

Article

Principled Engagement: The Bahá'í Community of Iran's Approach to Social Change

Iqan Shahidi 

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge CB3 9DA, UK;
shahidi.iqan@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the activities of the Bahá'í community in Iran after the Islamic Revolution, challenging the misconception that the community has remained disengaged from societal involvement which arises from a misinterpretation of its principle of non-involvement in partisan politics. Contrary to this belief, the Bahá'í community has been actively engaged in social change through a framework rooted in its principles, which emphasize constructive resilience and non-adversarial strategies. Informed by the Bahá'í teachings, the global Bahá'í experience, and contemporary theories of social change, the community has focused on translating its spiritual principles into practical actions, particularly in community building, social action, and participation in the prevalent discourse of society. These efforts, characterized by a commitment to unity and collaboration, differ from conventional adversarial activism and demonstrate the community's significant yet often overlooked contribution to Iranian society. Despite severe persecution, the Bahá'í community has maintained a principled engagement with social change, challenging the narrative of disengagement and highlighting its ongoing involvement in the life of the nation.

Keywords: Iran; constructive resilience; social transformation; non-violent engagement; community building; social action; public discourse; religious persecution; human rights; BIHE



Academic Editors: Robert H.
Stockman and Moojan Momen

Received: 23 June 2025

Revised: 26 August 2025

Accepted: 27 August 2025

Published: 4 September 2025

Citation: Shahidi, Iqan. 2025. Principled Engagement: The Bahá'í Community of Iran's Approach to Social Change. *Religions* 16: 1149. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16091149>

Copyright: © 2025 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. A Contextualized History

The Bahá'í Faith, a global religion with adherents in over 200 countries, traces its origins to the revolutionary Bábí religion in mid-19th century Persia. The Bábí religion, founded in 1844 by Siyyid `Alí-Muhammad of Shiraz (1819–1850), known as the Báb (“Gate”), heralded the coming of a new era and introduced radical reforms challenging the religious orthodoxy and socio-political structures of Qajar Persia (Buck 2020, pp. 71–74). The Báb proclaimed the imminent arrival of a Promised One who would bring a universal revelation to unify humanity and establish justice (Saiedi 2008, pp. 1–3). His teachings, which signaled a deliberate attempt to improve the status of women, called for a reinterpretation of Islamic law and spiritual renewal and provoked fierce opposition from the Shi'a clergy and the state, culminating in his execution in 1850 (Saiedi 2008, pp. 3–11; Zabihi-Moghaddam 2023). Despite its suppression, the Bábí religion influenced the social and intellectual landscape of Iran, inspiring reformist ideas that impacted the Constitutional Revolution and paving the way for the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith (Amini 2008, 2012a, 2012b; Momen 2025).

In 1863, Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892), a prominent follower of the Báb, declared His Mission, inaugurating a new prophetic dispensation for the modern age (Saiedi 2000). While later

writings clarified His station as *Him Whom God shall make manifest*, the public declaration of this identity unfolded gradually in subsequent years (see [Ghaemmaghami and Vafai 2025](#)). Bahá'u'lláh introduced principles aimed at the spiritual and social transformation of humanity, emphasizing unity, justice, and the equality of all people. The Bahá'í Faith offers a spiritual interpretation of existence that transcends reductionist materialism, addressing humanity's physical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions ([Saiedi 2000](#)). Bahá'u'lláh articulated these ideas in mystical works such as *The Seven Valleys* and *The Four Valleys*, exploring the soul's journey toward God, and in foundational texts like *The Kitáb-i Íqán* (*The Book of Certitude*), which explains progressive revelation as a divine process through which God educates humanity over time. Social justice, the equality of men and women, and the harmony of science and religion are central principles of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. During his exile in 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh addressed letters to world leaders, such as Queen Victoria, Napoleon III, and the Shah of Persia, calling for peace, disarmament, and justice ([Bahá'u'lláh 2022](#)). These letters and other writings laid the groundwork for a vision of global governance and social harmony, rooted in the spiritual and social principles developed in his earlier works ([Saiedi 2000](#)). Beyond these appeals to rulers, Bahá'u'lláh set forth comprehensive laws and goals for individuals and society in *The Kitáb-i Aqdas*, offering a blueprint for a cohesive and progressive social order grounded in universal values ([Ghaemmaghami and Vafai 2025](#)). It addresses issues such as social justice, the importance of education, and the balance between individual freedoms and collective responsibilities, while introducing a visionary framework for collective decision making that resonates with contemporary calls for global governance. Through its inclusive ethos, it envisions a society that transcends national, cultural, and religious divides, establishing a model for unity in diversity and laying the foundation for a civilization defined by equity, cooperation, and shared purpose. The Bahá'í Faith thus stands as both a spiritual path and a framework for fostering global unity and social progress.

The first Bahá'í communities were, in fact, the Bábí communities that embraced the new teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Building upon the transformative momentum initiated by the Báb, these communities underwent a cultural and spiritual evolution with Bahá'u'lláh's revolutionary teachings ([Momen 2015, 2021](#)). From the outset of Bahá'u'lláh's mission and more publicly during his declaration in the Ridván Garden in Baghdad, he emphasized the absolute prohibition of violence and the inherent dignity of all people ([Bahá'u'lláh 2022](#); [Stockman 2020](#), pp. 13–14). Bahá'u'lláh declared that “all created things were immersed in the sea of purification” and deserve to be treated with the highest respect, regardless of their beliefs or backgrounds ([Bahá'u'lláh 1992](#); [Saiedi 2000](#)). Bahá'u'lláh called for universal association, encouraging people to engage with one another in a spirit of friendship and unity.

2. The Emergence of Bahá'í Communities in Iran

These teachings laid the foundation for the emergence of Bahá'í communities in Iran, where individuals from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds came together under this new Faith. In these communities, members prayed collectively, consulted on community matters, and began practicing the transformative principles of the Bahá'í Faith, incorporating values such as justice, equality, and the oneness of humanity into their personal, family, and communal lives ([Momen 2015, 2021](#)).

Bahá'u'lláh's emphasis on peaceful means of conflict resolution became a cornerstone of the Bahá'í community's identity. This principle was vividly demonstrated in Ashgabat, where a Bahá'í was killed in an act of religious persecution. Rather than retaliating, the Bahá'ís pursued justice through legal channels, advocating for fairness within the framework of the existing judicial system. Ultimately, they chose to pardon the perpetrators,

embodying Bahá'u'lláh's teachings of forgiveness and reconciliation (Momen 1991). This commitment to peaceful advocacy and justice continued under the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's son and successor, who further guided the global Bahá'í community, especially the Bahá'í community of Iran during the Constitutional Revolution, in practicing these principles (Yazdani 2014). These examples underscore how the Bahá'í Faith transformed the cultural and moral fabric of its followers, fostering communities characterized by harmony, non-violence, and the pursuit of social justice.

Under 'Abdu'l-Bahá's leadership (1892–1921), the Bahá'í community in Iran underwent a cultural transformation, redefining the role of religion in society. Moving beyond the traditional view of religion as a set of personal rituals and prohibitions, the Bahá'ís embraced a vibrant spiritual paradigm that positioned faith as a catalyst for collective transformation and societal progress. This shift marked a decisive turn toward a proactive engagement with the challenges of their time, guided by Bahá'u'lláh's principles of justice, equality, and unity. The Bahá'í community emerged as a force advocating for progressive reforms, including the equality of men and women, public health, and democratic values such as freedom of religion or belief, the rule of law, tolerance, pluralism, and representative governance (Momen 2008, pp. 94–121). These efforts positioned the Bahá'ís as pioneers of a new vision for religious communities—one in which faith actively contributes to the construction of a just and inclusive society. Their transformative impact on Iranian society demonstrated how spiritual principles, when applied collectively, could challenge entrenched norms and foster the emergence of a more equitable and cohesive social order.

Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957), as the Guardian¹ of the Bahá'í Faith between 1921 to 1957, worked to strengthen the identity of the Bahá'í community in Iran while laying the foundation for democratic structures and values within it. Amidst significant social and political challenges, he developed the Bahá'í administrative order, ensuring that the Iranian Bahá'ís could organize themselves around principles of justice, equality, and collective consultation. By institutionalizing Local and National Spiritual Assemblies², he empowered the grassroots of the Bahá'í community in Iran, enabling them to manage their affairs transparently and inclusively despite external pressures (Buck 2020, pp. 145–54). His emphasis on the rule of law, grounded in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, provided the community with a stable framework to navigate persecution and adversity with dignity. Shoghi Effendi's unwavering commitment to unity in diversity, racial and gender equality, and the elimination of prejudice further strengthened Iranian Bahá'í identity, showcasing their values as a progressive force within Iranian society (Brookshaw and Fazel 2008, p. 130).

