2 December 2014

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
Head of the Judiciary
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Your Excellency,

I write to you on behalf of the American Physical Society’s (APS) Committee on International Freedom of Scientists (CIFS) regarding several educators from the Baha’i Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) who were arrested and detained in a raid of over 30 homes in May 2011. The APS is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the advancement of physics. The Society is the largest organization of physicists in the United States with over 50,000 members worldwide. CIFS is charged by the APS with monitoring the rights of scientists, to insure that they may freely pursue the knowledge that can be of benefit to their countries as well as to the global community and humanity.

CIFS has followed the situation concerning the educators of the BIHE for several years. We are troubled that individuals who have committed themselves to educating Baha’i youth in Iran have been imprisoned solely for their religious beliefs. We do not understand why any group of people, who because of their religious beliefs, should be restricted from participating in the secular activities of the country they reside in. This freedom of participation, which is independent of religious belief, is a tenet of the U.N.’s Declaration of Human Rights, for which Iran is a signatory. Iran’s restrictive treatment of the Baha’i community is also counter to the Golden Rule, adhered to by the world’s principal religions including the Moslem religion, which is to treat your neighbor as you would want your neighbor to treat you.

In March 2012, CIFS wrote to the Iranian government to urge it to reconsider its policy of barring Baha’is from pursuing education and to release the imprisoned BIHE educators. Today, we write to reiterate this request. Iran’s Baha’i community has a lot to offer to Iran and Iran has much to gain from a population that is fully free to pursue higher education. Hence, we call on the Iranian government to unconditionally release from prison the following educators who are still detained:

CIFS 2014
Chair
HERBERT L. BERK
University of Texas at Austin

ALESSANDRA BUONANNO
University of Maryland, College Park

JOHN GILLESPIE
C.U.N.Y.

KOTIK LEE

SAMUEL MARKSON
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

PETER S. RISEBOROUGH
Temple University

MARGARITA RYUTOVA
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

HOSSEIN SADEGHPOUR
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

PETER SCHMELCHER
University of Hamburg

VLADIMIR ZELEVINSKY
Michigan State University

Liaisons from the APS:
AMY K. FLATTEN
Director of International Affairs

MICHELE IRWIN
International Programs Administrator

Sincerely,

Herbert L. Berk
Chair, Committee on International Freedom of Scientists

Cc: Mr. Mohammad Farhadi, Minister of Education
Mohammad Javad Larijani, Head of the Human Rights Council in the Judiciary
Gholamhossein Dehghani, Ambassador and Charge d’Affaires a.i. of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations