

## **Principles and processes that facilitate the realisation of the freedom to believe in the individual lives of Bahá'ís**

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### Abstract:

Over sixty five years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights boldly proclaimed the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family. The Declaration specifically enshrined the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Yet despite the international community's unanimous adoption of this document and its' subsequent codification into instruments of international law, the promise of freedom of religion or belief remains one of the most pressing and contested human rights of our time.

While increasing attention has been paid in recent years to the widespread and systematic denial of the right to freedom of religion or belief of the followers of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran, that country's largest religious minority, relatively little is known about how this fundamental right is upheld in the Bahá'í community itself. This presentation seeks to explore this question by examining the principles and processes that facilitate the realisation of the freedom to believe in the individual lives of Bahá'ís and in the operation of the Bahá'í community itself. In this regard, there will be a discussion of the unique approach to consultation and decision-making that lie at the heart of Bahá'í community life.