

Confiscation and seizure of Baha'i property in Iran

Written question 2020/21: 1528 by Anders Österberg (S)

To Foreign Minister Ann Linde (S)

The Foreign Minister has condemned and expressed concern about the crimes of the Iranian regime, including Iran's systematic persecution of its largest non-Muslim minority, the Baha'is. The European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) recently stated in a report that the Baha'is remain the most oppressed religious minority in Iran. In recent months, alarming signs have emerged, indicating that Iran is conducting its attacks on the Baha'is in a more concerted and wider effort.

In northern Iran, in the village of Ivel, Baha'is who are hard-working, low-income farmers live. They earn their livelihood and subsistence through the land, which has belonged to their families for generations. Towards the end of 2020, two courts ruled that 27 Baha'is in Ivel own their land and property illegally. The court decisions issued by judges Hassan Babai and Mohammad Sadegh Savadkouhi are predicated on the belief that the Baha'is have "a perverse ideology" and therefore have no "legitimacy to their property rights". The majority of the Baha'i estates in Ivel are now confiscated and court decisions also allow these to be resold to others in the population.

On November 22, about 100 government agents stormed over 20 shops and homes belonging to the Baha'is, demanding that the Baha'is hand over their property deeds. The simultaneous raids were organised in at least seven cities around the country, including Tehran, Karaj, Isfahan and Mashhad. Belongings such as smartphones, computers and tablets were seized. The raids took place just a few hours into a 15-day nationwide shutdown announced to counter the spread of Covid-19. The agents completely ignored the authorities' own pandemic regulations during the invasion of the Baha'i homes, in which the elderly and sick also stayed.

The recent court decisions and raids are indicative of a new focus on the persecution. By applying a tactic which seizes the Baha'is' personal property to this extent, the authorities now want to further reduce the Bahai's of Iran to poverty. This is an alarming development and a further escalation in Iran's state-sponsored persecution of these law-abiding citizens whose only desire is to contribute to the development of society in the country.

Depriving innocent families of land and property because of their religious affiliation violates fundamental human rights. The Baha'is of Ivel have, like other citizens, right to their land.

In view of this, I would like to ask Foreign Minister Ann Linde:

Can the Minister call on Iran to ensure that the Baha'is of Ivel regain their properties?