

15. Religion, social change and responding to persecution – the case of the Bahá'í community in Iran

Kishan Manocha and Saba Tahzib

Introduction

The scale and intensity of religious discrimination and persecution throughout the world is markedly increasing. In January 2014, the Pew Research Center (2014) reported that religious hostilities had reached a six-year high, with more than 5.3 billion people, constituting 76 per cent of the world's population, currently living in countries 'with a high or very high level of restrictions on religion.' In particular, the Center (2013) charts a sharp increase in religious persecution in the Middle East since the political upheaval of the 'Arab Spring' of 2011, with non-Muslim as well as Muslim minorities suffering significant violations of their religious freedoms.

While the history of the persecution of the Bahá'í community in Iran predates this, it is nevertheless relevant to the general discussion. Iran's Bahá'ís have been the object of intense persecution since their emergence in the middle of the nineteenth century. During that time, Bahá'ís have been targets of recurrent waves of executions, death threats, mob violence, hostile propaganda and vilification, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, confiscation of individual and communal property and assets, arson, denial of access to education and employment, and even desecration of graves, all aimed at eliminating the community as a viable entity (Bahá'í International Community 2008; Ghanea 2002; Karlberg 2010).

The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, has described Iran's persecution of the Bahá'ís as among 'the most extreme manifestations of religious intolerance and persecution' in the world today (Bahá'í World News Service 2011). Romeo Dallaire, the Head of the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda during the country's 1994 genocide, has warned that the gravity of the situation is such that 'we are witnessing a slow-motion rehearsal for genocide' (Huffington Post 2012). Others have labelled the persecution of Iran's Bahá'ís as an 'ideological genocide' or a case of 'suspended' or 'cultural' genocide (Affolter 2005; Frelick 1987; Ghanea-Hercock 1997; Momen 2005).

Although other minorities around the world have been subject to similar or even greater levels of persecution, the manner in which the Bahá'í community

in Iran has responded to a sustained and systematic campaign of relentless oppression, focussing on a constructive and non-adversarial approach, raises a number of questions worthy of further reflection. How, for example, in the face of a coordinated campaign to extinguish the viability of their community have they avoided becoming victims of their situation? Faced with persecution of grave intent, how have they prevented the seeds of resentment and hatred at their treatment from taking root in their individual and collective consciousness? How and why have they declined to utilise the time-honoured tool of responding to persecution with confrontation and adversarial opposition in both its non-violent civil disobedience guises and more violent manifestations? This chapter will explore how certain elements of their conception of religion have informed a particular understanding of the process and requirements of social change that has underpinned the response of Iran's Bahá'ís to persecution. Although this experience may provide some insight into how religious minorities can strive to retain their integrity in the face of persecution, it may also contribute to the ongoing discussion about religion and its role in society at a time when the issue is the focus of much debate in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The first part of the chapter will review the Bahá'í community of Iran's experience of persecution to date; in the second part, the religious ideals and principles that inform their collective response to persecution in the wider context of their approach to social change will be examined, and the fruits of this response will be discussed.

A history of violent persecution

The Bahá'í Faith was founded in Iran in the middle of the nineteenth century by Mirza Husayn-'Ali, who is known by the name Bahá'u'lláh.¹ A fundamental tenet of Bahá'í belief is that all of the world's great religious systems come from the same unknowable Divine Source and are in essence successively unfolding stages of one revealed religion from God. The Faith's social teachings include the full equality of men and women, the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty, the harmony of science and religion, the elimination of all forms of prejudice and the need for universal education.

Karlberg (2010) describes the Bahá'í Faith as 'one of the most diverse, globally distributed, democratically organised, and steadily growing communities of people – religious or otherwise – on the planet today.' Bahá'ís represent some 2,100 different ethnic, racial and tribal groups, who hail from every religious background as well as from non-religious backgrounds (Weinberg 2007). The Faith has no ecclesiastical or clerical order but is organised through a system of elected councils at the local, national and international levels. These are a means for channelling the energies of Bahá'ís in service to the common good and for organising the religious and social affairs of the Bahá'í community itself. Bahá'ís are required, as an article of faith, to refrain from involvement in any partisan political activity and to show loyalty and obedience to the laws of the land in which they live.

