

**His Excellency Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Supreme Leader of the
Islamic Republic of Iran
Tehran, Iran**

Subject: Statement by Business and Economic Leaders – Economic Freedom for Baha'is in Iran

Your Excellency,

As business leaders and economists, we are deeply concerned about increasing harassment and discrimination against Baha'i business owners in Iran. We view the recent spate of business closures by Iranian authorities not only as a violation of religious freedom and human rights, but also as an affront to the freedom to do business.

Since October 2014, at least eighty Baha'i-owned businesses in Kerman, Rafsanjan and Sari were sealed by Iranian authorities because their owners had temporarily closed their doors in observance of a Baha'i holy day. While many have since been reopened, authorities have also attempted to force some Baha'i business owners to sign pledges affirming that they will not close their shops on Baha'i holy days in the future.

These actions are particularly troubling because of the context in which they take place. As Iran's largest non-Muslim religious minority, Baha'is are subject to systematic repression – including severe economic pressure. They are barred from government positions and private sector employers are pressured not to hire them, so small businesses and start-ups have become their primary means of livelihood. Shutting down these shops and businesses will only tighten the economic stranglehold on the small and peaceful Baha'i community.

Business can be a tremendous force for good, helping to build strong communities and prosperous nations. But the opportunity to do business must be open to everyone. Baha'is, like all Iranian citizens, must be free to do business without discrimination.

We urge the Iranian government to stop closing Baha'i-owned businesses and to allow Baha'i citizens full participation in Iran's economic and social life. As indicated by the progress achieved between Iran and the P5+1 nations, Iran may soon be much more deeply engaged with foreign business partners. We urge the Iranian government to ensure that, as it welcomes Western companies into its economy, it will also guarantee the economic freedom of its own citizens.

Sincerely,

1. Dagoberto Garcia, CEO, Telcabos Telecomunicações, São Paulo-SP, Brazil
2. Antonio Galvão, CEO, IPQ Tecnologia, Salvador-BA, Brazil
3. Reinaldo Gavioli, CEO, Maxcel Materiais Elétricos, Santo Andre-SP, Brazil
4. Gentry Underwood, Dropbox, USA
5. Larry Estrada, V. P., Goldman Sachs
6. Diego Rodriguez, IDEO, USA

7. Thiess Buettner, Professor of Economics, Friedrich-Alexander-Universitaet, Germany
8. Soheil Abedian, Executive Chairman, Sunland Group, Australia
9. Douglas Allen, Associate Professor of Management and Director of International MBA Program, University of Denver, USA
10. Nava Ashraf, Associate Professor, Harvard Business School, USA
11. José Paulo Cavalieri, Diretor, Klaruss Tecnologia, São Paulo –SP, Brazil
12. Dr. David Colwell, Senior Lecturer, School of Banking & Finance, University of New South Wales, Australia
13. Marivaldo Costa, Diretor, TM Solutions, Sao Paulo-SP, Brazil
14. Tim Crommelin, Executive Chairman, Morgans Financial Limited, Australia
15. Andre Denis, CEO, AJC Teleinformatica, Santo André-SP, Brazil
16. Mary Fish, Professor of Economics, Emeritus University of Alabama, USA
17. Ana Paula Fontes, Diretora, Lantele Telecomunicações, Rio de Janeiro-RJ, Brazil
18. Sergio Gigante, COO, Tecnocomp Soluções EM TI, São Bernardo do Campo-SP, Brazil
19. Bryan Graham, Associate Professor of Economics, University of California, Berkeley, USA
20. Jonathan Houghton, Professor of Economics, Suffolk University, USA
21. Satish Kumar Jain, Professor of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
22. Paulo Jubilut, CEO, Remaster Floor & Ceiling Solutions, São Paulo-SP, Brazil
23. Amitabh Kundu, Professor of Economics, Centre for the Study of Regional Development Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
24. Jordy Leiser, StellaService
25. Wai Man Liu, Associate Professor, College of Business and Economics, Australian National University, Australia
26. Fabio Lourenção, CEO, Interface Soluções Tecnológicas, São Paulo-SP, Brazil
27. Ciro Lucchesi, CEO, Recicabos, Recicabos-PE, Brazil
28. Adam Ludwin, Chain, USA
29. Shirin Mahalati, Professor of Economics, Devi Ahilyabai University, India
30. Renato Marquart, CIO, Austacem Telecom System, São Paulo-SP, Brazil
31. Shahruz Mohtadi, Associate Professor of Economics, Suffolk University, USA
32. Fariborz Moshirian, Professor and Director of the Institute of Global Finance, School of Banking and Finance, University of New South Wales, Australia
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34. Daniel Novaes, NATIV
35. Ricardo Okamura, CEO, Added Solutions, Brazil
36. Claudenir Oliveira, Diretor, Zeittec Conectividade, Curitiba-PR, Brazil
37. Peter Pham, Associate Professor, School of Banking & Finance, University of New South Wales, Australia
38. Farhad Rassekh, Professor of Economics, University of Hartford, USA
39. Eder Rodrigues, Diretor, Net Telecom, Sao Bernardo do Campo-SP, Brazil
40. Julian Shapiro, Libscore
41. Orlando Silva, CEO, Multirede Distribuidora, Belo Horizonte-MG, Brazil
42. Johnny Steindorff, Focus Investments
43. Alexandre Sulacov, CEO, Tecwork Teleinformática, São Paulo-SP, Brazil

44. Mauricio Takashima, Diretor, Delta Cable, Curitiba-PR, Brazil
45. Flavio Tomsic, Diretor, Klint Distribuidora de Soluções, Santo Andre-SP, Brazil
46. Bayan Towfiq, Flowroute, USA
47. Mark M. Towfiq, UserTesting
48. David Tuerck, Professor of Economics, Suffolk University, USA
49. T. K. Vaji, Professor of Economics, Devi Ahilyabai University, India
50. Eduardo Viana, CEO, Horus Telecom, Brasilia-DF, Brazil
51. James West, Professor of Economics and Management, Moravian College, USA
52. Payam Zamani, Reply! inc. & Shout.gd
53. Ariel Blumenkranc, Advent International
54. Jason Zein, Associate Professor, School of Banking and Finance, University of New South Wales, Australia

cc:

His Excellency, Hasan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

His Excellency, Gholamali Khoshroo, Ambassador to the United Nations of the Islamic Republic of Iran