

Bahá'í - Minority Rights Group

Bahá'í

Bahá'ís in Yemen, who now number around 1,000 people, have long been seen by the state as posing an ideological threat to national security. Persecution for their religious beliefs occurred during the reign of former President Saleh and continues to the present-day.

Current issues

While the Bahá'í faith is distinct to Islam, Judaism and other monotheistic religions, sectarian and religious tensions – in particular those linked to geopolitical rivalries with neighbouring countries – have contributed to their persecution. In 2013, for example, Hamed Kamal bin Haydara, a Bahá'í Yemeni, was arrested and accused of being an Iranian citizen working on behalf of the Israeli government to proselytize the Bahá'í faith.

Antipathy towards Israel has also played a role in shaping attitudes towards Yemen's Bahá'í community due to the location of the Bahá'í World Centre, the global spiritual headquarters, in Israel. In January 2015, after more than a year of detention without trial and having reportedly endured torture by prison guards, a formal indictment was issued. Yet as of February 2017, Haydara, facing the death penalty, saw his trial postponed for the seventh time, underscoring doubts among many outside observers about the existence of evidence of his alleged crimes.

Their situation has also deteriorated since the intensification of Yemen's civil conflict, despite community efforts to avoid taking sides among any of the warring parties. A number of incidents have involved Houthi forces. In August 2016, Houthi security personnel raided a Bahá'í youth workshop in Sana'a, arresting 65 people including women and children, and detaining 27 Bahá'í attendees without charge. Most were reportedly freed under the condition of pledging to refrain from organizing or partaking in any activities publically drawing attention to the Bahá'í faith. At the end of November 2016, the last detainee remained in custody without having been charged or given access to a lawyer. In early September 2016, authorities raided two community service organizations in Sana'a founded by Bahá'í members, shutting the buildings, confiscating documents, and arresting staff. Personal property including computers and passports were also seized from the homes of three Bahá'ís. In April 2017, reports emerged of further crackdowns against the community by Houthi forces in Sana'a, with more than 20 Bahá'í at risk of imminent detention.

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Peoples Under Threat map

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