

The last of the Bahai 7 religious leader group released from prison

The **Bahá'í 7**^[1], also known as the “Yaran” (friends), are seven Iranian Bahá'í community leaders arrested in 2008 that have served 10-year prison sentences in Iran. The seven prisoners of conscience are Mahvash Sabet, Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm.^[2]

Sabet was detained on 5 March 2008 after being summoned to Mashhad by the Ministry of Intelligence. Officers from the Ministry of Intelligence arrested the other six leaders in raids on their homes on 14 May 2008.^[3] The seven were held in Evin Prison in Section 209, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence, and were denied access to a lawyer. The five male detainees reportedly were placed in one cell together measuring 10m² and without any beds.^[4]



Images of the Bahá'í 7 at a rally in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (wikipedia)

On 7 August 2010, the Revolutionary Court in Tehran convicted the seven Bahá'í of crimes including “espionage for Israel”, “insulting religious sanctities” and “propaganda against the system,” and sentenced them to 20 years imprisonment.

On September 18, 2017, former prisoner Mahvash Sabet was released.^[10]

Thirty prominent Australians signed a statement welcoming her release, including Greens leader

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Richard Di Natale, former foreign affairs minister Bob Carr, former attorney-general Philip Ruddock, and members from all major faiths, including the president of the Uniting Church.

The other leaders were gradually released. By April 2018, only Afif Naeimi remained.

Afif Naeimi, the last of the seven Baha'i leaders imprisoned since 2008, has been released on completion of his sentence.

Dr Natalie Mobini, the director of the Office of External Affairs, Australian Baha'i Community, profoundly thanked Australian community for the concern and support shown for the seven during their incarceration over the past decade. She also said that the release of all members of the former leadership group is a significant milestone. At the same time, as you know, the systematic persecution continues. Baha'is in Iran are unable to practise their faith, more than 80 are currently imprisoned, and all experience multiple layers of discrimination at every level of life. The flow-on effects of this persecution are now further expanding into Yemen. Notwithstanding, we take this moment to breathe a sigh of relief that Mr Naeimi and his colleagues are all finally home with their families.

Hindu Council of Australia congratulates the Bahai community on the release of their religious leaders.

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