

United Nations Human Rights Council, 41st Session (24 February to 20 March 2020)

Item 6: Universal Periodic Review: Islamic Republic of Iran

Speaker: British Humanist Association Representative, Tallulah Gordon¹

We wish to highlight recommendations made by member states that Iran amend Article 13 of its constitution to officially recognise all religious minorities, including the non-religious, and ensure that all individuals enjoy the right to freedom of religion or belief.

We are alarmed by recent moves by Iran to increase discriminatory measures against religious minorities and the non-religious. In January this year, Iran removed the option of 'other religion' from its application forms for national ID cards, with only those of the Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or Zoroastrian faiths now able to apply for one.² Those belonging to other religious or non-religious groups, including Iran's large Baha'i minority,³ must now either conceal their beliefs or face losing the basic legal rights afforded by an ID card. These include the ability to obtain a passport, buy property, or open a bank account.⁴ This measure clearly violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which declares that no state may deny its religious or non-religious minorities the right to profess their beliefs.⁵

It is also of grave concern that Iran remains one of 14 countries worldwide that applies the death penalty for apostasy and blasphemy.⁶ This is despite the UN Human Rights Council passing Resolution 36/17 calling for the end of the use of the death penalty for these so-called 'crimes' in 2017.⁷

We call on Iran to fulfil its obligations under both the UDHR and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and protect the right to freedom of religion or belief for all and to abolish the use of the death penalty for apostasy and blasphemy.

Thank you.

¹ Humanists UK is the operating name of the British Humanist Association.

² Josie Esnor, 'Iran uses national ID card for fresh discrimination against Baha'i', 1 February 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/02/01/iran-uses-national-card-fresh-discrimination-against-bahai/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ United Nations, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 16 December 1966.

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/ccpr.pdf>

⁶ Humanists International, *Freedom of Thought Report 2019: Iran*.

<https://fot.humanists.international/countries/asia-southern-asia/iran/>

⁷ Humanists International, 'UN Human Rights Council condemns punishing apostasy, blasphemy and same-sex relations with death penalty', 30 September 2017.

<https://humanists.international/2017/09/un-human-rights-council-condemns-punishing-apostasy-blasphemy-sex-relations-death-penalty/>