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Australia's religious leaders oppose religious persecution in Iran

In light of reports that seven Bahá'í leaders in Iran have been sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, the Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations (APRO) joins the Australian Government in expressing deep concern at the treatment of the Iranian Bahá'í community.

These seven leaders – Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm – were charged with espionage, propaganda activities against the Islamic order, and the establishment of an illegal administration, among other allegations. They have already endured more than two years of “temporary” detention under harsh conditions, in clear breach of the rights to which they are entitled under Iranian and international law.

Like many governments and civil society organisations around the world, we believe that the sentences are based solely on their peaceful activities as members of the ad hoc national coordinating group for Iran's Bahá'í community. They have not been given a fair and public trial according to international law. No evidence appears to have ever been presented against them.

As leaders of Australia's diverse religious communities, we call on the Iranian government to immediately release these individuals on bail and to expedite a fairly conducted appeal hearing that respects international standards of jurisprudence.

Freedom of religion and belief is a right guaranteed to all people under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

We call on the Iranian government to respect and protect the right of all Iranians, including Bahá'ís and other religious minorities, to profess and practise the religion of their choice.

Statement supported by the following APRO members

National Council of Churches in Australia
Executive Council of Australian Jewry
Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils
Australian Sangha Association
Sikh Kirtan Prachar Mission of Australia
Australian Bahá'í Community
Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
Josie Lacey, Interfaith advisor, FECCA

APRO AUSTRALIAN PARTNERSHIP
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Media comment

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