

SCHOLARS AT RISK

N E T W O R K

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Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran

c/o H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazaei
Ambassador of Iran to the United Nations
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
662 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA

October 31, 2011

Re: Mr. Ramin Zibaei

Your Excellency:

I write on behalf of the Scholars at Risk Network to express concern for Mr. Ramin Zibaei, a scholar of psychology and dean at the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) in Tehran.

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of over 260 universities and colleges in 33 countries dedicated to promoting academic freedom and its constituent freedoms of thought, opinion, expression, association and travel. In cases like that of Mr. Zibaei, involving alleged infringement of these freedoms, Scholars at Risk intervenes hoping to clarify and resolve matters favorably.

According to the information we have, Mr. Zibaei completed a Master's level program in psychology at BIHE and has taught extensively at the institute over 8 years, holding positions as member of the psychology department and dean of social science faculty. In May 2011, he and more than a dozen staff and faculty members of the BIHE were arrested. We understand that he has been held since, and that since his arrest Mr. Zibaei has been denied access to legal counsel and family. Current reports indicate also that Mr. Zibaei was sentenced recently to four years in prison on charges related to his academic activities at BIHE.

We would of course welcome any additional or contrary information you might share which will help us to understand the situation more fully. Absent this, the facts as described appear to constitute violations of academic freedom and other internationally recognized human rights and standards of due process, fair trial and detention, as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is signatory. Taking into account also the reported arrests and prison sentences against other Baha'i scholars and the apparent targeting of the BIHE community, the facts suggest an attempt to exclude Baha'i individuals from higher education opportunities in Iran, and raise serious concerns about a wider campaign to limit the ability of intellectuals and scholars generally to work freely in Iran.

Scholars at Risk finds these suggestions particularly distressing and unfortunate, given Iran's rich intellectual history and traditional support for the values of scholarship and free inquiry. We therefore join with many national and international academic associations, human rights organizations and individual scholars in respectfully urging you to ensure that Iran's obligations under international law are upheld with regard to Mr. Zibaei, his colleagues at the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) and other intellectuals in Iran. We respectfully ask that you intervene to ensure Mr. Zibaei's well-being and access to family and counsel in custody; to ensure that he receives a fair and timely appeal hearing; to ensure that any convictions or sentences related to his academic activities or association with the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education are reconsidered; and to reaffirm Iran's commitment to its long tradition of intellectual freedom and quality higher education for all.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Quinn
Executive Director

CC:

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