Yet, despite these peace-inducing teachings and focus on promoting the common weal, the Bahá'í community has been subject to a violent campaign of opposition in Iran since its inception. Some 20,000 early followers, including women and children, were killed in a campaign of barbaric violence aimed at the extermination of the community at that time (Momen 1981, 2005). Written accounts by European eyewitnesses of this period recorded followers being 'stoned to death; having their teeth torn out, their eyes gouged out, and being forced to eat amputated parts of their own bodies; and having lighted candles inserted into their flesh while being led in chains, through the streets' (Momen 1981: p. 133–134).

The persecution continued intermittently during the twentieth century, coinciding most often with the need of various governments to shore up support from certain elements of Iran's Islamic leadership (Akhavi 1980; Tavakoli-Targhi, 2007). The pattern was one of ongoing low-level harassment, social marginalisation and legal exclusion, interspersed with the killing of a number of Bahá'ís in sporadic outbursts of violence. The establishment of the Pahlavi regime (1927–79) saw the recurrent persecution increasingly initiated by central government. A policy of discrimination was formalised against the Bahá'ís as a concession to the clergy. Bahá'í schools were closed, Bahá'í literature was banned, Bahá'í marriages were criminalised, Bahá'ís in public service were fired, occasional mob violence resulting in murders and rapes was encouraged and some communal property was destroyed (Bahá'í International Community 2008; Momen 2005).

Official government policy

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the attacks on that country's 300,000-strong Bahá'í community reached a new level, that of official government policy. Whereas attacks in the past had been spasmodic, and the government's support for them had been based on political expediency, the clerics who came to power during the Iranian revolution brought with them a deep and abiding hostility towards the Bahá'ís. The persecution was now state policy, the eradication of the Bahá'í community an ideological goal of the government of Iran (Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre 2006; Momen 2005).

That policy has been embedded in the Iranian Constitution in its recognition of only four religions – Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. This exclusion has come to mean that Bahá'ís enjoy no rights of any sort and that they can be attacked and persecuted with impunity. Bahá'ís have been classified as 'unprotected infidels,' 'heretics' and 'those whose blood may be shed with impunity' by Iranian courts, thereby denying them the right to seek justice or protection against the range of persecution they face (Bahá'í International Community 2008; International Federation of Human Rights 2003; Karlberg 2010). Iran continues to refer to the Bahá'í community as a 'misguided' or 'deviant sect,' a 'cult' or an 'illegal association' in official communications and documents (Bahá'í International Community 2008, 2011).

In the years immediately following the revolution, some 200 Bahá'ís were executed or killed, and hundreds were arrested. All Bahá'í administrative bodies and activities were officially banned. Individual and communal property and assets were confiscated or destroyed. Bahá'ís were barred from public sector jobs, and business licences were regularly revoked or refused. Pensions and access to healthcare were denied. Bahá'í school children were monitored, harassed and at times expelled. Bahá'ís were also prohibited access to higher education (Bahá'í International Community 2008; Ghanea 2002; International Federation of Human Rights 2003; Momen 2005).

Iran's policy towards its Bahá'í religious minority was set out in a 1991 memorandum of the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, a significant organ of the Iranian State. This policy, which came to light in a 1993 report of the UN Special Representative on Iran, was prepared at the request of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the then President of Iran, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, to deal with 'the Bahá'í question' (Bahá'í International Community 1993; Momen 2005). The document remains the current policy of the Iranian government towards its Bahá'í citizens and calls for Bahá'ís to be treated in such a way that 'their progress and development shall be blocked' (Bahá'í International Community 1993, 2008).

The document provides clear evidence that the campaign against Bahá'ís is centrally directed by the Iranian government. It indicates, for example, that the government aims to keep Bahá'ís illiterate and uneducated, living only at subsistence level. The memorandum states, for example, that all Bahá'ís should be expelled from universities, that they shall be denied 'positions of influence' and that they are to be denied 'employment if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís' (Bahá'í International Community 1993). Ominously, the memorandum declares that 'A plan must be devised to confront and destroy their [the Bahá'ís'] cultural roots outside the country' (Bahá'í International Community 1993, 2008).

