

## International Liberty Association Newsletter

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### EDITORIAL

In our January newsletter, we were very pleased to be able to tell you how our efforts and campaigns, related to establishing justice for the 1988 massacre of more than 30,000 prisoners in Iran, were being rewarded by a court case in Sweden against Hamid Nuri, one of the officials at the time. This is proving a landmark case, with far reaching consequences plus immediate impact, as the court proceedings are being live streamed so people watching, many of them inside Iran itself, are becoming aware of the true facts of this horrific period, the very existence of which had been suppressed and denied for so many years.

And, as 2022 gathers pace, we are delighted to see that our coordinated efforts are bearing more fruit, further evidence that the curve of history is at last moving towards justice, heralding an end to decades of impunity, as we witness more people, identified as perpetrators of crimes against humanity in Iran and Syria, being arrested on European soil, brought to trial and convicted for their human rights violations, in courts established in those countries.

In January, we also witnessed the adoption of a very damning UN resolution on the human rights situation in Iran. This is welcomed, but needs to translate into positive action, such as the re-imposition of UN sanctions and establishing a formal investigation into the 1988 massacre and also the November 2019 uprising in which 1,500 were killed.

Meanwhile, inside Iran, hundreds of protests and demonstrations are continuing across the country on a daily basis, despite all attempts by security forces to prevent them and brutal repression of the protestors ... *continued on p.2*

### UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION CONDEMNS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN IRAN



In its 76th session, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the Iranian regime's human rights abuses. Passed with 78 affirmative votes, this is the 68th UN resolution on the human rights situation in Iran since the

mullahs rose to power in 1979.

The resolution expresses serious concern at the "alarmingly high frequency of the imposition and carrying-out of the death penalty", "widespread and systematic use ... *continued on p.2*

### TEACHERS' PROTEST IN 116 CITIES ACROSS 30 PROVINCES



Teachers and educators held another round of their nationwide demonstrations on Thursday, 13 January 2022. They held their nationwide protests and gatherings despite massive security measures and the heavy presence of security forces and plainclothes agents. By noon, teachers

reported their nationwide demonstrations from 116 cities in 30 provinces.

In Tehran, they gathered outside the mullahs' parliament. In the provincial capitals, they gathered outside the general departments of education, and in smaller cities and towns, they ... *continued on p.3*



## UN General Assembly Resolution condemns Human Rights abuses in Iran

continued from p.1

of arbitrary arrests and detentions”, “deliberately denying prisoners access to adequate medical treatment and supplies”, “appalling acts committed by prison guards at Evin prison”, “harassment, intimidation, and persecution, including abductions, arrests, and executions, of political opponents, human rights defenders”, “arbitrary arrest and detention, and torture and

other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against peaceful protesters” and “the use of torture to extract confessions, and cases of suspicious deaths in custody”.

The resolution reiterates “the importance of credible, independent and impartial investigations in response to all cases of serious human rights violations... including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, and destruction of evidence in relation to such violations”.

The UNGA resolution also calls for

an end to “impunity for such violations”.

The resolution comes at a time when the world is becoming more aware of flagrant human rights abuses in Iran. An ongoing court in Sweden is putting the spotlight on the massacre of 30,000 Iranian political prisoners in 1988. The regime’s new president, Ebrahim Raisi, is known for his role in the 1988 massacre and other atrocities against dissidents and ordinary Iranians, which has caused concern among human rights organizations and activists across the globe.

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## Editorial continued from p.1

when they gather. Men and women, from all walks of life, have thrown away their fear as they courageously voice their grievances and make clear their feelings about the regime that controls their lives. In this newsletter we focus on the latest nationwide protest of teachers who should be respected as the lifeblood of the nation, but instead are paid well below the poverty line and subjected to much deprivation and injustice. Many who have stood up for their rights are currently in prison rather than free to educate the children of Iran. Solidarity comes to them from educational organisations across the world.

A major part of our effort is to raise awareness of the reality of life in Iran, to gain the release of prisoners of conscience and stop executions. We are forever grateful to the brave men and women in Iran who take risks to collect information and pass it on to us to help us in this work.