During this time, which coincided with the reign of Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979) and Iran's state-driven modernization efforts, the Bahá'ís of Iran, with the hopeful disposition that stemmed from their faith in the promising future of the country—as it was promised in the Bahá'í texts—intensified their contributions to the country's progress.³ Building on its longstanding principles of education, social reform, and civic responsibility, the community promoted trade, industry, and agriculture, while establishing modern schools, advancing scientific and technological education, and supporting public health initiatives (Milani 2008; Brookshaw and Fazel 2008, pp. 122–40; Zabihi-Moghaddam 2013). These efforts aligned with the broader governmental goals of modernization and national prosperity. Remarkably, these contributions were made despite persistent persecution, societal pressures, and systemic injustices, as anti-Bahá'í groups operated with impunity and acts of violence against Bahá'ís often went unpunished (Tavakoli-Targhi 2008).

It is important to note that persecution of the Bahá'í community persisted even during this era, though systematic government-led campaigns were less frequent. There were, however, instances of Bahá'ís being expelled from government offices and facing barriers

to professional advancement (Amini 2019; Arak Machinery Manufacturing Statement n.d.; Farmán Newspaper 1978; Imperial Iranian Air Force 1977; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development 1978; Ministry of Education 1978). At the same time, the Bahá'í emphasis on education and their long-standing dedication to mastering crafts, arts, and various professions enabled many Bahá'ís to excel and make significant contributions to Iran's social, cultural, and economic progress.⁴ This growing prominence of individual Bahá'ís was met with increasing hostility from anti-Bahá'í groups, often supported by religious clerics (Amini 2014). These groups sought to delegitimize the Bahá'ís by leveling moral accusations—alleging, for instance, that they benefited from undue privileges, engaged in sexual promiscuity, or demonstrated disloyalty to the Iranian nation (Yazdani 2017). In certain years, these anti-Bahá'í efforts peaked in the form of collective attacks, killings, and riots in cities and villages. Tragically, such acts were frequently met with government inaction or leniency, with attackers often evading prosecution entirely (Vahman 2019, pp. 109–15). This combination of contributions to Iran's progress by Bahá'ís and the simultaneous campaigns to vilify and harm them highlights a defining tension of this period, painting a complex picture of both resilience and adversity faced by the Bahá'í community in Iran.

3. The Islamic Revolution

As the 1979 Islamic Revolution approached, the Bahá'í community in Iran faced increasing persecution. In the months leading up to the revolution, at least six Bahá'ís were killed in various cities across the country.⁵ Revolutionary forces began systematically attacking Bahá'í centers, destroying them in multiple locations. In Shiraz alone, more than 300 homes belonging to Bahá'ís were set on fire and demolished, while numerous other Bahá'í-owned residences and businesses throughout Iran were similarly targeted, looted, and demolished (Vahman 2019, p. 154). Bahá'ís were subjected to physical violence, including beatings and torture, and faced widespread insults and intimidation in both urban and rural areas. In the weeks immediately preceding the revolution, an additional 500 Bahá'í homes were torched. Concurrently, a statement by Ayatollah Khomeini condemning the Bahá'í community alongside other non-Muslim religious minorities was published in the *Ittilá'át* newspaper, one of Iran's most widely circulated newspapers, further legitimizing and intensifying the attacks (Ittilá'át Newspaper 1979b). This escalation of anti-Bahá'í sentiment and violence occurred within the broader revolutionary upheaval that ultimately led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic. In this context of persecution and disorder, the revolution achieved its victory, bringing to power the very clerics and religious authorities who had played a leading role in inciting hostility against the Bahá'ís and who had been directly or indirectly responsible for acts of violence, including killings, against members of the community.

In the months leading up to the 1979 Islamic Revolution and its aftermath, members of Bahá'í elected institutions across Iran issued numerous statements to the public and governmental authorities.⁶ These statements aimed to dispel misconceptions about the Bahá'í Faith, affirm the community's loyalty to Iran and its laws, and document its historical and ongoing persecution. They also sought to foster a more accurate understanding of Bahá'í principles and appealed to authorities to address the injustices faced by the community. Lacking access to mainstream media, the Bahá'ís used these statements as a rare means of self-defense against widespread misinformation. Meanwhile, anti-Bahá'í rhetoric was actively spread through state media and religious institutions. Deprived of similar platforms, the Bahá'í community relied on these statements to clarify its position and advocate for justice.

While the Bahá'í community and its administrative institutions sought to clarify and respond to the accusations directed against them, an increasing volume of false statements and inflammatory rhetoric targeting the community was disseminated through newspapers and other media outlets. One such example was the declaration by a group of clerics from the Khorasan seminary against the Bahá'ís, issued on 2 March 1979, which represented a co-ordinated effort to incite hostility against the Bahá'ís ([Statement by a Group of Clerics from the Khorasan Seminary Against the Bahá'ís 1979](#)). The day after this statement, newspapers began reporting on alleged anti-revolutionary activities of the Bahá'ís.⁷ In the following days, two prominent ayatollahs issued statements granting permission for the occupation of Bahá'í Centers and seizure of Bahá'í documents ([The Newspaper Áftáb-i Sharq: Ayatollah Qomi and Ayatollah Shirazi Confirmed the Seizure of Bahá'í Centers 1979](#)).

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the Bahá'í community in Iran faced intensified persecution, driven by extremist elements incited by certain Shi'a clerics. A key distinction between the post-revolutionary attacks and those preceding the revolution was the systematic and predominantly state-sponsored nature of the former ([Bahá'í International Community 2023b](#)). In the initial months following the revolution, many prominent Bahá'ís were forcibly disappeared, while others were executed on the basis of false, politically motivated accusations. In August 1980, all nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran were abducted and subsequently disappeared. Following the reconstitution of the Assembly, members of several Local Spiritual Assemblies, including those in Yazd, Tabriz, and Hamadan, were arrested and executed. In January 1982, eight of the nine newly elected members of the National Spiritual Assembly were also arrested and executed ([Bahá'í International Community 2023b](#)). In response to a 1983 directive issued by the Attorney General of Iran, which demanded the dissolution of Bahá'í administrative institutions, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, as a gesture of goodwill towards the government, voluntarily disbanded all Bahá'í administrative bodies ([National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran 1983a](#)).⁸ Despite this, persecution persisted. In the early years of the revolution, over 200 Bahá'ís were executed, while hundreds more were arrested, tortured, and imprisoned. Additionally, thousands of homes and properties, both personal and community-owned, were confiscated ([Ghanea-Hercock 2002](#), pp. 297, 307, 323). In 1991, The Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council issued a directive, signed by Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, instructing government agencies to “block the progress and development” of Bahá'ís and to take measures to “destroy their cultural roots outside the country.” This document formalized a state policy aimed at suppressing the Bahá'í community and restricting its civil, economic, and educational rights ([The Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council 1991](#)).

After some time following the Islamic Revolution, in response to the social and administrative needs of Iran's 300,000-strong Bahá'í community, informal arrangements known as the Yárán (Friends) group at the national level and Khádimín (Servants) groups at the local level were established. Over the next two decades, these institutions maintained periodic interactions with government authorities, sometimes through amicable dialogue and at other times under harsh and prolonged interrogations. However, in 2008, with the arrest of the Yárán group, the Attorney General officially declared even these temporary arrangements illegal ([House of Justice 2015](#)).

The economic persecution of the Bahá'í community in Iran has been a persistent and systematic feature of state policy since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. This persecution is part of a broader campaign aimed at the marginalization and eradication of the Bahá'í Faith, which is considered heretical by the Iranian government. In addition to being systematically excluded from higher education and public sector employment, Bahá'ís have faced extensive restrictions in the private sector, including prohibitions on practicing

nearly twenty specific professions.⁹ These measures have severely limited their economic opportunities and undermined their ability to sustain livelihoods ([Bahá'í International Community 2015](#)).

Since 2005, the intensity of these oppressive measures has escalated, reflecting a deliberate and coordinated effort to suppress the Bahá'í community. The Iranian government has increasingly utilized mass media—including newspapers, radio, television, films, websites, and social media platforms—to propagate misinformation and defamatory narratives about the Bahá'í Faith and its adherents. This media campaign serves to delegitimize the Bahá'í community in the eyes of the public and justify state-sanctioned discrimination and violence ([Bahá'í International Community 2011](#)). Arbitrary arrests and detentions of Bahá'ís have continued unabated, with thousands of individuals subjected to imprisonment on baseless charges. Additionally, the destruction of Bahá'í cemeteries and cultural sites has further compounded the community's suffering, erasing their historical and spiritual heritage ([Bahá'í International Community 2016](#)). These actions are emblematic of a broader strategy to erase the Bahá'í identity from Iranian society.

The systematic nature of these policies underscores the Iranian government's intent to eliminate the Bahá'í community as a viable entity within the country. This multifaceted persecution—encompassing economic, social, cultural, and religious dimensions—represents a grave violation of human rights and religious freedom. The international community has repeatedly condemned these actions, yet the Iranian government has persisted in its campaign, reflecting the entrenched ideological and political motivations behind the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran. What is relevant to this article is the way that Bahá'ís have attempted to overcome these multifaceted sources of oppression.

4. A Theoretical Framework to Build a Pattern of a New Society

This section outlines the theoretical framework of the article by examining major perspectives on social transformation. It situates the Bahá'í community's approach—both globally and in Iran—within these perspectives, emphasizing how its principles and practices inform processes of social change. Building on the historical context presented earlier, the discussion now turns first to how Bahá'ís confront oppression and injustice in diverse societies, followed by the theoretical framework that informs these approaches, and then to the specific responses of the Iranian Bahá'í community.

The Bahá'í perspective asserts that the lack of the oneness of humankind is the most profound crisis confronting the world today. According to this view, the principle of the oneness of humankind asks “not merely for cooperation among people and nations” but “calls for a complete reconceptualization of the relationships that sustain society” ([House of Justice 2013](#)). In this perspective, global challenges—such as economic injustice and environmental degradation—ultimately arise from a failure to recognize and apply this principle within both individual consciousness and societal institutions. From this standpoint, the root cause of the world's problems lies not in economic structures or its political systems but in the lack of unity at various levels of society and in the mind and hearts of its citizens. Structural crises in governance, economy, and social relations are seen as consequences of this deeper issue ([Shoghi Effendi 1938](#)). As humanity becomes more interconnected and globalization accelerates, the failure to uphold the oneness of humankind increasingly obstructs meaningful solutions to pressing global challenges, highlighting the need for a fundamental transformation in social consciousness and institutional frameworks.

Two critical considerations must be addressed in this regard. First, the absence of the oneness of humankind constitutes a multidimensional issue that must be remedied at both the individual level and within broader societal structures, encompassing economic, cultural, and political systems. The imperative to cultivate individual ethical refinement

is equally as significant as the necessity of structural transformation. Any exclusive emphasis on either dimension to the neglect of the other constitutes an oversimplification and reductionist interpretation of the intricate framework presented in the Bahá'í Writings. Bahá'u'lláh Himself accentuated both the moral and ethical purification of the individual and the imperative for institutional and systemic reform to secure social justice, national stability, and the eradication of linguistic barriers, political despotism, and religious authoritarianism. Consequently, while the Bahá'í Faith articulates an ethical vision for its adherents, it simultaneously underscores the indispensability of reforming social structures to achieve the oneness of humankind.

Second, addressing these crises at both the individual and structural levels necessitate a spiritually grounded epistemological shift, whereby both individuals and institutions cultivate a novel mode of thought, fostering the emergence of a new generation of ethically and socially conscious actors capable of embodying the principle of the oneness of humankind. Spirituality, in this context, is neither solely an individual pursuit nor an abstract metaphysical construct; rather, it is both an individual and collective phenomenon, exerting far-reaching influences on social, political, and economic transformation, alongside personal moral development. The interdependence of spiritual transformation, individual ethical advancement, and systemic reform constitutes a foundational tenet of the Bahá'í worldview. Within this paradigm, spirituality is conceived not just as a passive or private endeavor but as an active force of societal metamorphosis, possessing the potential to reshape human consciousness while simultaneously facilitating the emergence of novel institutional and structural configurations that reflect justice, unity, and social progress (Afnan 2022).

This perspective aligns with recent theoretical developments in political and social thought. Prior to the 1980s, most social theories tended to adopt an approach that emphasized either individual agency or structural forces in their analyses of social systems and prescriptions for social transformation. Theories that prioritized individual agency, such as B.F. Skinner's behaviorism and Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism, on the one hand, and those that focused on structural determinants, such as classical Marxist theory and Talcott Parsons' structural functionalism, on the other, exemplify early theoretical frameworks that disproportionately emphasized one dimension of the complex social reality (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2021).

However, theoretical advancements—shaped by the historical experiences of various social movements and the evolution of sociological discourse—have demonstrated that such approaches yield significant limitations and unintended consequences. More comprehensive theoretical frameworks have since emerged, reflecting a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between structure and agency. Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, articulated in his work *The Constitution of Society* (Giddens 1984), and Jürgen Habermas' *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984a, 1984b), which integrates action theory with network theory, are among the most influential contributions illustrating this paradigm shift. Likewise, Randall Collins, the prominent American sociologist, argues that social structures are inseparable from the actors who construct them and that the integration of micro and macro theories represents a significant advancement in contemporary social theory. Collins critiques single-cause explanations of the world, such as classical Marxist theory, advocating instead for a multidimensional approach to social analysis (Collins 1998). These theoretical developments underscore a broader intellectual shift toward synthesizing agency and structure, moving beyond the limitations of earlier frameworks and advancing a more holistic understanding of social transformation.

A crucial element in understanding the Bahá'í framework is the distinction between sustainable social transformation and temporary social change. The former involves an

irreversible reconfiguration of human relationships, social structures, and intellectual paradigms. Like natural processes—such as the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly or the maturation of a human being—enduring social change requires both individual evolution and structural reform. Achieving gender equality, for example, cannot be accomplished through legal and policy changes alone; it demands the cultivation of ethical sensibilities, the reshaping of cognitive frameworks, and the internalization of new behavioral norms. Without individuals' commitment to moral development and the abandonment of prejudices and entrenched behaviors, even progressive laws will be insufficient for creating an equitable society.¹⁰

The principles of the Bahá'í Faith provide frameworks for societal organization and identify objectives toward which humanity is encouraged to strive. Concepts such as gender equality, social justice, the independent investigation of truth, and the elimination of various forms of prejudice—including racial, ethnic, and national biases—are considered essential goals that require both individual transformation and structural reform for their realization (Karlberg 2020). The broader the scope of the transformation and the greater the gap between the current state and the desired ideal, the more extensive and multidimensional the necessary changes at both personal and institutional levels.

Achieving social transformation requires citizens who exhibit a heightened level of ethical awareness and civic commitment. The establishment of a society in which cooperation and mutual engagement replace patterns of unregulated competition necessitates both individuals who do not perceive themselves as being in perceptual rivalry with others and institutional frameworks that promote collaboration rather than competition across political, academic, economic, and cultural domains (Karlberg 2020; Palmer 2018). Such a transformation cannot be achieved solely through legislative measures or structural adjustments; rather, it demands the systematic cultivation of collective consciousness and moral responsibility. A society that seeks to enhance civic responsibility and public participation cannot rely exclusively on legal incentives or deterrents.¹¹ Instead, sustained participation in public life necessitates a process of moral and intellectual empowerment, in which individuals develop an understanding of civic engagement and actively embrace their role in societal progress. Without such a foundation, any emergent social structure will remain inherently unstable and unsustainable.

5. Role of Community

The Bahá'í community's perspective on social transformation goes beyond the traditional dichotomy between individual and structural change by including the essential role of communities in fostering and sustaining transformation. Sustainable social change requires not only reforms at both the structural and individual levels but also the cultivation of communities that facilitate and reinforce these transformations. The Bahá'í perspective seeks to integrate these dimensions within a comprehensive framework that transcends the limitations of previous models. It posits that transformation must occur not only within individuals and institutions but also within communities—entities that both enable individual moral and intellectual development and serve as independent forces capable of exerting broader influence on social change (House of Justice 1995a).

A community provides a space where individuals who share common goals, principles, and values can interact, engage in collective reflection on shared challenges, exchange experiences and knowledge necessary for achieving their objectives, and collaborate in collective planning and action. Relationships within such a community are characterized by closeness and mutual support, as individuals recognize themselves as part of a shared identity and collective purpose (Tavangar and Palmer 2023; Lample 2004). Communities serve as vital protective entities, shielding individuals from the destabilizing forces of

rootlessness, alienation, and historical disorientation; without such communal bonds, these very vulnerabilities become fertile ground for demagogic figures who weaponize the frustrations of those demanding systemic change, distorting legitimate struggles for justice into vehicles for authoritarian consolidation ([Arendt 1968](#)).

Many social transformations pursued by civil and political activists must take place at the level of culture. Such cultural transformation is not solely the product of individual contemplation and effort but requires collective reflection and joint action to critically reassess cultural elements that are inconsistent with the principles and values of the community. Over time, as such communities expand, they can serve as concrete embodiments of the values and ideals around which they were formed, offering tangible models of an alternative social reality. By actualizing their principles in practice, these communities provide compelling evidence and persuasive arguments for broader society to embrace those values and goals. The failure to prioritize the continuous effort to actualize ideals and values on a small scale, particularly within local communities, further exacerbates growing skepticism toward the slogans and promises of social transformation. The larger and more cohesive these communities become, the more effectively they function as key agents of sustainable social change. Consequently, within Bahá'í thought, building communities that are manifestations of certain qualities and principles is pursued as a distinct approach. Through this approach, both human resources are developed—meaning individuals are raised up who cultivate a sense of agency and seek social transformation—and communities themselves emerge as autonomous agents of social change by offering concrete models and alternatives to existing societal structures.

