and privileges." – Dr. Larijani, 31 October 2014.

- Iran condemns religious intolerance of all kinds, and Bahá'ís are free to worship.

"They cannot propagate Bahaism among non-Bahá'ís. It is against the law. But they can have their own preaching within themselves. They have their own meetings, in their own worship places." – Dr. Larijani, 6 March 2016.

- Bahá'ís have played a pernicious and destructive role in Iran's history, supporting colonialism, Zionism, and other allegedly anti-regime political movements.

"Bahaism is not a religion in Iran but a diversionary sect and that based on Iran's law, publicity in favor of Bahaism is a crime, but Bahá'ís enjoy complete freedom in their personal issues and nobody opposes them." – Dr. Larijani, 15 May 2011.

- Bahá'ís do not participate in partisan politics, and charges against them almost always refer to their religious identity.

- Bahá'ís are specifically excluded from many sectors of economic activity, including all government employment. They face continual harassment from workplace inspectors in even the smallest of shops.

- Bahá'ís are blocked from obtaining higher education through a series of bureaucratic ruses and mandated expulsions if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís.

- The government sponsors and condones anti-Bahá'í propaganda in the media, contrary to international law.

- The Bahá'í Faith emerged in Iran in 1844 as a new and independent religious movement. Its teachings advocate non-violence and peaceful solutions to all forms of conflict, and call on its followers to promote the betterment of society wherever they reside.

In the coming chapters, this report will deal with each of these claims in turn, showing the degree to which they are both inaccurate and utterly disingenuous.