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Press Statement

Adam Ereli, Deputy Spokesman

Washington, DC

December 23, 2005

Iran: Death of Zabihullah Mahrami

The United States condemns the persecution and imprisonment of Zabihullah Mahrami for his belief in the Bahá'í Faith. After ten years in prison, Mr. Mahrami died on December 15. We offer our condolences to his family and loved ones. During his imprisonment, he received death threats and was forced to perform arduous physical labor.

Unfortunately, Mr. Mahrami's incarceration is not unique. The Government of Iran is engaged in the systematic oppression of its citizens, including the persecution of individuals for religious, political and other reasons. Members of the country's religious minorities—including Sunni Muslims, Sufis, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians—are frequently imprisoned, harassed, and intimidated based on their religious beliefs. Bahá'ís are systematically denied the right to assemble, maintain administrative institutions, or worship freely. Political dissidents are targeted, as has been the case with Akbar Ganji, an investigative journalist and human rights advocate who was charged with "acting against national security" in connection with his participation at a conference in Berlin. He has been in prison for five years.

The United States calls on the government of Iran to allow freedom of religion for all Iranians, and to ensure the right to freedom of speech and expression for all its citizens, without fear of discrimination, intimidation or imprisonment.

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