This perspective aligns with certain communitarian arguments, a school of thought that critiques the emphasis on individualism in liberal political theory and underscores the importance of communities in shaping moral and social life. Thinkers such as Amitai Etzioni, Charles Taylor, and Michael Sandel have argued that individual rights and autonomy cannot be fully understood outside the context of communal relationships and shared values. Etzioni, for instance, asserts that a healthy society requires a balance between individual rights and communal responsibilities, advocating for a responsive communitarianism in which moral values are cultivated within strong community structures ([Etzioni 1996, 1993](#)). Taylor highlights the importance of collective identity and cultural context in shaping individual autonomy, challenging the notion of an atomized self, detached from its social environment ([Taylor 1989](#)). Similarly, Sandel critiques the procedural neutrality of liberalism and underscores the communal nature of moral reasoning, asserting that individuals are embedded in shared traditions and values that influence ethical and political life ([Sandel 2020](#)).

Similarly, the Bahá'í approach recognizes that individual transformation cannot be divorced from the social contexts in which people live. However, it extends this argument by suggesting that communities themselves should not only serve as spaces for moral development but also act as proactive agents of social change—creating alternative social models that reflect values such as justice, cooperation, and unity. By fostering spaces for collective reflection, moral education, and collaborative action, communities become catalysts for broader societal transformation that extends beyond individual or institutional reforms ([Bahá'í World Centre 2017](#)). Moreover, as a distinct social force, they can drive cultural change in ways that are difficult or impossible to achieve through other agents, thereby shaping not only policy or governance but also the moral and intellectual foundations of society.

Building on the previously discussed necessity of transforming individuals and structures, as well as fostering local communities, the Bahá'í community endeavors to develop alternative models for each of these three elements: individuals, communities, and insti-

tutions. On the one hand, it seeks to cultivate human resources capable of driving social transformation; individuals who can act as agents of change, promote unity while respecting diversity, advance justice, and adopt an uncompromising stance against corruption. On the other hand, the community, understood as an organic entity, is more than a mere collection of individuals; it serves as a site of mutual support, collective learning, and unified action, where patterns of cooperation and justice take root and grow. Through its educational initiatives, the Bahá'í community not only prepares individuals to act as agents of change but also assists in the creation and strengthening of communities—spaces where individuals can support and encourage one another, critically examine cultural norms, identify and counteract negative social forces, and collectively strive for transformation. These communities provide an environment in which individuals can apply their acquired capabilities, experiment with new ideas in a manageable setting, and translate principles into action.

In addition to nurturing individuals and fostering communities, the Bahá'í community is also engaged in the development of institutional structures that embody the principle of the oneness of humankind. These institutions emphasize cooperation over competition, serve as manifestations of collective responsibility, and work to empower individuals while mobilizing resources for large-scale initiatives. As alternatives to conventional governance models, these structures seek to demonstrate principles of just and inclusive governance, fostering decision-making processes that are collaborative, participatory, and oriented toward the collective well-being of society (Karlberg 2020, pp. 92–112). Through this integrative approach—where individual transformation, community, and institutional development operate in synergy—the Bahá'í community offers a practical and evolving model for social transformation that seeks not only to reform existing realities but also to create new paradigms of governance, cooperation, and justice.

6. Three Areas of Activities

In pursuit of these objectives, the global Bahá'í community is currently engaged in three major areas of action: community building, social action, and participation in social discourses (House of Justice 2010). These efforts aim to translate Bahá'u'lláh's vision for humanity into reality, contributing to the development of individuals, communities, and institutions that exemplify principles of unity, justice, and collective progress.

Community-building activities constitute a systematic approach to fostering spiritual, moral, and social development at the grassroots level, with the aim of cultivating a cohesive and service-oriented society. These activities are structured around four core components: *children's classes*, which nurture moral and spiritual qualities from an early age; *junior youth empowerment programs*, designed to strengthen adolescents' moral reasoning and sense of social responsibility; *study circles*, which provide youth and adults with a collaborative space to explore spiritual principles and their application to daily life; and *devotional gatherings*, which offer opportunities for collective worship, reflection, and the strengthening of community bonds (Lample 2008, pp. 73–104). Rooted in the principles of unity, consultation, and action, these initiatives are open to all, regardless of religious background, and emphasize the transformative power of service in shaping both individuals and their communities. This organic process of capacity building fosters an environment in which individuals contribute meaningfully to social progress, leading to the gradual emergence of a unified and spiritually empowered society that advances both material and moral dimensions of civilization.

As participation in these activities expands, communities progressively develop the capacity to engage in more structured forms of social action. Social action refers to collective efforts aimed at improving the material and social conditions of a community,

addressing issues such as education, health, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability. Its primary aim is to foster the well-being of individuals and societies by applying principles of justice, equity, and participation. In the Bahá'í context, social action is pursued as a spiritual and moral imperative, inspired by the belief that all individuals and communities have the right and responsibility to contribute to the advancement of civilization. Bahá'í efforts in this realm operate at various levels: grassroots initiatives undertaken by individuals or small groups, sustained community-based projects, and large-scale programs managed by Bahá'í-inspired organizations (Lample 2008, pp. 127–46). Examples of such initiatives include literacy programs that have significantly improved education rates, health campaigns addressing issues like sanitation and disease prevention, agricultural projects enhancing food security, and capacity-building programs that empower individuals with knowledge and skills (Bahá'í International Community 2023a). These efforts emphasize participatory methodologies, fostering local ownership and long-term sustainability, while also integrating scientific knowledge with spiritual principles to create holistic and inclusive development models.

Participation in public discourse entails the active engagement of individuals and communities in discussions on social issues, shaping collective understanding and influencing decision-making processes. This engagement operates across multiple levels, from grassroots dialogues to national policy debates and international forums, employing diverse methodologies such as direct engagement with policymakers, scholarly contributions, and collaborative initiatives (Karlberg and Smith 2022, pp. 95–97). Within this framework, Bahá'ís consider public discourse an essential expression of their faith, grounded in the belief that religion serves as a transformative force in society (Razavi 2018). Their participation is informed by principles such as the oneness of humanity, the necessity of unity and social cohesion for sustainable progress, the equality of women and men, and the pursuit of knowledge through the integration of science and religion. Bahá'ís contribute to discourse at multiple levels: individuals engage in local and professional conversations; at the national level, Bahá'í offices of public affairs interact with government authorities, policymakers, NGOs, and civil society organizations; and at the international level, the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) represents the Bahá'í perspective in global spaces, including at the United Nations (Razavi 2018). The Bahá'í approach to discourse emphasizes consultation as a means of fostering consensus, favoring constructive dialogue over adversarial debate. Rather than advocating for specific policy outcomes, their engagement seeks to elevate discourse by promoting moral and spiritual principles, addressing the underlying causes of social challenges, and fostering inclusive, principle-based conversations that contribute to long-term societal advancement.

These three major initiatives undertaken by the Bahá'í community around the world pursue the long-term objective of social transformation. Emerging from community-building efforts—currently involving nearly two million participants, according to a recent report (Department of the Secretariat 2020)—and gradually expanding, millions, and eventually tens of millions, of individuals are expected to engage with a coherent intellectual framework. This framework is founded on the belief in the oneness of humanity, gender equality, and social justice, while also recognizing unity as an essential prerequisite for peace, social cohesion, and progress. These human resources, in turn, contribute to the further expansion of community-building activities, leading to the formation of societies committed to specific values. The proliferation of such communities fosters a shift in the dominant cultural and value systems, ultimately facilitating sustainable social transformation based on a new level of collective consciousness.

Simultaneously, initiatives in social action aim to establish a balance between the spiritual and moral advancement of a society and its material progress, as these two dimen-

sions are so intrinsically linked that their separation is inconceivable. The development of communities that are both materially and spiritually prosperous serves as a model that can demonstrate the efficacy of Bahá'í community-building endeavors to neutral observers.

Furthermore, efforts to participate in discourses seek to challenge and transform collective mental structures as well as unjust, oppressive, and unsustainable laws that undermine grassroots initiatives. By engaging at the level of intellectual discourse, these efforts strive to introduce new approaches within formal structures, contributing both to the refinement of existing processes and the generation of novel content. Collectively, these three interconnected processes—community building, social action, and discourse participation—not only transform individuals and establish new communities but also contribute to the creation of novel economic, social, intellectual, and legal structures. These structures seek to identify and transcend injustices, ultimately fostering a more just and inclusive reality.

7. Constructive Resilience: The Response of the Bahá'ís of Iran to Persecution and Injustices

Given the discussion thus far, the Bahá'í community worldwide—across every country, city, and village where Bahá'ís reside—engages in community-building efforts, social action initiatives, and participation in discourses at various levels and complexities. As stated at the beginning, the Bahá'í community of Iran, despite having faced persistent persecution since its inception—resulting in the killing, imprisonment, and exile of tens of thousands of its followers in pursuit of its ideals—is not an exception to this global Bahá'í endeavor. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that much of the available information on these efforts in Iran comes from public sources, which are necessarily limited given the ongoing repression. The sensitivity of the issue is underscored by the fact that even modest initiatives, such as educational programs for underprivileged youth, have been met with harsh crackdowns and prison sentences by the authorities.

Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Bahá'í community of Iran has undergone three major historical phases, each reflecting different strategies of resilience and adaptation in response to state-imposed repression. The first phase was characterized by severe and systematic persecution, including the execution of hundreds of Bahá'ís, the imprisonment of thousands, the closure of Bahá'í institutions, and the confiscation of properties belonging to both individuals and the community. Bahá'ís were barred from higher education and government employment, and those who held state jobs were dismissed. This period represented an unprecedented assault on the Bahá'í community, with the explicit aim of dismantling its social and institutional structures.

In the subsequent phase, spanning approximately the next decade, the Bahá'í community in Iran adopted a more inward-focused approach. This response was a natural outcome of the sustained persecution it faced, as communities subjected to such conditions often prioritize self-preservation and the maintenance of essential functions. During this time, and with the knowledge and tacit approval of the authorities, the community initiated temporary arrangements to manage its internal affairs ([House of Justice 2015](#)). These arrangements facilitated educational initiatives for children, adolescents, and youth, as well as provisions for family-related matters such as marriage, burials, and religious observances. Given this inward orientation, the community also initiated structured study programs aimed at enhancing the knowledge of its members. During this period, in 1987, the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) emerged as a response to the systematic exclusion of Bahá'í youth from university education ([Cameron and Ghanea 2018](#), p. 139).

Around the year 2004, a shift occurred in the Bahá'í community of Iran's approach, with an emphasis on reducing reliance on internal administrative structures and expanding

educational initiatives focused on the materials of the “training institute” which animated the community-building activities (House of Justice 2006). The content of the training institute’s children’s and junior youth classes, which had developed based on both the experiences of the Iranian Bahá’í community and those of Bahá’í communities worldwide, gradually replaced older study programs for children and youth. The expansion of these educational activities, initially confined to the Bahá’í community of Iran, eventually extended to the wider society. This historical trajectory illustrates the ways in which the Bahá’í community in Iran has navigated systematic persecution, balancing strategies of survival with efforts to contribute to the social and educational well-being of both its members and the wider society.

This recent phase of the Bahá’í community’s development represents a logical continuation of its broader social engagement, which had been significantly disrupted by the Islamic Revolution and the years afterwards. From this period onward, with the call of the House of Justice, Iranian Bahá’ís responded more actively to the accusations, misconceptions, and hostilities directed at them over previous decades, engaging in systematic efforts to clarify misunderstandings and address misrepresentations. Over time, the educational initiatives of the training institute expanded beyond the community itself, gradually becoming accessible to the wider society. A significant number of individuals from outside the Bahá’í community have been participating in these programs, many of whom have since become human resources capable of independently advancing the institute’s activities while also collaborating with others in this endeavor. Some of them have even identified themselves as Bahá’ís (House of Justice 2015). The ability of the Bahá’í community, after three decades of upheaval and sustained repression after the Revolution, to realign its efforts with those of the global Bahá’í community—despite the persistent challenges it has faced—demonstrates both the preservation of its capacities and their continued development in the post-revolutionary period.

The Bahá’í community of Iran today, like Bahá’í communities around the world, continues its community-building activities, particularly at the neighborhood level, aiming to empower local individuals to actively contribute to the social life of their communities (House of Justice 2020). These individuals, imbued with a sense of agency and a vision informed by Bahá’í teachings as presented through the training institute, cultivate a strong sense of belonging to their local communities. They seek to broaden conversations on social well-being, engaging an increasing number of neighbors, colleagues, and friends in discussions aimed at improving local conditions. Simultaneously, many Iranian Bahá’ís are engaged in social action initiatives (House of Justice 2011). They strive to address the educational, health, and cultural needs of various groups. One such effort includes working with migrant communities to enhance literacy levels. Given the sensitivities surrounding such activities, these initiatives are deliberately conducted without attracting public attention, focusing solely on improving the material and social conditions of specific populations.

Engagement in public discourse is another area in which individual Bahá’ís in Iran participate (House of Justice 2016a, 2011, 2009). This involvement takes place in various forums, including academic conferences and similar platforms where discussions on topics such as social cohesion and peace are actively taking place. In line with these efforts, the Iranian Bahá’í community has also established an online platform aimed at contributing to social discourses relevant to contemporary issues in Iran.¹²

In addition to the aforementioned initiatives, members of the Iranian Bahá’í community have also undertaken other efforts—particularly in the years following the Islamic Revolution—to contribute to the improvement of Iran’s social conditions and to overcome prevailing prejudices and misconceptions. One of the efforts undertaken by the persecuted and oppressed Bahá’í community of Iran has been advocating for its own rights (House

of Justice 2009). The pursuit of justice for the Bahá'í community is not only crucial for Bahá'ís themselves but also for the broader struggle for democracy and freedom in Iran. This is because the Bahá'í community, historically marginalized as an “other” and systematically targeted by clerical authorities—and, in past decades, by a significant portion of the population—has never been granted the opportunity to express itself freely (House of Justice 2008). It has been systematically denied the right to respond to accusations and falsehoods leveled against it and has never had access to platforms such as newspapers, publishing houses, or mass media to articulate its perspective. It is within this context of ignorance, misinformation, and entrenched prejudice that Bahá'ís in Iran have been deprived of many of their rights.

The response of the Bahá'í community to persecution reflects its broader beliefs regarding the appropriate way to confront oppression. In facing systemic injustices—both before and after the Islamic Revolution—Bahá'ís have consistently sought to redress their rights through existing legal mechanisms within the country. This has included holding meetings with and writing letters to local officials, followed by appeals to national authorities. When domestic legal channels fail to provide a remedy, Bahá'ís have turned to international legal mechanisms, including human rights organizations and the United Nations, as avenues for seeking justice (House of Justice 2016b). However, beyond legal advocacy, the Bahá'í community has adopted a distinctive approach known as “constructive resilience,” which emphasizes non-violent, principled engagement in the face of oppression (House of Justice 2007). This framework prioritizes proactive contributions to society rather than confrontational approaches such as civil disobedience or violence.

Advocacy at all levels is an integral part of the Bahá'í community's efforts to mitigate oppression and injustice. By remaining in Iran and persistently striving for justice, Bahá'ís have sought to address the root causes of their persecution—namely, prejudice, ignorance, and misinformation. Recognizing that prejudice, which stems from ignorance, is not exclusive to their community, Bahá'ís have consistently emphasized that the most effective response is the promotion of knowledge and awareness of principles that foster unity and justice in society (House of Justice 2010).

A notable example of the Bahá'í response to post-revolutionary persecution is the establishment and continued operation of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE). Established in 1987 as a direct response to the Iranian government's policy of barring Bahá'í students from higher education, BIHE emerged as a decentralized and adaptive institution, offering undergraduate and graduate programs across a range of disciplines (Ahmadi Amoei 2021; Yazdani 2015). Initially operating through in-person instruction in private homes, BIHE evolved to incorporate correspondence and online courses, significantly expanding its reach and academic offerings. Despite facing continual government crackdowns—including raids, arrests, and the confiscation of materials—BIHE has persisted in its mission. Faculty members, many of whom were dismissed from academic positions due to their faith, have contributed to the institute's development, while an extensive network of volunteer educators, both within and outside Iran, has facilitated its growth. As of 2024, BIHE offers 17 undergraduate, 16 graduate, and 4 associate degree programs across disciplines such as sciences, engineering, business and management, humanities, and social sciences. Additionally, it provides 11 vocational programs, 3 one-year foundation programs, and 5 graduate certificate programs. This extensive curriculum is supported by approximately 955 faculty and administrative staff, including over 1000 members of the Affiliated Global Faculty from 69 countries, 60% of whom hold doctoral degrees.¹³ This international collaboration has been pivotal in maintaining and enhancing BIHE's academic standards. Its commitment to excellence has led to international recognition, with graduates accepted into advanced degree programs at more than 116 universities

worldwide. This achievement underscores the institute's academic rigor and the resilience of its community.

The BIHE initiative reflects the Bahá'í community's commitment to securing the right to education for its own members in the face of systematic exclusion. While its primary focus is on serving the educational needs of Bahá'ís, it also exemplifies a non-confrontational model of civil resilience that resonates with broader aspirations for educational equity in Iran. The systemic denial of educational opportunities to Bahá'ís—part of a larger campaign of economic and social marginalization—has drawn international condemnation and has been documented by human rights organizations. In response, the global Bahá'í community has advocated for the right to education as a human right, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies that transcend religious discrimination. The case of BIHE highlights a key principle in the Bahá'í response to oppression: constructive resilience. Rather than resorting to direct confrontation, the Bahá'í community has sought to build institutions and networks that empower individuals, foster education, and contribute to the social and intellectual advancement of society. This approach, rooted in the community's commitment to peaceful and non-adversarial strategies for social transformation, has allowed the Bahá'ís of Iran to maintain their identity, cultivate knowledge, and contribute meaningfully to both their immediate community and the broader global discourse on education and human rights (Karlberg 2010; Kazemzadeh and Zhu 2023).

