

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 319

Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing repression of the religious freedom and human rights of the Iranian Bahá'í community by the Government of Iran.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 30, 2003

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. LANTOS, and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing repression of the religious freedom and human rights of the Iranian Bahá'í community by the Government of Iran.

Whereas in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, and in 2000, Congress, by concurrent resolution, declared that it holds the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all its nationals, including members of the Bahá'í Faith;

Whereas the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, who constitute the largest religious minority in Iran, are not recognized under the Iranian Constitution and are deprived thereby of adequate legal protection;

Whereas Congress has deplored the Government of Iran's persecution of the Bahá'í community and has condemned Iran's execution of more than 200 Bahá'í and the imprisonment of thousands of others solely on account of their religious beliefs;

Whereas on February 22, 1993, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights published a confidential Iranian Government document revealing that these repressive actions are part of a deliberate policy to destroy the Bahá'í community, a deliberate policy that was designed and approved by the highest officials in the Iranian Government;

Whereas in 2002, when the United States was not a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the resolution against human rights abuses in Iran failed to pass for the first time in 17 consecutive years;

Whereas in 2003, a resolution against human rights abuses in Iran was not introduced for a vote at the meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights;

Whereas the Government of Iran is now free to continue its systematic and deliberate policy to destroy the Bahá'í community in the absence of international monitors;

Whereas the use of harassment, in the form of arrests, suspended sentences, and short-term detentions against the Iranian Bahá'ís have increased since the failure in 2002 to adopt the United Nations resolution against human rights abuses in Iran;

Whereas four Bahá'ís remain imprisoned in Iran solely because of their religious beliefs, 1 serving a 4-year sentence and another a life sentence for apostasy from

Islam, while 2 others are serving 15 years of imprisonment for associating with Bahá'í institutions;

Whereas the Iranian Government's deliberate policy to expel Bahá'ís from universities once it becomes known that they are Bahá'ís has not changed;

Whereas Bahá'ís continue to be banned from studying at Iranian universities and therefore were forced to create their own Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) using private homes and volunteer faculty throughout Iran, yet in July 2002, Iranian Revolutionary Guards intimidated students and systematically disrupted qualifying examinations for the Bahá'í university in nine districts by videotaping the proceedings, interrogating students, and confiscating Bahá'í books and examination papers;

Whereas the Iranian Government's deliberate policy to deny Bahá'ís any position of influence, such as in the educational sector, has not changed;

Whereas in 1998, officers of the Iranian Government arrested 36 faculty members of the Bahá'í school and seized textbooks, scientific papers, computers, desks and benches from 532 Bahá'í homes and, in March 2003, a Bahá'í was re-imprisoned for, among similar charges, educating and training Bahá'í youth in various professions and crafts;

Whereas the Iranian Government's deliberate policy to deny Bahá'í individuals employment if they identify their religion has not changed;

Whereas some 10,000 Bahá'ís were dismissed from government positions and educational institutions in the 1980s because of their religious beliefs, many remain unemployed and receive no unemployment benefits or pensions,

while others have been required to return salaries or pensions paid to them before they were dismissed;

Whereas the Iranian Government's deliberate policy to destroy the Bahá'í community's cultural roots inside the country has not changed;

Whereas the Iranian Government has refused to permit Iranian Bahá'ís to elect their leaders, refuses to return confiscated Bahá'í community properties, refuses to allow Bahá'ís to assemble as a community, and has demonstrated a desire to impose its own religious ideology on Bahá'í youth, as shown by the arrest of 17 Bahá'í boys and girls, in June 2002, on the way to a camp for Bahá'í teaching and cultural activities;

Whereas the Iranian Government's deliberate policy to destroy the Bahá'í community's cultural roots outside the country has not changed;

Whereas in February 2001, Iranian authorities denied visas to non-Iranian Bahá'ís holding Indian, South Korean, Japanese, and United States passports who were part of the Bahá'í International Community's delegation to the Regional Preparatory Conference for the United Nations' World Conference Against Racism, held in Tehran; and

Whereas the Government of Iran's deliberate policy of slowly strangling the Bahá'í community's viability is in direct violation of international norms expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has not changed: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
- 2 *concurring), That Congress—*

1 (1) expects the Government of Iran to uphold
2 the rights of all its nationals, including the members
3 of the Bahá'í Faith, in a manner consistent with
4 Iran's obligations under the Universal Declaration of
5 Human Rights and other international agreements
6 guaranteeing the civil and political rights of its citi-
7 zens, including freedom of thought, conscience, and
8 religion;

9 (2) condemns the deliberate policy of the Gov-
10 ernment of Iran to undermine the viability of the
11 Bahá'í community;

12 (3) urges the Government of Iran to permit
13 Bahá'í students to attend, and Bahá'í faculty to
14 teach, at Iranian universities, as well as to permit
15 the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education to continue
16 teaching functions among Bahá'í youth without dis-
17 turbance;

18 (4) urges the Government of Iran to eliminate
19 employment discrimination against Bahá'ís in both
20 public and private sectors, and to distribute pensions
21 and unemployment benefits without respect to belief
22 or religious affiliation;

23 (5) urges the Government of Iran to dem-
24 onstrate its commitment to human rights, democ-
25 racy, and religious freedom by making a legislative

1 enactment to clarify that the civil and political rights
2 of all unrecognized minorities or communities, such
3 as the Bahá'ís, are to be respected regardless of
4 their religious beliefs;

5 (6) urges the Government of Iran to allow the
6 reestablishment of Bahá'í institutions, to give indi-
7 viduals the freedom to manifest their religion, and to
8 return all confiscated Bahá'í properties;

9 (7) urges the United States representative to
10 the United Nations to pursue a resolution on human
11 rights violations in Iran, including specific mention
12 of the the situation of the Bahá'ís, and calls for re-
13 estabishment of the mandate of the Special Rep-
14 resentative on Iran at the United Nations Commis-
15 sion on Human Rights; and

16 (8) calls upon the President to continue—

17 (A) to assert that the United States re-
18 gards the human rights practices of the Govern-
19 ment of Iran, particularly its treatment of the
20 Bahá'í community and other religious minori-
21 ties, as a significant factor in the foreign policy
22 of the United States Government regarding
23 Iran; and

24 (B) to encourage other governments to
25 continue to appeal to the Government of Iran,

1 and to cooperate with other governments and
2 international organizations, including the
3 United Nations and its agencies, in efforts to
4 protect the religious rights of the Bahá'ís and
5 other minorities.

