The Persecution of the Bahá’ís of Iran: Education is Not a Crime

John Gruda, Independent Scholar

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Since its inception in 1844 in Iran, the followers of the Bahá’í Faith in Iran have been subjected to various forms of harassment in that country. Regardless of political regime, the Bahá’í community fails to be recognized in Iran even though it makes up the largest non-Muslim minority in Iran. This systematic denial of basic human rights in Iran to its Bahá’í citizens continues this historical pattern by the combined forces of “church” and state in contemporary Iran today.

Recently, the Iranian office of Public Properties closed stores owned by Bahá’ís because they were closing their shops during Bahá’í Holy Day festivities. On Sept. 30, 2016, 14 Bahá’ís were arrested by the security services in Shiraz in their private homes on unknown charges and their whereabouts are still unknown.

Currently members of the Bahá’í Faith in Iran are denied entrance to higher education. Members of the Bahá’í Faith are banned from attending all Iranian universities. Eighty-one universities were recently instructed by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology to expel any student who is known to be a Bahá’í.

The US House of Representatives has again recently passed in a completely bi-partisan manner, a resolution to address the systematic discrimination and harassment of members of the Bahá’í Faith by the Government of Iran. The resolution calls on the President and Secretary of State, together with responsible nations, to condemn the persecution of the Bahá’ís in Iran and to demand the release of religious prisoners, including seven Bahá’í leaders who have been sentenced to 20 years in prison solely on account of their religious beliefs.