This example illustrates how the Bahá'í community's response to oppression extends beyond seeking justice through legal channels. Rather than resorting to protest or retaliation, Bahá'ís have chosen to engage in constructive actions that reinforce their values and serve both their community and the broader society. This strategy, rooted in the belief that the most effective means of countering injustice is through education, social service, and principled engagement, reflects the Bahá'í commitment to transforming adversity into opportunities for positive social change (Karlberg 2004, 2010).

Despite engaging in various activities—whether community-building efforts, social action initiatives, participation in public discourse, or broader expressions of constructive resilience such as the establishment of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education—some political activists may question why the Bahá'ís of Iran do not engage in political activities to advance their goals. The response to this question is multifaceted. First, many of the initiatives pursued by Bahá'ís in the realm of social transformation could be interpreted as having political dimensions or implications. Broadly speaking, efforts to reform society and contribute to a better world inevitably touch on questions of governance and the organization of human society—realms that might be described as “political” in the classical sense of the term. This understanding is acknowledged within Bahá'í teachings, which distinguish such engagement from partisan political activity or involvement in political disputes (House of Justice 1995b). However, the key distinction lies in the approach they adopt: Bahá'ís do not employ partisan politics as a means to drive social transformation. The reason for this lies in the incompatibility of partisan politics with the Bahá'í principle of the oneness of humanity. Partisan politics is inherently based on competition, often involving the legal and democratic elimination of political opponents. While democratic structures are undoubtedly preferable to authoritarian or theocratic regimes, which persist in various parts of the world, the adversarial nature of partisan politics remains inconsistent with the vision that Bahá'ís seek to promote (House of Justice 2022; Karlberg 2004).

Within Bahá'í thought, the ends cannot justify the means; rather, the means employed must be in harmony with the intended goal (House of Justice 2013). Since Bahá'ís strive for peace and unity, they refrain from using adversarial methods to achieve their aims. Instead, through community-building efforts, they work to explore and develop alternative models of governance that align with the principle of oneness of humankind. This process

is necessarily gradual, requiring sustained effort and considerable time (House of Justice 2021). However, moving beyond current ineffective paradigms necessitates the pursuit of alternative frameworks, and it is through these constructive initiatives that Bahá'ís seek to contribute to lasting and meaningful social transformation.

It is important to note that Bahá'ís do participate in the electoral processes of their respective countries and also sign petitions that express public demands, provided that the implications of such petitions align with the principle of the oneness of humankind (House of Justice 2013). However, they do not view such participation as sufficient for achieving lasting social transformation. The kind of transformation that Bahá'ís seek is far deeper and more fundamental than what can be accomplished through minor legislative changes. Rather, it requires raising society to a higher level of collective consciousness and learning how to construct a new social order based on the principles they uphold. From a Bahá'í perspective, community-building efforts, social action, and participation in public discourse can contribute to the emergence of a new level of awareness while also generating innovative and alternative models for existing social structures. This is a long-term process that requires continuous practice and the daily application of these principles in lived experience. By contrast, political engagement in the form of casting a vote on a single day and, at best, subsequently critiquing political processes does not, on its own, possess the capacity to bring about the kind of transformation that Bahá'ís envision. The shift towards a more just and unified society, in their view, necessitates a sustained commitment to alternative modes of governance and social organization that foster unity, justice, and collective well-being.

Like many other citizens and social actors in Iran, the Bahá'ís aspire to a society free from religious and ethnic prejudice and social discrimination, where justice and freedom can prevail. However, while they recognize the importance of political engagement, they refrain from partisan political activities, choosing instead to dedicate their material and human resources to raising collective consciousness and promoting principles and values that enable peaceful coexistence. Through their educational initiatives and efforts to build both local and non-geographically bound communities, they seek to contribute to meaningful social transformation. The fact that the path they have chosen differs from conventional approaches to social change should not be mistaken for indifference toward the pursuit of transformation. On the contrary, their commitment reflects a long-term vision aimed at fostering deep and lasting societal change through constructive and inclusive means.

8. Conclusions

The Bahá'í community of Iran has faced persistent persecution since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, yet its response has been characterized by a principled approach of constructive resilience. Despite systematic discrimination, the community has remained committed to social transformation through community building, social action, and participation in public discourse. This approach reflects a conscious effort to transcend adversarial methods of activism, emphasizing non-violent engagement and a long-term vision for societal change.

The historical trajectory of the Bahá'í community in Iran demonstrates how it has continually adapted to challenges while maintaining its core principles. From the initial phase of direct state repression to the development of informal administrative structures and the later expansion of community-based educational initiatives, Bahá'ís have sought to both preserve their identity and contribute meaningfully to Iranian society. The establishment of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) stands as a testament to this commitment, offering a model of perseverance and innovation in the face of exclusion. Furthermore, the Bahá'ís of Iran, like many other civil society actors, strive for a society free from religious

prejudice and social discrimination, where justice and freedom prevail. However, their approach differs from conventional political activism. While they participate in electoral processes and sign petitions aligned with the principle of the oneness of humankind, they refrain from partisan political engagement. This distinction arises from their belief that sustainable transformation requires a shift in collective consciousness and the gradual development of alternative models for governance and social organization.

The community's long-term vision, rooted in the principles of unity, justice, and co-operation, challenges dominant narratives about political participation and social change. Rather than seeking immediate legislative reforms or engaging in confrontational political tactics, Bahá'ís focus on cultivating an inclusive and service-oriented society through grassroots efforts. Their community-building initiatives, educational programs, and contributions to public discourse are aimed at fostering deeper social cohesion and a more just and equitable society. Ultimately, the experience of the Iranian Bahá'í community offers valuable insights into alternative pathways for social transformation. By emphasizing ethical consistency between means and ends, they present a model of engagement that prioritizes long-term societal evolution over short-term political gains. This approach, while distinct from conventional activism, contributes to the broader struggle for human rights, democracy, and social justice in Iran. In the face of ongoing repression, the Bahá'í commitment to constructive resilience remains a powerful example of how non-violent action and principled engagement can shape the future of a society.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The title “Guardian” refers to Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957), the great-grandson of Bahá'u'lláh, who was appointed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His Will and Testament, with responsibility for interpreting the teachings and developing its administrative order.
- ² Local and National Spiritual Assemblies are nine-member bodies elected annually through a non-competitive process: there are no nominations, campaigning, or candidate slates, and voting is carried out by secret ballot, grounded in consultation and guided by prayer.
- ³ Abdu’l-Bahá, in one of his Tablets, states: “*The future of Iran is of the utmost greatness, majesty, and glory, for it is the native land of the Blessed Beauty. All the nations of the earth will turn to and regard Iran with high esteem. Know of a certainty that it will make such progress as to dazzle the eyes of the mighty and the learned throughout the world.*” (Abdu’l-Bahá n.d., p. 51).
- ⁴ Many Bahá'ís have made significant contributions to Iran's social, cultural, and economic progress. Among them are Khalil Arjomand, who founded Iran's largest home appliance factory; Mirza Abdollah Farahani, who restructured Iranian traditional music; Tal'at Bassari, a pioneer in recognizing women's roles in literature, especially in Shahnameh studies; Ali Murad Davoodi, noted for translating important works of Greek philosophy into Persian; Lili Ahi, who greatly influenced children's literature and educational reforms; Mohammad Baqer Hoshyar, a pioneer in modern education and psychology; Zhinous Mahmoodi, Iran's first female meteorologist and head of the Meteorological Organization; Hushang Seyhoun, the father of modern Iranian architecture, who designed monumental buildings; Hossein Amanat, the architect of the iconic Azadi Tower; Amanatollah Roshan Zayer, a key figure in advancing physics in Iran; Manouchehr Hakim, who established the anatomy department at Tehran University; and Gholamreza Rouhani, a notable satirist. In the arts, Rahmatollah Badi'i and Ali Mohammad Khadem Misagh, who contributed immensely to Iran's classical and traditional music. Other key figures include Mirza Ebrahim Khan Akasbashi, the first Iranian photographer and filmmaker, and Shapour Rassekh, a significant figure in the development of Iran's educational and social institutions. Their works in education, healthcare, art, and industry have left an indelible mark on Iranian society.

