

H. Res. 492

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,

September 12, 2023.

Whereas in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021 and 2022, Congress declared that it deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Baha'i community and would hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Baha'i faith;

Whereas, since 1979, Iranian authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Baha'i leaders, and more than 10,000 Baha'is have been dismissed from government and university jobs;

Whereas June 18, 2023, marks the 40th anniversary of the execution of 10 Baha'i women by the Iranian Government each witnessing the hanging of those hanged before her in a final failed attempt to induce abandonment of their faith after over 6 months of imprisonment and violent abuse, with the youngest only 17 years old;

Whereas, on December 15, 2022, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/C.3/77/L.34) criticizing Iran for human rights abuses and calling on Iran to carry out wide-ranging reforms, including—

(1) to end its “continuing disregard for protections under Iranian law or internationally recognized safeguards relating to the imposition of the death penalty” and “to commute the sentences for child offenders on death row”;

(2) “to ensure, in law and in practice, that no one is subjected to torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment”;

(3) “to cease the widespread and systematic use of arbitrary arrests and detention”;

(4) “to release persons detained for the exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms”;

(5) “to address the poor conditions of prisons”;

(6) “to eliminate, in law and in practice, all forms of systemic discrimination and other human rights violations against women and girls”;

(7) to cease the “increased harassment, intimidation, persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention of, and incitement to hatred that leads to violence against, persons belonging to recognized and unrecognized religious minorities, including Christians (particularly converts from Islam), Gonabadi Dervishes, Jews, Sufi Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Yarsanis, Zoroastrians, and, in particular, Baha’is, who have been subjected to a sudden increase in persecution, who have faced increasing restrictions and systemic persecution by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on account of their faith and have been reportedly subjected to mass arrests and lengthy prison sentences, as well as the arrest of prominent members and increased confiscation and destruction of property”;

and

(8) “to release all religious practitioners imprisoned for their membership in or activities on behalf of a mi-

nority religious group, to cease the desecration of cemeteries and to ensure that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief”;

Whereas, in the 2023 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom issued in April 2023, it is reported that—

(1) the Government of Iran “escalated its persecution of Baha’is, conducting nationwide arrests and spreading propaganda against the group”;

(2) in February [2022], Judge Mohammadghasem Ain al-Kamali of Branch 1 of the Semnan Revolutionary Court ruled that [the parastatal entity known as] the Execution of Imam Khomeini’s Order (EIKO) could legally confiscate the property of Baha’is . . . Branch 54 of the Tehran Appeals Court upheld the decision in August following the destruction of six Baha’i houses in Rooshankoooh;

(3) government officials arrested 14 Baha’is during a religious study in Ghaemshahr; and

(4) the Government of Iran “continued its systematic campaign of Baha’i arrests” throughout the latter part of 2022;

Whereas, in response to a surge in persecution in June and July 2022, involving the subjection of over 100 Baha’is to arrests, arraignments, sentencings, and raids on their homes and businesses across Iran, including the sentencing in June of 26 individuals in the city of Shiraz to a combined total of 85 years in prison, the Department of State’s Office of International Religious Freedom issued a statement on August 2, 2022, indicating that “[a]mid a continued rise in arrests, sentences, and imprisonments, the U.S. urges Iran to halt its ongoing

oppression of the Baha'i community and honor its international obligations to respect the right of all Iranians to freedom of religion or belief”;

Whereas the Iran section of the Department of State's 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom issued in May 2023 provides, in part—

(1) “According to the Baha'i International Community (BIC), Amnesty International, multiple international news organizations, and the United Nations, in July and August, security forces in cities across the country conducted multiple raids of Baha'i homes, confiscated property deemed ‘illegitimate wealth,’ and arrested Baha'is in their homes or workplaces on unsubstantiated charges including ‘causing intellectual and ideological insecurity in Muslim society.’”;

(2) “In August, a group of UN human rights experts released a joint statement calling on the government to stop the increasing arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances of members of the Baha'i Faith and the destruction or confiscation of their properties in what the experts said ‘bears all the signs of a policy of systematic persecution’.”; and

(3) “In their August 22 statement, the UN experts stated that as of April, more than 1,000 Baha'is awaited imprisonment, following their initial arrest and hearings.”;

Whereas, on November 21, 2022, Ms. Mahvash Sabet and Ms. Fariba Kamalabadi, 2 former members of the disbanded informal 7-person leadership group of the Baha'is of Iran, who each served 10-year sentences from 2008 to 2018 and have been detained since July 31, 2022, in Evin prison, were sentenced to an additional 10 years in

prison each after a summary trial lasting 1 hour; and on February 10, 2023, another former member of the disbanded leadership group, Mr. Afif Naimi, who had also served a 10-year sentence from 2008 to 2018, was sentenced on February 10, 2023, to 7 years in prison, which he began to serve on April 29, 2023;

Whereas, on December 11, 2022, the Baha'i International Community organization reported that, "More than 320 Baha'is have been affected by individual acts of persecution since the arrest [on July 31, 2022] of Mahvash [Sabet] and Fariba [Kamalabadi]. Dozens were arrested at various points in Shiraz, across Mazandaran province, and elsewhere throughout the country. Homes owned by Baha'is in the village of Roshankouh were demolished. Government plans to tar the Baha'is through hate speech and propaganda were also exposed. And at least 90 Baha'is are currently in prison or subject to degrading ankle-band monitoring.";

Whereas, on April 21, 2023, the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom issued a statement in a tweet indicating that, "[w]e are deeply concerned following the news of Mahvash Sabet's injuries sustained while in prison. No one should be punished for their faith. We call on Iranian authorities to make sure Mrs. Sabet receives medical attention immediately and release her.";

Whereas Iran is a member of the United Nations and a signatory to both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, among other international human rights treaties, without reservation;

Whereas section 105 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8514) authorizes the President to impose sanctions on individuals who are “responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against citizens of Iran or their family members on or after June 12, 2009”; and

Whereas the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–158) amends and expands the authorities established under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–195) to sanction Iranian human rights abusers: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the Government of Iran’s state-sponsored persecution of the Baha’i minority in Iran and the continued violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

(2) calls on the Government of Iran—

(A) to immediately release the imprisoned or detained Baha’is and all other prisoners held solely on account of their religion;

(B) to end its state-sponsored campaign of hate propaganda against the Baha’is; and

(C) to reverse state-imposed policies denying Baha’is and members of other religious minorities

equal opportunities to higher education, earning a livelihood, due process under the law, and the free exercise of religious practices;

(3) calls on the President and the Secretary of State, in cooperation with responsible nations, to immediately condemn the Government of Iran's continued violation of human rights, and demand the immediate release of prisoners held solely on account of their religion; and

(4) urges the President and the Secretary of State to utilize available authorities to impose sanctions on officials of the Government of Iran and other individuals directly responsible for serious human rights abuses, including abuses against the Baha'i community of Iran.

Attest:

Clerk.