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***Statement for the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues  
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The right to work, under international law, includes being allowed the opportunity to earn a living through work that individuals freely choose or accept. Governments must safeguard this right and guarantee that it is exercised without discrimination based on race, sex, origin or status, language, opinion, religion or belief.

Some States, however, do just the opposite. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the authorities are carrying out a systematic plan to prevent adherents of the Bahá'í Faith from earning a livelihood. Their methods include:

- banning Bahá'ís from employment in the public sector
- threatening and harassing employers to make them fire Baha'is in private sector jobs
- refusing to issue or to renew business and work licences
- pressuring Muslims so they stop awarding contracts and doing business with members of this minority
- pressuring landlords to refuse to rent properties or renew leases for Bahá'ís
- ordering the destruction of farmlands and livestock
- forcing banks to refuse loans and other banking services
- denying access to higher education, including technical and vocational training, to reduce their chances of employment
- prohibiting Bahá'ís from working in 25 different trades and businesses, based on orders from the Public Places Supervision Office, a government bureau in charge of morality.

The fact that this discrimination is official government policy has been clear since 1993, when the former UN Special Representative obtained and published a copy of an Iranian government memorandum on “the Bahá'í question”. Still in effect today, its provisions explicitly state that Iranians must be denied employment if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís, and in any case must only be permitted “a modest livelihood”.

In his report to the General Assembly on Iran this year, the UN Secretary General criticized the government's failure to protect the rights of minorities such as the Bahá'í, Sufi, Baluch and Kurdish communities. He stated that: “Members of unrecognized religions, in particular the Baha'i, who comprise the country's largest non-Muslim religious minority, face multiple forms of discrimination and harassment, including denial of employment, Government benefits and access to higher education.”

The Iranian Bahá'ís seek the freedom to learn and work in order to serve their homeland and its people. We call for Iran to lift the restrictions that exclude Bahá'ís from effective participation in economic life, so that they can fully contribute to the progress of their nation.