The international community began to act systematically on the situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran in the mid-1980s and exerted increasing scrutiny of the Iranian government's actions through resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly and other UN bodies (Ghanea 2002; Karlberg 2010; Momen 2005). Similar resolutions have been passed by national parliaments around the world, appeals for justice have been articulated by an array of human rights organisations and considerable attention has been devoted to the situation by the international media. By the early 1990s, international pressure reached a consistency and intensity that forced the Iranian government to recalibrate its actions. However, rather than cease its persecution the government adapted its approach and methods in an attempt to conceal its actions. But the overall aim remained the same – the elimination of the Bahá'í community as a viable entity in Iran.

This policy of attempting to slowly and quietly strangulate the Bahá'í community through economic, social and cultural restrictions to avoid international censure continues to this day.

Indeed, since 2005 there has been an intensification in persecution, with a renewed attempt to fully implement the intended aim of the 1991 memorandum (Bahá'í International Community 2015). This has been evidenced by a dramatic surge in the number of Bahá'ís arrested and detained. For example, in 2004, there were four Bahá'ís imprisoned in Iran. Since then more than 700 Bahá'ís have been arrested, and over one hundred are in prison at the time of writing (Bahá'í International Community 2015). Of particular note was the arrest and detention in 2008 of seven members of an informal *ad hoc* leadership body of the Bahá'í community in Iran, the Yárán. Each of the seven was sentenced to twenty years in prison in 2010 purely on the grounds of their faith. Economic restrictions have also been pursued with a renewed vigour with Bahá'í-owned businesses subject to particular attacks (Bahá'í International Community 2015).

A wide-ranging media campaign, with the support of the state, has been also instigated. Deploying false accusations, inflammatory terminology and repugnant imagery, this systematic incitement of hatred against the Bahá'ís has disturbing parallels with other state-sponsored anti-religious campaigns of the past (Bahá'í International Community 2011). A particularly sinister development in recent years has been Iran's extraordinary effort to track down, identify and monitor its Bahá'í citizens. An example of this occurred in March 2006 with the public disclosure by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief of a October 2005 letter from Iranian military headquarters, instructing state intelligence services, police units and the Revolutionary Guard to make a 'comprehensive and complete report of all activities' of the Bahá'ís 'for the purpose of identifying all individuals' of this 'misguided sect' (Bahá'í International Community 2008).

Rationale for the persecution

The Iranian government has at various times denied any persecution of the Bahá'ís was happening; that the Bahá'í Faith is not a religion but rather a 'deviant sect' with seditious political intentions; that Bahá'ís are spies for Israel or agents of American, British or Russian imperialism; and that Bahá'ís were criminals spreading injustice, corruption and immorality (Bahá'í International Community 2008, 2011; Karlberg 2010; Momen 2005). The specious nature of these allegations has always been clear to anyone familiar with the facts but is also wholly undermined by the well-documented incidences of Bahá'ís being offered a reprieve from imprisonment or execution on the condition that they recanted their faith, underscoring the fact that Bahá'ís are persecuted solely because of their religious beliefs and not due to any underlying issue of ethnicity, social class or political ideology (Bahá'í International Community 2008; Ghanea 2002; International Federation of Human Rights 2003; Karlberg 2010).

So, why are Iran's Bahá'ís persecuted so vigorously by their government, despite their commitment to non-violence; their steadfast non-involvement in partisan political activity, their long-standing efforts to promote the development of their country, and the fact that the Bahá'í Faith recognises the station of the Prophet Muhammad, accepts the authenticity of the Quran and upholds the divine origins of Islam? Karlberg (2010) describes the reasons that some Shia clerics are bent on extinguishing the Bahá'í Faith as both 'theological and material.' Bahá'ís understand that this pattern of persecution is a manifestation of the misunderstanding and fear that often occurs when a new religion emerges from the matrix of a well-established orthodoxy. To Iran's Shiite establishment, the emergence of a post-Islamic religion is not only theologically unacceptable but threatens the system of patronage, endowments, political influence and social privileges to which they lay claim (Affolter 2005; Akhavi 1980; Karlberg 2010). Further, the progressive teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, such as the absence of a clerical order and the full equality of women and men are also seen as a threat to the established religious order's interests.

