

106<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
2<sup>D</sup> SESSION

# H. CON. RES. 257

Concerning the emancipation of the Iranian Baha'i community.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 29, 2000

Mr. PORTER (for himself, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. HOYER, Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. FORBES, Mr. WOLF, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mr. EVANS, Mr. McDERMOTT, Mr. ROGAN, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mrs. MORELLA, Mr. HORN, Mr. TRAFICANT, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. MOORE, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. HINCHEY, Mrs. MINK of Hawaii, Mr. UNDERWOOD, Mr. VISCLOSKY, Mr. BATEMAN, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. CLEMENT, Mr. DEUTSCH, Mr. COYNE, Mr. DEFazio, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. BERKLEY, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. RAHALL, and Mr. FALCOMA) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

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## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Concerning the emancipation of the Iranian Baha'i community.

Whereas in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, and 1996, 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 Baha'i Faith, Iran's largest religious minority;

Whereas Congress has deplored the Government of Iran's religious persecution of the Baha'i community in such resolutions and in numerous other appeals, and has con-

demned Iran's execution of more than 200 Baha'is and the imprisonment of thousands of others solely on account of their religious beliefs;

Whereas in July 1998 a Baha'i, Mr. Ruhollah Rowhani, was executed by hanging in Mashhad after being held in solitary confinement for 9 months on the charge of converting a Muslim woman to the Baha'i Faith, a charge the woman herself refuted;

Whereas 2 Baha'is remain on death row in Iran, 2 on charges on apostasy, and 10 others are serving prison terms on charges arising solely from their religious beliefs or activities;

Whereas the Government of Iran continues to deny individual Baha'is access to higher education and government employment and denies recognition and religious rights to the Baha'i community, according to the policy set forth in a confidential Iranian Government document which was revealed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1993;

Whereas Baha'is have been banned from teaching and studying at Iranian universities since the Islamic Revolution and therefore created the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education, or Baha'i Open University, to provide educational opportunities to Baha'i youth using volunteer faculty and a network of classrooms, libraries, and laboratories in private homes and buildings throughout Iran;

Whereas in September and October 1998, Iranian authorities arrested 36 faculty members of the Open University, 4 of whom have been given prison sentences ranging between 3 to 10 years, even though the law makes no men-

tion of religious instruction within one's own religious community as being an illegal activity;

Whereas Iranian intelligence officers looted classroom equipment, textbooks, computers, and other personal property from 532 Baha'i homes in an attempt to close down the Open University;

Whereas all Baha'i community properties in Iran have been confiscated by the government, and Iranian Baha'is are not permitted to elect their leaders, organize as a community, operate religious schools, or conduct other religious community activities guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Whereas on February 22, 1993, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights published a formerly confidential Iranian government document that constitutes a blueprint for the destruction of the Baha'i community and reveals that these repressive actions are the result of a deliberate policy designed and approved by the highest officials of the Government of Iran; and

Whereas in 1998 the United Nations Special Representative for Human Rights, Maurice Copithorne, was denied entry into Iran: Now, therefore, be it

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

3            (1) continues to hold the Government of Iran  
4        responsible for upholding the rights of all its nation-  
5        als, including members of the Baha'i community, in  
6        a manner consistent with Iran's obligations under  
7        the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and

1 other international agreements guaranteeing the civil  
2 and political rights of its citizens;

3 (2) condemns the repressive anti-Baha'i policies  
4 and actions of the Government of Iran, including the  
5 denial of legal recognition to the Baha'i community  
6 and the basic rights to organize, elect its leaders,  
7 educate its youth, and conduct the normal activities  
8 of a law-abiding religious community;

9 (3) expresses concern that individual Baha'is  
10 continue to suffer from severely repressive and dis-  
11 criminatory government actions, including executions  
12 and death sentences, solely on account of their reli-  
13 gion;

14 (4) urges the Government of Iran to permit  
15 Baha'i students to attend Iranian universities and  
16 Baha'i faculty to teach at Iranian universities, to re-  
17 turn the property confiscated from the Baha'i Open  
18 University, to free the imprisoned faculty members  
19 of the Open University, and to permit the Open Uni-  
20 versity to continue to function;

21 (5) urges the Government of Iran to implement  
22 fully the conclusions and recommendations on the  
23 emancipation of the Iranian Baha'i community made  
24 by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Reli-  
25 gious Intolerance, Professor Abdelfattah Amor, in

1 his report of March 1996 to the United Nations  
2 Commission of Human Rights;

3 (6) urges the Government of Iran to extend to  
4 the Baha'i community the rights guaranteed by the  
5 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the  
6 international covenants of human rights, including  
7 the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and  
8 equal protection of the law; and

9 (7) calls upon the President to continue—

10 (A) to assert the United States Govern-  
11 ment's concern regarding Iran's violations of  
12 the rights of its citizens, including members of  
13 the Baha'i community, along with expressions  
14 of its concern regarding the Iranian Govern-  
15 ment's support for international terrorism and  
16 its efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruc-  
17 tion;

18 (B) to emphasize that the United States  
19 regards the human rights practices of the Gov-  
20 ernment of Iran, particularly its treatment of  
21 the Baha'i community and other religious mi-  
22 norities, as a significant factor in the develop-  
23 ment of the United States Government's rela-  
24 tions with the Government of Iran;

1           (C) to emphasize the need for the United  
2 Nations Special Representative for Human  
3 Rights to be granted permission to enter Iran;

4           (D) to urge the Government of Iran to  
5 emancipate the Baha'i community by granting  
6 those rights guaranteed by the Universal Dec-  
7 laration of Human Rights and the international  
8 covenants on human rights; and

9           (E) to encourage other governments to  
10 continue to appeal to the Government of Iran,  
11 and to cooperate with other governments and  
12 international organizations, including the  
13 United Nations and its agencies, in efforts to  
14 protect the religious rights of the Baha'is and  
15 other minorities through joint appeals to the  
16 Government of Iran and through other appro-  
17 priate actions.

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