

**Ten Baha'i women executed together 40 years ago:
Global campaign honors them in support of gender equality in Iran, calling for public
creative contributions**

GENEVA—15 May 2023—The day of 18 June 2023 will mark 40 years since the Islamic Republic of Iran hanged 10 Baha'i women in a single night in a square in the city of Shiraz. Their crime was refusing to renounce their beliefs in a faith that promotes the principles of gender equality—absent and criminalized in Iran—as well as unity, justice and truthfulness.

The women were hanged one by one, each forced to watch the next woman's death in a harrowing attempt to coerce them into recanting their faith. One was only 17; most were in their 20s. Human rights groups and ordinary citizens around the world were shocked and outraged at this barbaric act by the Iranian authorities.

Global leaders at the time led [a wave of appeals](#) for condemned Baha'i women and men to be released from their death sentences. But to no avail.

The Baha'i International Community is now launching a global campaign, called #OurStoryIsOne, to honor the executed women and the long struggle for gender equality lived by women of all faiths and backgrounds in Iran for many decades and which continues to this day.

“The story of the 10 Baha'i women is not over. It was a chapter in the unfolding story of Iranian women's resilience and sacrifice for equality,” says Simin Fahandej, Representative of the Baha'i International Community (BIC) to the United Nations in Geneva. “Today, in the blood, tears and wounds of thousands of young women in Iran seeking equality, we can see echoes of the injustice suffered by the 10 women of Shiraz whose tragic death touched the lives of many. We see the same spirit, the same choice being made: to stand up for the principles of justice and equality with utmost effort. Though mistreated and imprisoned, today's women—just like those before them—are bravely striving for a just and prosperous Iran.”

In some cases, the executed Baha'i women were arrested on charges of providing moral education to young children, both girls and boys. Since the 19th century, the Baha'is in Iran have promoted gender equality through efforts at every level, including the establishment of schools for girls. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Baha'is were particularly targeted for calling for the full equality of women and men, which allowed women to take part in all aspects of community life and join gatherings where men were present.

“The Baha'i community in Iran has always called for the full participation of women in all spheres of life in society, including decision-making processes, and has paid a heavy price for it,” Ms. Fahandej added. “Bearing more than 40 years of systematic persecution, which has now

sadly been extended to all Iranians, the Baha'i community has insisted on its right to serve Iran, which it regards as a sacred land, by promoting gender equality, justice and access to education, regardless of the consequences to their lives.”

Following the execution of the 10 women and for the four decades that have followed, hundreds more Baha'i women have been severely persecuted, facing discrimination both as women and as Baha'is. After the Revolution, Baha'i women serving in prominent social positions in the country were dismissed from their jobs, arrested and imprisoned, tortured, or executed. Those left to live were barred from universities, public employment and virtually all aspects of social life.

In honor of the 10 women of Shiraz and the cause of justice and equality for which they gave their lives, the BIC now invites people around the world, whether as artists, musicians, filmmakers, or in other creative areas, to pay tribute in their name. Contributions can include: songs about the 10 women, short videos about their lives, a memory of the women themselves, graphic arts, written work, social media posts, or public events and memorials, to honor the longstanding struggle and efforts towards gender equality in Iran.

The campaign will start in June and span a year, with its most intensive phase taking place the first three weeks of June, leading to the 40th anniversary of their execution on 18 June.

“More and more Iranians are uniting in a search for social justice, and they have focused on the equality of women and men as one of the most pressing challenges facing the country,” added Ms. Fahandej. “We hope that together we can honor not only the 10 Baha'i women of Shiraz, but all women across Iran who cherish the principle of the equality of women and men, and who have contributed to building a better future for the country through their perseverance in the face of oppression.”

“Let us stand together, united by our shared experiences of resilience and our collective efforts and sacrifices for Iran, to show that we are inextricably linked regardless of faith and background. We hope that remembering the execution of these 10 women will illuminate and reinforce conversations around justice and gender equality in Iran. Our story is one and we will raise our voices until our shared ideals are realized.”

Background

On 18 June 1983, [10 Baha'i women](#), most of them in their 20s, including a young girl of 17 and a woman in her 50s, were executed by hanging in Chowgan Square in Shiraz because they had refused to renounce their faith. This shocking event was met with consternation and outrage by human rights groups and ordinary people around the world.

Two nights prior, six Baha'i men (some of them relatives of these 10 women) were executed in that same square. More than 200 Baha'is were executed by the Iranian authorities in the years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The killings only paused after international outcries, but the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran continues with impunity to this day.

The 10 women were arrested in October and November 1982. Many were first held at the Sepah Detention Centre and then transferred to Adelabad Prison. They suffered harsh interrogations and torture by Revolutionary Guards in an attempt to coerce them to recant their faith. They were denied the right to a lawyer, denied a trial in a public court, and ultimately sentenced by the Sharia judge of Shiraz to execution by hanging on charges of “Zionism,” “spying for Israel,” and teaching moral education classes for children.

Each of these women was violently coerced several times in the effort to get them to deny their faith and to convert to Islam, to escape execution, but none of them agreed to sign the statements authorities prepared for them. On 18 June 1983, they were secretly taken to Chowgan Square and hanged one by one and in front of each other. Their families were not even notified of their deaths, their bodies were not returned to their families, and they did not receive dignified burials with religious rites. It is believed that they were buried in the Baha'i cemetery in Shiraz by the authorities, which was later [demolished](#) and made into a “cultural and sports building” in 2014.

The women executed on this date were:

- [Mona Mahmoudnejad](#), 17;
- [Roya Eshraghi](#), 23, executed along with her mother Ezzat-Janami Eshraghi;
- [Simin Saberi](#), 24;
- [Shahin \(Shirin\) Dalvand](#), 25;
- [Akhtar Sabet](#), 25;
- [MahshidAkhtar Sabet - Executed by hanging in Shiraz on 18th June 1983 | Archives of Baha'i Persecution in Iran Niroumand](#), 28;
- [Zarrin Moghimi-Abyaneh](#), 29;
- [Tahereh Arjomandi Siyavashi](#), 30. Her husband, Jamshid Siavashi, was executed two days earlier;
- [Nosrat Ghufrani Yaldaie](#), 46. Her son, Bahram Yaldaie, was executed two days earlier;
- [Ezzat-Janami Eshraghi](#), 57, along with her daughter Roya, 23. Her husband, Enayatullah Eshraghi was executed two days earlier.