The Bahá'í response to persecution

Although by no means an exhaustive treatment of the subject, the following section will attempt an initial exploration of some elements of the vision and principles that guide the Bahá'í response to persecution – located in the wider context of a distinctive approach to social change – as well as the form it has taken in the case of Bahá'ís in Iran.

The Bahá'í response to persecution can be understood as stemming from a conception of religion as a source of principles and values which, together with science, propels the advancement of civilisation. These principles and values are seen to have the power to tap the deepest roots of human motivation and create new patterns of behaviour and social interaction conducive to far-reaching and lasting, constructive social change.

Conception of religion

Religion is commonly viewed as a welter of competing sects and denominations, each with its own set of personal beliefs, particular customs and prescribed practices. However, it is also possible to understand religion as a continually evolving system of knowledge and practice representing the spiritual experience of the human race, a common legacy available to all humankind. Bahá'ís consider some of the truths it contains to remain valid with the passage of time, but others speak to specific historical conditions and require renewal and updating as civilisation advances. As the human race is a single species, so too, the instrumentality by which God cultivates the moral and spiritual capacity of the human race is, in the Bahá'í view, part of one unfolding process. Indeed, the Founders of the world's great religions can be seen as great reformers who awakened humankind to its capacities

and responsibilities as part of a process that is not simply repetitive but progressive. The Bahá'í Writings proclaim that 'All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilisation' (Bahá'u'lláh 1990) and that the aim of every religion is 'to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions' (Bahá'u'lláh 1990). Informed by this vision, religion is understood as a transformative power which can unlock human potential for the betterment of society.

Conception of history

The Bahá'í understanding of religion as a single civilising process is rooted in a broader conception of history, which Bahá'ís see as having a particular direction and ultimate purpose. History, in the Bahá'í view, is regarded as an evolutionary process culminating with the principle of oneness of humankind becoming firmly established as the organising principle of human affairs. This process is expected to unfold over many generations; therefore, the Bahá'í approach to social change, including its response to persecution and all forms of oppression, is pursued with this long-term perspective in mind and in a spirit of perseverance and patience (Karlberg 2010).

A related aspect of the Bahá'í understanding of history is the recognition of the interplay between two powerful forces – one disintegrative, the other integrative – propelling humankind towards its collective maturity. Indeed, the far-reaching changes sweeping across the current geopolitical, social and cultural landscape are seen as the fruit of the interaction between these twin forces of the historical process. The Universal House of Justice (2013), the international governing body of the Bahá'í community, has explained that 'Though devastating in their effects, the forces of disintegration tend to sweep away barriers that block humanity's progress, opening space for the process of integration to draw diverse groups together and disclosing new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.' With this insight in mind, Bahá'ís focus their efforts on buttressing the process of integration through striving to establish patterns of activity and administrative and social structures appropriate to the needs of humankind's emerging maturity.

As already mentioned, Bahá'ís understand history as a teleological process culminating in the emergence of a world civilisation embodying in all its aspects the principle of the oneness of humankind. In this context, unity is not only one of the primary goals of social evolution; it is also the power through which humankind collectively advances. This principle regards humankind as an organic whole in which the members of the human family are inseparable and interdependent parts of a larger creation. The creation of a new social reality governed by oneness, in the Bahá'í view, requires more than just a reawakening of the spirit of goodwill and fellow feeling together with appeals to cooperation and understanding among the myriad diverse inhabitants of the planet; it is of necessity a process that reaches deep into both

the consciousness of individuals and the structure of society, recasting and reshaping the relationships between and among individuals, institutions and communities.