We are pleased to report that the greater visibility of the people protesting inside Iran, together with the activities, rallies, demonstrations and meetings that we and others organise to inform the world, have caused the Iranian regime to take a step back, however small, with the release of a number of prisoners during this period.

Sadly, others have been transferred without notice to unknown locations and there are brave men and women whose lives are in danger because of their defence of the human rights of those in Iran’s prisons.

So we must step up our efforts, to save the lives of more people and end the suffering of their families.

A very good way to help would be writing to your MPs urging them to ask the government to make addressing human rights violations a precondition for any negotiations with the Iranian regime.

Undoubtedly, the Iranian people will never forget your kindness and support in these momentous times.



## Teachers protest in 116 cities across 30 provinces *continued from p.1*

assembled outside the department of education.

The teachers' nationwide demonstrations and rallies had been called for in advance.

During these protest rallies in 116 cities the teachers chanted: "Free all imprisoned teachers", "Teachers, rise up to eliminate discrimination", "We heard too many hollow promises, but did not see any justice", "The government betrays, the parliament supports", "Teachers cry out for your rights", "Teacher dies but won't accept humiliation", "Teachers are in prison, thieves are at large", "Free education for Iran's children".

One of the teachers said in a speech to the rally: "For forty-three years, a thousand people have ruled all economic, political, military and cultural aspects of this country, and their job is only to suppress, steal and destroy the culture and economy and all the assets of Iran".

In Ahvaz, the State Security Force attacked and brutalized the teachers. They arrested six teachers in Ahvaz, four teachers in Mashhad, three in Bushehr, and several in Tehran and Shiraz.

Most teachers have very difficult lives with wages that are around a quarter to a third of the poverty line. Teachers with permanent employment receive an average salary of 4 million Tomans a month (about £70). Teachers with temporary contracts receive between one and two million Tomans a month (about £18-£35). The poverty line in Iran sits at 12 million Tomans (about £210), and the official inflation rate is approximately 50%.

In their nationwide demonstrations, Iranian teachers have been demanding the implementation of the Teachers Ranking Plan. In reaction to their widespread protests, the clerical regime had the parliament adopt an incomplete plan on 15 December 2021, after more than a decade of foot-dragging. No budget, however, has been allocated to implement the plan. Even if implemented, the small amount of pay rise will do nothing to offer economic relief.

Therefore, with a maximum salary of 6.5 million Tomans (£114), all school-teachers will remain 50% below the poverty line.

On Monday, 17 January 2022, the Guardian Council returned the Teachers Ranking bill to the parliament.

"Although the government announced in parliament that it would accept the financial burden to implement the rank-

ing of teachers, it is not accepting it now" said Monadi Sefidan, chair of the parliamentary education and research committee. (The state-run tejaratnews.com – 20 January 2022)

He added, "The Guardian Council held the bill for about 20 days, but the government did not submit a letter accepting the financial burden for the implementation of the ranking bill (during this period). The government had verbally accepted the budget for this bill during an open session of parliament. The issue had also been discussed in the meeting of the heads of the three branches ... but, apparently, the first vice president has not signed to accept the bill's financial burden."

Iranian teachers have been waiting for years and demanding the approval and implementation of the Teachers Ranking Plan, which calls for raising teachers' salaries to an acceptable standard, hoping to improve their living conditions. However, the Iranian regime has failed to allocate the funds needed to implement the plan.

**The World Federation of Teachers' Associations** and other education staff representing 178 countries and territories around the world issued a statement supporting the teachers' and educators' protests in Iran, stating: "Education International and its member organizations urge the government of Iran to allow teachers to exercise their right to their fair demands and the release of their fellow prisoners without fear of violence or arbitrary arrest".

Currently, one of the union leaders and a number of teachers are in prison.

Teachers, as one of the most organized sectors of the country, have been holding large-scale protest rallies for years, expressing various demands, including fair wages, freedom of teachers' activists, health insurance and retirement benefits, and an end to discrimination in the education system.

**The German Education and Science Union**, which consists of teachers and other German trade unions, is one of the largest industrial confederations of unions in Germany. They too expressed their support for



Iranian teachers:

"We strongly condemn the imprisonment of Iranian education union activists and call for their immediate and unconditional release. Dozens of Iranians defending teachers' rights are currently in jail" said **David Edwards, secretary general of the Education and Science Union**. "This shows that freedom of expression, peaceful demonstrations and rallies, and independent trade union work are criminalized in Iran".



