Baha'is of St. Paul will hold a prayer gathering on Saturday, February 21, 7 – 8 P.M. at The St. Paul Area Council of Churches (1671 Summit Ave, St. Paul) to express their concern and support for the seven members of their religion who have been in prison in Iran for nearly a year and who are now to stand trial on false charges of spying for Israel and insulting Islam. The public is invited to attend.

The Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA) announced on February 11 that charges had been laid against the seven imprisoned members of the national-level committee that coordinates the activities for the Iranian Baha'i community. The report quoted deputy Tehran prosecutor Hassan Haddad as having said "the case will be sent to the revolutionary court next week" and that these Baha'is are accused of "espionage for Israel, insulting religious sanctities and propaganda against the Islamic republic."

The Baha'is deny categorically these charges. No evidence against them has been brought to light. The seven Baha'is were arrested in March and May of 2008 and have been held in Tehran's Evin Prison. At no time during their incarceration have they been given access to their legal counsel, Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi. Recently Mrs. Ebadi has been harassed, intimidated and threatened by the Iranian government and has not been given access to their case files.

The prosecution of the leaders is just one step in a 30-year-long systematic campaign orchestrated by the government to eliminate the Baha'i community as a viable entity in Iran, the birthplace of the Baha'i Faith.

At this time, some thirty other Baha'is are imprisoned in Iran solely on account of their religion. Close to 80 more Baha'is, have been required to post deeds of property and business licenses as collateral for bail. They have likewise been falsely charged and are awaiting trial.

The Baha'i Faith is the youngest of the world's independent monotheistic religions and one of the fastest-growing, with a significant presence throughout the United States. Baha'is view the world's major religions as part of a single, progressive process through which God reveals His will to humanity. Major Baha'i tenets include the oneness of humanity, equality of men and women, eradication of prejudice, harmony of science and religion, universal education and world peace.

Updates and background on the situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran are posted at http://iran.bahai.us . To learn more about the Baha'i Faith in America, check www.bahai.us .