Based on this conception of social change, Bahá'ís see the most effective and sensible response to persecution as the construction of new patterns of behaviour and organisation based on the principle of the oneness of humankind. Given the premium placed by Bahá'ís on unity as both the goal and means of social change, they seek to avoid actions that, directly or indirectly, undermine this consistency of means and ends. Basically,

what Bahá'ís see as one aspect of their contribution cannot contradict the other. They cannot be seeking to establish patterns of thought and action that give expression to the principle of oneness within their community, yet engage in activities in another context which, to whatever extent, reinforce an entirely different set of assumptions about social existence.

(Universal House of Justice 2013)

In addition to the collective commitment to the oneness of humankind, a number of other ideals and principles are also relevant. Karlberg (2010) summarises some of them as including the recognition of the spiritual and material dimensions of human reality, the cultivation of spiritual qualities and reliance on the power of personal example, the peaceful construction of viable, alternative models of coexistence and cooperation, and the principle of active service to the welfare of others, irrespective of their backgrounds or beliefs. There is, therefore, a focus on fostering values, principles, attitudes and modes of behaviour that are manifestations of a broadened understanding of human nature as the bedrock of any viable effort to bring about constructive, sustained social change.

The upshot of all of this is that Bahá'ís, instead of responding to persecution with violent opposition, non-violent civil disobedience or through engaging in partisan politics, are encouraged to be busy in contributing to the betterment of society:

to neither to succumb in resignation to their fate nor to take on the characteristics of the oppressor ... the victim of oppression can transcend it through cultivating an inner strength that shields the heart and spirit from bitterness and hatred.

(Universal House of Justice 2009)

In short, a Bahá'í response to persecution rests on the development of qualities and capacities that 'concentrate on revitalising the hearts, minds and behaviour of people – including the oppressor' and 'on presenting a working model as evidence of the reality and practicality of the way of life they propound' (Universal House of Justice 1995).

Rethinking foundational concepts

Integral to a Bahá'í approach to social change is a rethinking of certain foundational concepts. Notable among these is power, which is traditionally seen as a means of control and domination with the accompanying notions of contest, exploitation, division and superiority. Power, from a Bahá'í point of view, is conceived of as 'power to' instead of 'power over,' and while its operation through political processes cannot be denied, constructive and lasting social change will not be effected unless the latent powers of the human spirit – the power of love, of unity, of good deeds – are successfully channelled and released for the betterment of the human race. Armed with this conception, Bahá'ís facing persecution and subject to traditional misuses of power that seek to oppress and control are able to avoid the pitfalls of victimisation and, through their constructive and positive response, become empowered and, in turn, assist and strengthen others. Roxana Saberi (2010, 2011), the Iranian-American journalist who shared a prison cell for a few months in 2009 with two Bahá'í women, has recounted how the joyous spirits, kindness and compassion of these two Bahá'í prisoners lifted the morale of other inmates and through their actions became a source of hope and sustenance in the awful conditions of the notorious Evin prison in Tehran.

In essence, the Bahá'í response to persecution can thus be described as one of constructive resilience rooted in striving to develop a pattern of life distinguished by adherence to the principles of the oneness of humankind and service to others (Universal House of Justice, 2007). However, as Karlberg (2010) notes 'this posture of constructive resilience together with the principle of obedience to the laws of the land does not mean that Bahá'ís are forbidden from appealing for justice for themselves and other oppressed minorities through proper legal channels.' Indeed, Bahá'ís are directed to pursue 'every principled means' (Universal House of Justice 2006) to defend themselves and others against oppression.

Experience of the Bahá'í community in translating principles into action

Although the Bahá'í community in Iran can by no means claim to be a perfect embodiment of the ideals described – and as Karlberg (2010) articulates 'within any community it is natural that the level of commitment to, internalisation of, and successful application of the community's professed teachings will vary among individuals' – its collective experience over many decades demonstrates a glimpse into the power and potential efficacy of translating a particular conception of religion and its distinctively non-adversarial approach to social change into concrete constructive action in response to bitter persecution.

For example, committed to the principle of the full equality of women and men, Bahá'ís founded the first schools for girls in Iran open to people of all faiths and backgrounds. These schools were eventually shut down by the government during a particular episode of persecution but they are nevertheless

credited with training the first ever generation of professional women in Iran leaving a lasting impact throughout Iranian society (Karlberg 2010; Momen, 2007). Within the Bahá'í community itself, Bahá'í women in Iran under the age of 40 had achieved 100 per cent literacy by 1974 compared to a national average of 15 per cent (Karlberg 2010; Momen 2007). In the face of mass denial of employment, higher education and other rights of citizenship since 1979, Bahá'ís have attempted to establish creative systems to ensure their survival. For example, Iran's Bahá'ís have established informal systems to care for elderly Bahá'ís who have lost their pensions and to educate Bahá'í children who had been expelled from schools (Karlberg 2010). In response to the denial of higher education imposed on their youth by the Iranian authorities, the Bahá'ís established an informal distance learning educational initiative known as the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education that was described in the *New York Times* (1998) as 'an elaborate act of self-preservation.'

However, the efforts of the Bahá'í community in Iran has not been purely inward looking or solely focussed on survival. In the face of long-standing hostility by the authorities, Bahá'ís have retained their sense of constructive agency and continue to contribute to the development and well-being of their local communities. But, even these constructive acts of service have been attacked by the government. For example, fifty-four Bahá'ís were arrested in Shiraz in 2006 for participating in teaching literacy to underprivileged children (Bahá'í World News Service 2006). In 2011, four Bahá'ís were arrested in Bam for providing education to children following the devastating earthquake in the region (Bahá'í Word News Service 2011).

Concluding remarks

The situation and future of religious minorities in the Middle East and elsewhere is often analysed through the prism of international legal norms and instruments, geopolitics, socioeconomics, historic and cultural issues and a range of internal political dynamics in the states where minorities are persecuted. These are all important approaches that have their value in the ongoing discussions on religious minorities and issues of freedom of religion or belief. However, it may also be useful to consider the possibility that at its heart, these challenges involve conceptions of religion and its role in society. Societies in which religious minorities are persecuted often see religion as an element of identity that separates them from non-believers; they regard religion as static, literal and dogmatic; they experience religion as conferring privileged, exclusive and final access to the truth; and in these cases the role of religion is to control and impose its ideals on others. Although clearly not sufficient to create the conditions for persecution they are arguably necessary. There is therefore some value in unpacking the underlying assumptions of such conceptions of religion as well as reflecting on the ideals of religion and examples of religious lives that can satisfy the long-held aspirations of most people to live in cohesive, peaceful and flourishing societies.

At the very least, the experience of the Bahá'í community in Iran of responding to persecution illustrates the power that conceptions of religion as a source of developing human potentialities in service to the common good can have in motivating individuals and communities to attempt to contribute to the betterment of their society, even under the bleakest of circumstances.

Note

- 1 The English translation is the 'Glory of God.'

Bibliography

- Affolter, F. (2005). The Specter of Ideological Genocide: The Bahá'ís of Iran. *War Crimes, Genocide and Crimes against Humanity*. 1(1): 75–114.
- Akhavi, S. (1980). *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Bahá'í International Community. (1993). *The Bahá'í Question: Iran's Secret Blueprint for the Destruction of a Religious Community*. New York: Bahá'í International Community Publications.
- Bahá'í International Community. (2008). *The Bahá'í Question: Cultural Cleansing in Iran*. New York: BIC.
- Bahá'í International Community. (2011). *Inciting Hatred: Iran's Media Campaign to Demonize Bahá'ís*. New York: BIC.
- Bahá'í International Community. (2015). *Current Situation of Bahá'ís in Iran*. 20 February 2015 update. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: www.bic.org/index.php?q=media/Current-situation-Bahais-in-Iran [Accessed: 9 March 2015]
- Bahá'í World News Service. (2006). *54 Bahá'ís Arrested in Iran*. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: <http://news.bahai.org/story/450> [Accessed: 22 February 2015]
- Bahá'í World News Service. (2011). *UN Religious Freedom Expert: Iran Is Systematically Persecuting Bahá'ís*. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: <http://news.bahai.org/story/862> [Accessed: 19 February 2015]
- Bahá'í World News Service. (2011). *Bahá'ís Who Offered Education to Earthquake-hit Iranian Region Arrested*. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: <http://news.bahai.org/story/812> [Accessed: 22 February 2015]
- Bahá'u'lláh. (1990). *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.
- Bronner, E. (1998). Iran Closes 'University' Run Covertly by the Bahais. *New York Times* [Online]. Accessible online at URL: www.nytimes.com/1998/10/29/world/iran-closes-university-run-covertly-by-the-bahais.html?scp=1&sq=%22an%20elaborate%20act%20of%20communal%20self-preservation%22&st=cse [Accessed: 1 March 2015]
- Frelick, B. (1987). Iranian Bahá'ís and Genocide Early Warning. *Social Science Record*. 24 (2): 35–37.
- Ghanea, N. (2002). *Human Rights, the UN and the Bahá'ís in Iran*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ghanea-Hercock, N. (1997). Review of Secondary Literature in English on Recent Persecutions of Bahá'ís in Iran. *Bahá'í Studies Review*. 7. [Online]. Bahá'í Library.com. Accessible online at URL: http://bahai-library.com/ghanea-hercock_literature_persecutions_bahai [Accessed: 19 February 2015]