- 5 Ruhollah Teymouri—23 Ordibehesht 1356 (13 May 1977), Behnam Majidi—4 Mordad 1357 (26 July 1978), Ziaullah Haghighat—22 Mordad 1357 (13 August 1978), Shirmohammad Dastpish—10 Azar 1357 (1 December 1978), Safatollah Fahandej Saadi and Avaz Gol Fahandej Saadi—23 Azar 1357 (14 December 1978).
- 6 Read the statements on the *Archives of Bahá'í Persecution in Iran* website at: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa> (accessed on 20 March 2025).
- 7 For instance, *Ittilá'át* ran the headline “Discovery of Two Anti-Revolutionary Bahá'í Centers in Mashhad” (*Ittilá'át Newspaper 1979a*), further fuelling hostility against the community. In the following days, similar articles continued to appear, such as *Ittilá'át*'s report on “The Discovery of Espionage Documents from Hazíratu'l-Quds in Tehran” (*Ittilá'át Newspaper 1979c*).
- 8 Also, see National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, “The National Spiritual Assembly's Letter to the Bahá'í Community of Iran Regarding the Closure of Bahá'í Institutions in Iran” (*National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran 1983b*).
- 9 Bahá'ís are not only banned from employment in government or military offices but they are also prohibited from working in or operating certain independent occupations. These restrictions apply particularly to professions with high income potential or public visibility, or, in some cases, to occupations involving food preparation due to the state's construction of Bahá'ís as ritually impure. This has led to bans on operating bakeries, restaurants, or barbershops, as well as professions such as journalism, publishing, jewelrymaking, watchmaking, printing, tourism and car rental services, hotel and guesthouse management, tailoring schools, photography, videography, gaming centers, computer and internet cafés, and other cultural, advertising, or economic institutions (*Police Intelligence and Public Security Office of Tehran 2007*).
- 10 Empirical evidence highlights the limitations of an exclusively structural approach to social change. For example, the rise in domestic violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic in countries such as France and Spain, despite their relatively advanced legal frameworks promoting gender equality, underscores the inadequacy of relying solely on legal and institutional reforms as a means to achieve a just and cohesive society. Similarly, the historical trajectory of racial justice movements in the United States illustrates the inherent risks of a reductionist approach that prioritizes either individual transformation or structural reform in isolation. The protests following the death of George Floyd revealed the enduring presence of deep-seated racial biases, demonstrating that systemic racism persists despite the existence of anti-discrimination laws and the election of a Black president. These examples underscore that genuine and lasting social transformation is only possible through the simultaneous evolution of individual moral, intellectual, and behavioral patterns, alongside comprehensive structural and institutional reforms, ensuring that the principles of justice and equality are not merely enshrined in law but deeply embedded in societal consciousness and practice.
- 11 The case of Brazil, where, despite the imposition of stringent penalties for electoral abstention, over twenty percent of eligible voters still refrain from participating in elections, underscores the limitations of purely legalistic approaches in fostering meaningful public engagement. This applies to many Nordic countries as well.
- 12 This website, named *Gofteman Iran* and accessible at www.gofteman-iran.org (accessed on 18 March 2025), aims to contribute to discussions on topics such as social transformation, social cohesion, the role of women, and youth participation.
- 13 All statistics presented have been acquired through the BIHE website: www.BIHE.org (accessed on 17 March 2025).

References

- Abdu'l-Bahá. n.d. *Additional Tablets, Extracts and Talks*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre. Available online: www.bahai.org/r/506985621 (accessed on 15 March 2025).
- Afnan, Elham. 2022. Devotional Life. In *The World of the Bahá'í Faith*, 1st ed. Edited by Robert H. Stockman. London: Routledge, pp. 479–87.
- Ahmadi Amoei, Bahman. 2021. *Dánishgáh-i-Zírzamíní-i-Bahá'íyán-i-Írán [An Underground University of Bahá'ís of Iran]*, 1st ed. Sweden: Baran Publication.
- Amini, Tooraj. 2008. *Ta'ámul-i-Aqqalíyatháy-i-Madhhabí va Inqiláb-i-Mashrú'íyyat-i-Írán*. Los Angeles: Kitab Corp.
- Amini, Tooraj. 2012a. *Asnád-i Bahá'íyán-i Írán az Sále 1320 tá Páyán-i Sále 1331*. Sweden: Bárán.
- Amini, Tooraj. 2012b. *Rastákhíz-i Panhán: Bázgusháyí-i Nisbat-i Áyínhá-ye Bábí va Bahá'í bá Jarayán-i Rawshanfikrí-i Írán [The Hidden Renaissance: The Iranian Modernity and the Babi-Bahá'í Religions]*. Cháp-i Avval. Sweden: Bárán.
- Amini, Tooraj. 2014. *Asnád-i Bahá'íyán-i Írán az Sále 1332 tá Inghiláb-i Islámí*. Sweden: Bárán.
- Amini, Tooraj. 2019. *Asnád-i Bahá'íyán-i Írán az Sále 1305 tá Páyáne Sále 1319*. Spain: Nehal Publication.
- Arak Machinery Manufacturing Statement. n.d. Dismissal from Employment at Arak Machinery Manufacturing. 7. Arak Machinery Manufacturing Statement. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/akhraj-az-kar-dr-mashyn-sazy-arak> (accessed on 29 March 2025).
- Arendt, Hannah. 1968. *Men in Dark Times*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Bahá'í International Community. 2011. *Inciting Hatred Iran's Media Campaign to Demonize Bahá'ís*. New York. Available online: <https://www.bic.org/publications/inciting-hatredirans-media-campaign-demonize-bahais> (accessed on 30 March 2025).

- Bahá'í International Community. 2015. 'Their Progress and Development Are Blocked'—The Economic Oppression of Iran's Bahá'ís. New York. Available online: https://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/the_economic_oppression_of_irans_bahais_151013.pdf (accessed on 30 March 2025).
- Bahá'í International Community. 2016. The Destruction of the Cultural Sites of the Bahá'ís in Iran. Geneva, Switzerland. Available online: <https://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/srculturalrights-0416.pdf> (accessed on 31 March 2025).
- Bahá'í International Community. 2023a. *For The Betterment of The World; The Worldwide Bahá'í Community's Approach to Social and Economic Development*. New York: Bahá'í International Community.
- Bahá'í International Community. 2023b. *The Bahá'í Question: Persecution and Resilience in Iran*. New York: Bahá'í International Community. Available online: <https://www.bic.org/publications/bahai-question-persecution-and-resilience-iran> (accessed on 31 March 2025).
- Bahá'í World Centre. 2017. *The Five Year Plan 2011–2016 Summary of Achievements and Learning*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre.
- Bahá'u'lláh. 1992. *The Kitáb-i Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre.
- Bahá'u'lláh. 2022. *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre.
- Brookshaw, Dominic Parviz, and Seena B. Fazel. 2008. *The Bahá'ís of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*. Routledge Advances in Middle East and Islamic Studies 12. London: Routledge.
- Buck, Christopher. 2020. *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics*. Milton: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Cameron, Geoffrey, and Nazila Ghanea. 2018. Bahá'ís in the Middle East. In *Routledge Handbook of Minorities in the Middle East*. Edited by Paul S. Rowe. London: Routledge.
- Collins, Randall. 1998. *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Department of the Secretariat. 2020. *Letter to Dr. Robert Stockman, December 16, 2020*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre.
- Effendi, Shoghi. 1938. *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 1993. *Spirit of Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 1996. *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*. New York: Basic Books.
- Farmán Newspaper. 1978. Farmaan: Expulsion of Bahá'ís from Government Offices, 28 December 1978. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/frman-akhraj-bhayyan-az-adarat-dwlty> (accessed on 29 March 2025).
- Ghaemmaghami, Omid, and Shahin Vafai. 2025. *Exploring the Kitáb-i Aqdas: The Laws and Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith*, 1st ed. London: I. B. Tauris & Company.
- Ghanea-Hercock, Nazila. 2002. *Human Rights, the UN and the Bahá'ís in Iran*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Habermas, Juergen. 1984a. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Juergen. 1984b. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- House of Justice. 1995a. 26 December 1995—To the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/19951226_001/1#876015958 (accessed on 1 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 1995b. 27 April 1995—To an Individual, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/19950427_001/1#985937741 (accessed on 1 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2006. 22 March 2006—To the Iranian Believers Living Outside Iran, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://payamha-iran.org/document/62> (accessed on 1 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2007. 9 September 2007—Message of the Universal House of Justice Addressed to Bahá'í Students in Iran Who Have Been Deprived of Higher Education, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://www.payamha-iran.org/document/60> (accessed on 2 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2008. 31 October 2008—To the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://www.payamha-iran.org/en/document/54> (accessed on 2 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2009. 9 February 2009—To the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://www.payamha-iran.org/en/document/53> (accessed on 2 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2010. 2010 Ridván Message—To the Bahá'ís of the World, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: https://universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/ridvan-messages/20100421_001 (accessed on 2 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2011. 14 May 2011—To the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://www.payamha-iran.org/en/document/36> (accessed on 3 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2013. 2 March 2013—To the Bahá'ís of Iran, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20130302_001/1#473077094 (accessed on 3 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2015. 19 January 2015—Message of the House of Justice to an Individual, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://www.payamha-iran.org/document/828> (accessed on 3 April 2025).

- House of Justice. 2016a. 4 February 2016—To the Bahá'ís of Iran, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://www.payamha-iran.org/en/document/127> (accessed on 3 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2016b. 23 June 2016, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://payamha-iran.org/document/141> (accessed on 3 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2020. 24 November 2020—Extract from a Letter Dated 24 November 2020 Written on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an Individual Believer, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: <https://payamha-iran.org/document/324> (accessed on 4 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2021. 30 December 2021—To the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20211230_001/1#758524470 (accessed on 4 April 2025).
- House of Justice. 2022. 1 November 2022—To the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bahá'í Reference Library. Available online: https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20221101_001/1#561948941 (accessed on 4 April 2025).
- Imperial Iranian Air Force. 1977. Dismissal of Tahmoures Samandari Sisan from the Air Force. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/akhraj-thmwrth-smndry-sysan-az-nyrwy-hwayy> (accessed on 29 March 2025).
- Ittilá'át Newspaper. 1979a. Discovery of Two Anti-Revolutionary Bahá'í Centers in Mashhad, 3 March 1979. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/rwznamh-atlaat-kshf-dw-mrkz-ddanqlaby-bhayy-dr-mshhd> (accessed on 29 March 2025).
- Ittilá'át Newspaper. 1979b. Imam Khomeini's Criticism of the Shah's Actions in Favor of the Bahá'ís, 21 January 1979. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/rwznamh-kyhan-antqad-amam-khmyny-az-aqdamat-shah-bh-nf-bhayyan> (accessed on 29 March 2025).
- Ittilá'át Newspaper. 1979c. The Discovery of Espionage Documents from Hāzīratu'l-Quds in Tehran, 6 March 1979. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/rwznamh-atlaat-kshf-asnad-jaswsy-az-hzyrtalqds-thran> (accessed on 29 March 2025).
- Karlberg, Michael. 2010. Constructive Resilience: The Bahá'í Response to Oppression. *Peace & Change* 35: 222–57. [CrossRef]
- Karlberg, Michael, and Todd Smith. 2022. A Culture of Learning. In *The World of the Bahá'í Faith*. Edited by Robert Stockman. London: Routledge, pp. 463–78.
- Karlberg, Michael Robert. 2004. *Beyond the Culture of Contest: From Adversarialism to Mutualism in an Age of Interdependence*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Karlberg, Michael Robert. 2020. *Constructing Social Reality: An Inquiry into the Normative Foundations of Social Change*, 1st ed. Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies.
- Kazemzadeh, Mark, and Lin Zhu. 2023. Exploring Constructive Resilience: A Qualitative Investigation of the Bahá'í Response to Oppression. *Journal of Conflict Management* 8: 22–41.
- Lample, Paul. 2004. *Creating a New Mind*. West Palm Beach: Palabra Publications.
- Lample, Paul. 2008. *Revelation and Social Reality*. West Palm Beach: Palabra Publications.
- Milani, Abbas. 2008. *Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941–1979, Volumes One and Two*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. 1978. Gholam Zahedi Expelled from Sari Rural Cooperative Union. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/ghlam-zahdy-az-dr-athadyh-tawny-rwstayy-sary> (accessed on 29 March 2025).
- Ministry of Education. 1978. Mehrnoosh Showkati's Dismissal from Work. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/akhraj-mhrnwsh-shwkty-az-kar> (accessed on 30 March 2025).
- Momen, Moojan. 1991. The Bahá'í Community of Ashkhabad: Its Social Basis and Importance in Bahá'í History. In *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*. Edited by Shirin Akiner. London: Kegan Paul International, pp. 278–305.
- Momen, Moojan. 2008. Baha'i Schools in Iran. In *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*. Edited by Seena B. Fazel and Dominic Parviz Brookshaw. Routledge Advances in Middle East and Islamic Studies 12. London: Routledge.
- Momen, Moojan. 2015. *The Bahá'í Communities of Iran 1851–1921 Volume 1: The North of Iran*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Momen, Moojan. 2021. *The Bahá'í Communities of Iran 1851–1921 Volume 2: The South of Iran*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Momen, Moojan. 2025. The Bābī-Bahá'ī Revolution in Iran. *Iranian Studies*, 1–24. [CrossRef]
- National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran. 1983a. Open Letter from the Bahá'í Community of Iran Regarding the Closure of Bahá'í Institutions in Iran, 3 September 1983. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/namh-srgshadh-mhfl-bhayyan-ayran-dr-mwrdr-ttyly-mwssat-bhayy-dr-ayran> (accessed on 30 March 2025).
- National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran. 1983b. The National Spiritual Assembly's Letter to the Bahá'í Community of Iran Regarding the Closure of Bahá'í Institutions in Iran, 3 September 1983. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/namh-mhfl-mly-bh-jamh-bhayy-ayran-drbarh-ttyly-mwssat-bhayy-dr-ayran> (accessed on 30 March 2025).

- Palmer, David. 2018. Religion, Spiritual Principles, and Civil Society. In *Religion and Public Discourse in an Age of Transition: Reflections on Bahá'í Practice and Thought*. Edited by Geoffrey Cameron and Benjamin Schewel. Bahá'í Studies. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Police Intelligence and Public Security Office of Tehran. 2007. *Letter to Commanders of Local Law Enforcement and Heads of Police Intelligence and Public Security*. No. 22/2/1314, 8 April 2007. Islamic Republic of Iran Law Enforcement Force, Public Places Supervision Department. Archives of Bahá'í Persecution in Iran. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/sham-nywz-mshaghl-mmnw-bray-bhayyan> (accessed on 30 March 2025).
- Razavi, Shahriar. 2018. Bahá'í Participation in Public Discourse: Considerations Related to History, Concepts, and Approach. In *Religion and Public Discourse in an Age of Transition: Reflections on Bahá'í Practice and Thought*. Edited by Geoffrey Cameron and Benjamin Schewel. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, pp. 151–78.
- Ritzer, George, and Jeffrey Stepnisky. 2021. *Sociological Theory*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Saiedi, Nader. 2000. *Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Bethesda: University Press of Maryland.
- Saiedi, Nader. 2008. *Gate of the Heart: Understanding the Writings of the Báb*. Bahá'í Studies Series. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Sandel, Michael J. 2020. *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* London: Penguin.
- Statement by a Group of Clerics from the Khorasan Seminary Against the Bahá'ís. 1979. 2 March 1979. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/alamyh-jmy-az-rwhanywn-hwzh-lmyh-khrasan-lyh-bhayyan> (accessed on 30 March 2025).
- Stockman, Robert H. 2020. *The Bahá'í Faith, Violence, and Non-Violence*, 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad. 2008. Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran. In *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*. Edited by Seena B. Fazel and Dominic Parviz Brookshaw. Translated by Omid Ghaemmaghami. Routledge Advances in Middle East and Islamic Studies 12. London: Routledge.
- Tavangar, Temily Tianmay, and David Alexander Palmer. 2023. Nurturing Inherent Nobility: Insights on Human Dignity from a Bahá'í Perspective. *Religions* 14: 250. [CrossRef]
- Taylor, Charles. 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The Newspaper Áftáb-i Sharq: Ayatollah Qomi and Ayatollah Shirazi Confirmed the Seizure of Bahá'í Centers. 1979. 5 March 1979. Available online: <https://iranbahaipersecution.bic.org/fa/archive/rwznmh-aftab-shrq-aytallh-qmy-w-aytallh-shyrazy-tsrf-mrakz-bhayy-ra-tayyd-krdnd> (accessed on 31 March 2025).
- The Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council. 1991. The ISRCC Document. Available online: <https://www.bic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/iran/1991%20Bahai%20Question%20Memo%20ENG.pdf> (accessed on 2 April 2025).
- Vahman, Fereydu. 2019. *175 Years of Persecution: A History of the Bábís & Bahá'ís of Iran*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Yazdani, Mina. 2014. Abdu'l-Bahá and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution: Embracing Principles While Disapproving Methodologies. *Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 24: 47–82. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Yazdani, Mina. 2015. Higher Education under the Islamic Republic: The Case of the Baha'is. *Journal of Educational Controversy* 10: 7. Available online: <https://cedar.wvu.edu/jec/vol10/iss1/7> (accessed on 2 April 2025).
- Yazdani, Mina. 2017. Towards a History of Iran's Bahá'í Community During the Reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, 1941–1979. *Iran Namag* 2: 66–93.
- Zabihi-Moghaddam, Siyamak. 2013. Promoting the Advancement of Women: Bahá'í Schools for Girls in Iran, 1909–35. *Iranian Studies* 46: 273–305. [CrossRef]
- Zabihi-Moghaddam, Siyamak. 2023. Women in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: A Historical and Theological Inquiry. *Religions* 14: 705. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.