**"The Australian Education Union**, a member of Education International, expresses the strongest solidarity with the huge teacher strikes and protest rallies in Iran last Thursday, 13 January, in 75 cities in 29 Provinces in Iran. These protests were called at three days' notice and mobilised over 30,000 teachers.

We join with teachers and other trade unions to condemn the Iranian regime for violations of teachers' rights to secure employment, to be paid properly and on time, to their proper retirement pay, and to respect for seniority in their promotions. We especially call for the release from detention of all teacher leaders who have been arrested including the 20 who were arrested last Thursday and over the weekend. Instead of repressing teachers and their unions, the government of Iran should immediately sit down to negotiate a resolution to the teachers' grievances."





## BAKTASH ABTIN, KURDISH WRITER AND POLITICAL PRISONER – HIS UNJUST IMPRISONMENT BECOMES A DEATH SENTENCE



**Baktash Abtin**, poet, filmmaker, and winner of the Pen/Barbey Award passed away after contracting Covid-19 in prison and there being deliberate delay in transporting him to hospital.

**The Writers' Guild of Iran** had previously issued a statement expressing concern over the general condition of Baktash Abtin and called for the release of political prisoners and writers. The centre said in a statement that the current situation of Mr Abtin had worsened, due to lack of timely medical care and hospitalisation, and that the government of Iran was responsible for the consequences of anything that happened to imprisoned writers, especially Baktash Abtin. The government has deliberately played with the lives of political prisoners who must be released before any catastrophe occurs. We all know that these writers have not committed any crime that requires punishment.

Last month, three writers, members of the Writers' Guild of Iran, **Baktash Abtin**, **Reza Khandan (Mahabadi)**, and **Keyvan Bazhen**, contracted Covid-19 in Evin Prison. The condition of two of them, Abtin and Khandan, was worrying. Despite the obvious symptoms of the disease, the regime's prison guards left Abtin in the ward without any effective treatment for several days until finally he was taken to the hospital overnight, without the knowledge of his

cellmates and family, when he was barely alive. But government officials did not stop harassing him and tied the same half-dead body to the bed in Taleghani Hospital in Tehran, with shackles and chains, in the presence of heavy security forces. This eventually led to the death of this political prisoner.

The reason for the arrest, imprisonment and then the deliberate delay in taking Abtin to the hospital was his anti-government stance. He said in his last speech:

"I think the missing link in the situation of our contemporary society is that we have enough good poets, filmmakers, artists, today, what we lack is that a group of people stand up and fight. People to stand and demand their rights. A group of people to stand up and

persevere. The virtue of perseverance, struggle and endurance, this is the contemporary missing link of my country. In this way, I would like to sacrifice my sweet soul with authority for the freedom of my country today."

"Our worst panic occurred today, as we mourn Baktash Abtin's completely preventable death. Covid is a natural killer, but the Iranian government has helped and supported Abtin's death at every turn" said **PEN America's Chief Executive Officer Suzanne Nossel**. "Evin Prison in Tehran was a permanent hotbed of disease, and his unjust imprisonment turned into an effective death sentence since September last year. Abtin was denied medical treatment, his comorbidities were ignored and at times he was shackled to his bed."

Nossel continued: "Abtin, was a true champion of free expression and a steadfast leader in the Iranian literary and human rights communities. When this brave role put a target on his back, he did not flinch or hide. We will remember Abtin as a gifted poet and filmmaker, but also as a courageous thinker and an honorable advocate."

The fact is that the death of prisoners due to lack of medical care in Iranian prisons is a long-standing issue. In June of this year, **Sasan Niknafs**, a political prisoner imprisoned in the Greater Tehran Prison, was kept in the prison's medical ward without proper medical care, despite his serious physical condition, and eventually lost his life.

Last year, **Behnam Mahjoubi**, a Gonabadi dervish, was transferred from Evin Prison to a hospital due to drug poisoning and died on February 24 in Tehran's Loghman Hospital. Recently, **Adel Kianpour**, a prisoner detained in Sheiban prison in Ahvaz, lost his life in very dubious circumstances.