- Huffington Post. (2012). Romeo Dallaire: Senator Warns of Dangerous Parallels between Violence in Iran and Syria and Rwandan Genocide. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: www.huffingtonpost.ca/2011/12/06/romeo-dallaire-syria-iran-rwanda_n_1132469.html [Accessed 19 February 2015]
- International Federation of Human Rights (2003). *Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Iran*. Report presented to the 63rd Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/ir0108a.pdf [Accessed: 19 February 2015]
- Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (2006). *A Faith Denied*. New Haven, CT: IHRC. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/3149-a-faith-denied-the-%20persecution-of-the-baha-is-of-iran.html [Accessed: 19 February 2015]
- Karlberg M. (2010). Constructive Resilience: The Bahá'í Response to Oppression. *Peace & Change* 35 (2): 222–257.
- Momen, M. (2005). The Babi and Bahá'í Community of Iran: A Case of “suspended genocide”? *Journal of Genocide Research*. 7 (2): 221–241.
- Momen, M. (2007). Bahá'í Schools in Iran. In Brookshaw, D.P. & Fazel, S.B. (eds.) *The Bahá'ís of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*. Oxford: Routledge: 94–121.
- Momen, M. (ed.) (1981). *The Ba'bi' and Bahá'í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Nash, G. (1982). *Iran's Secret Pogrom: The Conspiracy to Wipe out the Bahá'ís*. Suffolk: Neville Spearman.
- Pew Research Center. (2013). *Arab Spring Restrictions on Religion*. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: www.pewforum.org/2013/06/20/arab-spring-restrictions-on-religion-findings. [Accessed: 19 February 2015]
- Pew Research Center. (2014). *Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High*. [Online]. Accessible online at URL: www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high. [Accessed: 19 February 2015]
- Saberi, R. (2010). In Iran, Shackling the Bahá'í torchbearers. *The Washington Post* [Online]. 27th August. Accessible online at URL: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/27/AR2010082704485.html [Accessed 19 February 2015]
- Saberi, R. (2011). Free Iran's Bahá'í Seven. *The Wall Street Journal*. [Online]. 15th March. Accessible online at URL: www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703597804576194611528457604. [Accessed: 19 February 2015]
- Tavakoli-Targhi, M. (2007). Anti-Bahá'ism and Islamism in Iran. In Brookshaw, D.P. & Fazel, S.B. (eds.) *The Bahá'ís of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*. Oxford: Routledge: 200–231.
- Universal House of Justice, letter to an individual, 27 April 1995.
- Universal House of Justice, letter to Bahá'ís of Egypt, 21 December 2006.
- Universal House of Justice, letter to Bahá'í students deprived of access to higher education in Iran, 9 September 2007.
- Universal House of Justice, letter to Bahá'ís in Iran, 23 June 2009.
- Universal House of Justice, letter to the Bahá'ís of Iran, 2 March 2013.
- Weinberg, R. (ed.) (2007) *The Bahá'í World: 2005–2006*. Haifa: World Center Publications.