

June 10, 2008

APRO welcomes Australia's voice against religious persecution

The Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations (APRO) welcomes the Australian Government's statement of concern about the recent arrest of Baha'i leaders in Iran and the continuing discrimination and harassment of the Iranian Baha'is on the grounds of their religion.

APRO's Baha'i community representative, Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, said six of the seven members of the "Friends in Iran", the national coordinating group for Baha'is in Iran, were arrested in early morning raids on 14 May 2008. The seventh member has been in detention since 5 March 2008.

"They do not have legal representation, have not been allowed to communicate with their families, and their whereabouts is presently unknown," Dr Mobini-Kesheh said.

APRO Convenor, Professor Abd Malak said APRO shared the Government's deep concern for these Baha'i leaders, made in a recent public statement.

"Freedom of religion and belief is a right guaranteed to all people under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party," Prof Malak said.

"Their detention is in clear breach of the rights to which they are entitled under international law," he said.

"They must be allowed to communicate with their lawyers and their families, and their place of detention and the exact charges brought against them must be made known," he said.

"Members of APRO call on the Iranian authorities to release the Baha'i leaders, if they are not to be charged with a recognisable criminal offence and allowed a fair and prompt trial."

The following members and organisations add their support for APRO's statement and call the Iranian government to respect and protect the right of all Iranians, including Baha'is and other religious minorities, to profess and practise the religion of their choice:

-More-

MEDIA RELEASE

Professor Emeritus Gary Bouma, UNESCO Chair, Inter-religious and Intercultural Relations - Asia Pacific.

Dilip Chirmuley AM, Hindu Society

Eugenia Tsoulis, National Council of Migrant Resource Centres and Migrant Service Agencies

Abeselom Nega, the Federation of African Communities Council

The Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils, Inc.

John Henderson, National Council of Churches in Australia

Jeremy Jones, Executive Council of Australian Jewry

Josie Lacey, The Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
interfaith advisor

Kulbir Singh Malhotra, Sikh Association

Australian Baha'i community

-ends-

Media comment:

Abd Malak, APRO Convenor: 0417 489 066

Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, Australian Baha'i community: 0414 603 145