Suzanne Nossel of PEN America



## CHILD RIGHTS ACTIVIST, ATENA DAEMI, RELEASED FROM PRISON



On 24 January 2022, civil activist **Atena Daemi** was released from Lakan Prison in Rasht. She was serving her sentence in Evin Prison from December 2016 until March 2021 when she was suddenly transferred at night to Lakan Prison, far from her family.

In May 2015, Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced her to 14 years in prison on charges of “assembly and collusion to act against

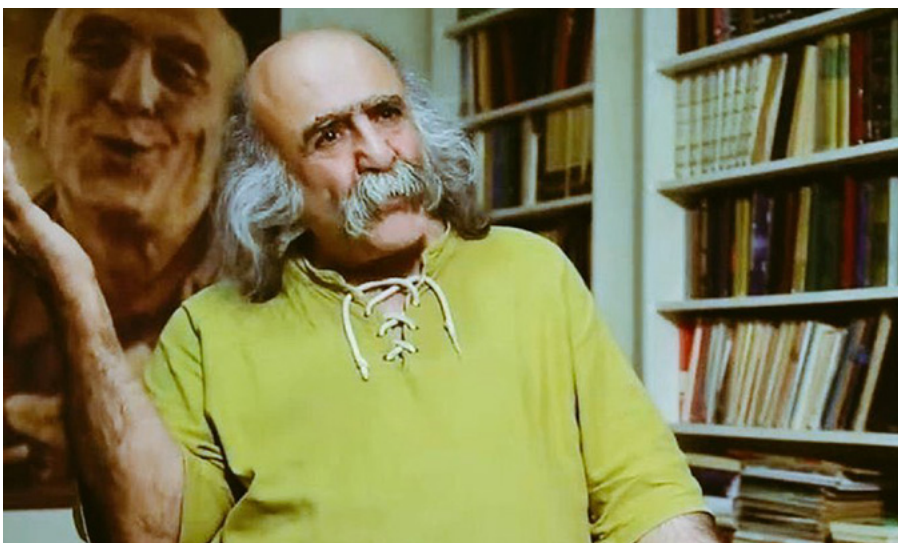
national security” and “offensive statements against the supreme leader”. This verdict was reduced to 7 years on appeal.

Daemi began serving her sentence in 2016 in Evin Prison. In 2018, while still in jail, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran opened a new case against her and **Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee** on a new charge of “membership in anti-regime groups”. She was

sentenced to an additional three years and seven months and the verdict was upheld on appeal.

In July 2020, she was sentenced to two years and 74 lashes in another new case, this time opened by Branch 24 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran. Her request for a retrial was dismissed. During this time, she and her family were consistently pressured by judicial and security forces.

## MAGAZINE EDITOR TRANSFERRED FROM EVIN TO AN UNKNOWN LOCATION



**Keyvan Samimi**, the editor of **Iran Farda Magazine** and a member of the **Iranian Writers' Association**,

was transferred from Evin Prison to an unidentified location on Wednesday, 19 January. He was removed from his ward

on the pretext of addressing a problem with his phone card, but then transferred to an unknown location.

On 20 April 2020, in a trial in absentia, Mr Samimi was sentenced to three years imprisonment on the charge of “assembly and collusion to act against national security”. The verdict was upheld on appeal, but was reduced to two years in the retrial.

A forensic medical assessment concluded that he should be granted “intolerance of punishment”, which was rejected by the court after four months.

The court, instead, ordered his transfer to an exile prison away from his family and friends.





## DOWNING OF THE UKRAINIAN PASSENGER PLANE: A CRIME GONE UNANSWERED

Canada and other nations say their patience is running out with Iran over the downing of the Ukrainian passenger plane.

On Thursday, 4 January 2022, Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and Britain said they could consider new steps in line with international law against Iran if it failed to respond by 5 January 2022 to demands for reparations after the downing of the Ukrainian passenger plane last year.

