

## History and Overview

Subsequent to the 1979 revolution in Iran, the newly established Islamic government began a systematic persecution of the Bahá'ís which grossly violated numerous human rights. One of these violations included the banning of Bahá'í students and faculty from universities and colleges. Since then, despite various appeals by the Iranian Bahá'ís and the international community, very few acceptable measures have been taken by the government to remove or ease these barriers and restore the birthright of Bahá'í youth to acquire higher education. In fact, the steady persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran has only intensified in recent years.

In 1987, after failed attempts to persuade the government to admit qualified Bahá'í students to Iranian universities, the Bahá'í community of Iran rallied its forces and expertise and established the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE). Founded on the spirit of sacrifice and volunteerism, BIHE quickly grew to meet the pressing needs of its inherent community and was soon able to provide its youth with a new means for access to higher education.

Professors and researchers in Iran who had been discharged from their universities and colleges for no reason other than their membership in the Bahá'í faith dedicated themselves to the BIHE project that has evolved from a compensatory institution to a university with academic standards not only on par with the Iranian public university system, but also equaling the standards adopted by universities in the West.

Since its beginning, BIHE faculty and students have consistently faced stifling and oppressive conditions. They have been forced to operate under the radar in discreet locations, have been subject to numerous arrests, periodic raids, mass confiscation of school equipment (photocopiers, faxes, computers and other materials) and general harassment. Furthermore, the Iranian government has refused to recognize any undergraduate degree completed through BIHE, denying graduates the certification required to obtain admission into graduate studies and to qualify for employment in many fields. Worse yet, it refuses to recognize graduate degrees obtained by BIHE graduates from universities outside Iran.

Recently, however, through persistent and dedicated effort, BIHE graduates are increasingly admitted to universities in North America, Europe, Australia and India, and are being recognized for their high level of academic achievement and the quality of their education received at BIHE.

Through the efforts of a committed and growing number of Core Faculty in Iran, and an ever-increasing Affiliated Global Faculty from universities around the world, BIHE has emerged into the 21st century with a strong foothold in the international academic arena. Currently BIHE has a combined faculty and administrative staff of over 955 members, delivering over 1050 courses, in the arts and sciences. Its growing number of partnerships with institutions of higher learning from around the globe serve to strengthen BIHE and open up a world of possibilities to its students.