Ontario's Superior Court of Justice had announced its findings on 3 January 2022, that the destruction of the commercial plane was an intentional act of terrorism. The court stated that the plaintiffs had established their case that the act of shooting down the plane was a terrorist act. The trial was based on complaints by six family members of flight PS752's victims, after which the Iranian regime was ordered to pay \$107 million in compensation.

The defendants in this case are Ali Khamenei, the IRGC, the General Staff of the Armed Forces and several senior military officials, including Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Hossein Salami, Commander of the IRGC, Amir Ali Hajizadeh, Commander of the Air Force; and Abdul Rahim Mousavi, Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

Iran's Civil Aviation organization said that, based on the information retrieved from the black box of the Ukrainian



passenger plane, the pilots were still safe and in control of the aircraft after the first missile was fired. The question here is, why was the second missile fired? "All variables indicate that the aircraft was in normal flight condition" said Touraj Dehghani Zanganeh, head of the Civil Aviation organization in Iran. The aircraft's black box recorded the conversations inside the cockpit for 19 seconds after the first missile exploded. The recordings indicated that the crew still had control of the plane until the last moment. The audio recording stopped after 19 seconds. Then 25 seconds after the first explosion, the second missile struck. There is no analysis of the effects caused by the second missile in the black box (The state-run Mehr news agency – August 23, 2020).

The families of the victims who were on the Ukrainian passenger plane shot down by the IRGC have continued their protests in a coordinated fashion, forming an association.

**Hamed Esmaeilion**, who lost his wife and daughter on the flight, confirmed at an online conference on 24 November 2021, that the international response to the downing of the Ukrainian passenger plane

had not been "decisive". He said, "Canada and other members of the international community must declare the entire IRGC a terrorist organization". He noted that the evidence shows that the downing of the Ukrainian passenger plane was deliberate.

**The Association of Families of Flight PS752** believes that the Iranian government was on full military alert yet kept the country's airspace open to passenger flights. The government used those flights as human shields against possible US attacks. On 28 November 2021, the victims' families protested while under security forces' siege. The protesters chanted, "Down with the criminals, down with the Revolutionary Guards", and also "Down with Khamenei". They marched towards Tehran's military court, holding up large photos of their loved ones.

On the eve of the second anniversary of the downing of the Ukrainian passenger plane by IRGC missiles, the families of martyrs from the November 2019 uprising and other families calling for justice, expressed their condolences. They used the hashtag #IWillLightACandleToo to commemorate the anniversary on 2 January 2022.

Meanwhile, the government's security institutions have increased pressure on Flight PS752 families.

"Law enforcement officers personally went to families' residences and warned them about the anniversary" according to an informed source.





## NEWS IN BRIEF

### SHADI GILAK, A CIVIL ACTIVIST SENT TO PRISON



**Shadi Gilak**, a civil activist living in Tehran, was sent to Evin Prison on Saturday, 8 January 2022, to serve a one-year sentence.

Shadi Gilak was tried by the Revolutionary Court of Tehran and sentenced to one year in prison on charges of “propaganda against the regime”.

Shadi Gilak’s husband, **Arash Johari**, is also serving his sentence in Evin Prison. Arash Johari is a labour activist. The Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced him to 16 years in prison.

### ZAHRA MOHAMMADI TO SERVE A FIVE-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE



**Zahra Mohammadi**, a 30-year-old Kurdish language teacher, was transferred to the women’s ward of the Sanandaj Correctional Centre on Saturday, 8 January 2022, to serve a five-year prison sentence.

When the public learned of the transfer of this Kurdish language teacher to prison, dozens of the residents of Sanandaj gathered outside the Ministry of Justice to express their anger.

In front of the prison, Zahra Mohammadi met a large crowd who had

gone to bid her farewell. She expressed her gratitude and in her brief remarks said, “I did not expect that you come here to be in my company as I am going to prison. This is truly heart-warming and I assure you that during all the moments of my prison time, the enemy will regret pinning their hopes on incarcerating me. I thank you again and I reiterate that the enemy will regret pinning their hopes on my incarceration.”

The Supreme Court has turned down Ms Mohammadi’s appeal to revise her sentence according to Article 477.

Zahra Mohammadi, 30, lives in Sanandaj. She has a master’s degree in Geopolitics from the University of Birjand.

Agents of the Intelligence Department broke into Ms Mohammadi’s residence on 23 May 2019, and arrested her. She was conditionally and temporarily released after six months on a bail of 700 million Tomans (approx. £12,500).

In July 2020, Zahra Mohammadi was sentenced to 10 years in prison on the charge of “forming a group against national security”. Later in October, her sentence was commuted to five years.

### HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER MARYAM KABIRI ARRESTED IN TEHRAN



Agents of the Ministry of Intelligence arrested high school teacher **Maryam Kabiri** as she was leaving her home in Tehran on Sunday, 13 January 2022, the Coordinating Council of the Educators’ Associations announced today.

Maryam Kabiri works as a teacher for exceptional students in Tehran’s 2nd educational district.

The Intelligence Ministry agents ransacked Maryam Kabiri’s house and confiscated her and her husband’s mobile phones. Then, they transferred Ms Kabiri to Evin Prison. During her detention, Maryam Kabiri has contacted her family

only once for a few minutes.

Maryam Kabiri’s relatives said she was seriously ill, but the 6th Branch of the Evin Investigation Department has refused to deliver any medicine to her, despite her family’s insistence.

### RAPPER FINED AND SENTENCED TO SIX MONTHS SUSPENDED IMPRISONMENT



The Revolutionary Court of Shahin-Shahr sentenced **Tomaj Salehi** to six months in prison and a fine. The verdict was suspended for one year. Salehi is a rapper who is well-known for his protest songs.

According to human rights observers, Salehi was exonerated from the charge of “provoking violence and insurrection”.

On 12 September 2021, Tomaj Salehi was arrested by security forces at his home and nine days later, released on bail from Dastgerd Prison.

### TEACHERS’ TRADE ASSOCIATION MEMBER SENTENCED TO 4½ YEARS IN PRISON



Jafar Ebrahimi, a member of the Iranian Teachers’ Trade Association, was sentenced to four years and six months in prison. The court notified Ebrahimi about the sentence on 31 January. He was charged for “spreading lies” and “propaganda against the regime” and “acting against national security”. The trial was held in November 2021.





## RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS FOLLOWING NUMEROUS CAMPAIGNS AND PRESSURE FROM PUBLIC OPINION



**Luqman Molani** and **Khoman Ahmadi**, residents of Mahabad, were released from prison in this city.

Also, 9 Christians were released from Evin prison. These 9 prisoners of conscience were:

**Behnam Akhlaghi, Babak Hosseinzadeh, Abdolreza Ali Haghnejad, Shahrooz Islamdoost, Mehdi Khatibi, Khalil Dehghanpour, Hossein Kadivar, Kamal Namanian and Mohammad Vafadar.**

**Mojgan Kavousi**, a political prisoner, was released from Kachooei



Prison in Karaj.

Eventually the force of conscience and the efforts of all of us to stop the execution and improve the human rights situation and the struggle for the release

of political prisoners will overcome the actions of dictators and human rights violators, as we were successful in saving the lives of many by our actions and widespread campaigns.

## TWO BAHÁ'IS SENT TO PRISON TO SERVE THEIR SENTENCE

On 23 January, two Baha'is, **Farham Sabet** and **Farzan Masoomi**, both residents of Shiraz City, were sent to Adel-Abad Prison to serve their sentence. Earlier, the Revolutionary Court of Shiraz sentenced each to 6 years in prison. This verdict was reduced to two years for each, after appeal.

Farham and Farzan were arrested by security forces in Shiraz in 2016 and after a while, they were released on bail until the end of legal proceedings.

In May 2020, the Revolutionary Court of Shiraz, headed by Judge Mahmood Sadati, sentenced each to 6 years on

the charges of "propaganda against the regime and membership in one of the anti-regime groups". This verdict was reduced for each to two years on appeal.

According to unofficial sources, it is estimated that more than 300,000 Baha'is live in Iran, but because their faith is not considered legitimate by the authorities, the rights of Baha'is in Iran have been systematically violated for years.

This deprivation of the freedom to practice their religion is a breach of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights. The United Nations covenant holds that every person has the right to freedom of religion, freedom of converting religion, as well as freedom of expression, individually or collectively, openly or secretly.



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