

The expulsion of Mr. Armin Nourdel from the University of Tabriz

On 26 October 2013, Mr. Armin Nourdel was informed by the Office of the Deputy for Academic and Cultural Affairs that the university had not yet received confirmation of his enrolment and registration from the Sanjesh Organization¹ and that he should not attend classes for the next three weeks. At Mr. Nourdel's insistence, he was given the order in writing which was signed but not stamped with the official stamp of the office. Mr. Nourdel continued attending classes. However, his name had been taken off from the university website and the school attendance sheet. Upon his insistence, the professors added his name to the attendance sheet. On 11 September 2013, Mr. Nourdel went to the office of the deputy for academic and cultural affairs. The official in charge claimed that he was personally pursuing the case and that he had written to both the Sanjesh Organization and the Ministry of Education and that the ministry had given him the order by telephone to prevent Mr. Nourdel from attending classes. Again, after a lengthy discussion, the official finally agreed that Mr. Nourdel could attend classes on the condition that he did not discuss the issue with anyone.

On 29 October the office called the workplace of Mr. Nourdel's father and instructed him to contact an individual by the name of Faghihinia to arrange for a meeting. Mr. Nourdel went to the office once again. The official explained that Mr. Faghihinia was the representative of the Ministry of Science and Technology for non-profit educational institutions in the province of Eastern Azarbayegan. Despite Mr. Nourdel's insistence, he was not given a letter of introduction to take to Mr. Faghihinia. He then went to the University of Tabriz (where Mr. Faghihinia was said to be) and, without mentioning his name, requested a meeting with the representative of the Ministry of Science and Technology for the non-profit educational institutions. The security guard at the main gate of the university stated that there was no such post or office at that university, whereupon Mr. Nourdel immediately went to the Central Bar Association of Tabriz and explained the situation to them. They advised him to return to the Sanjesh Organization and to the Ministry of Science and Technology. He went to the Sanjesh Organization, where he was told that they were not responsible and that if there were any problem the university had to be in contact with them. They added that it was unlikely that the Sanjesh Organization would issue an order to a university over the telephone and ask them to deny entry to a student. Following this, he went to the Student Affairs Association and met with its deputy, who, after being informed of the situation, asked Mr. Nourdel whether he was a member of a religious minority. Mr. Nourdel indicated that he was. The deputy asked which religion Mr. Nourdel belonged to and he responded that he is a Bahá'í, at which point the deputy said that he was unable to help Mr. Nourdel and told him to see an official in the Sanjesh Organization building. Mr. Nourdel did not comply.

Mr. Nourdel continued attending classes until 23 November 2013 when the guard at the entrance to reading room asked for his student ID. Mr. Nourdel was then denied entry for not having a student card. He was then sent to the Office of Herasat² where he spoke to an official who asked why he was attending classes when he was instructed not to. Mr. Nourdel responded that he had never received an official notification not to attend his classe. Mr. Nourdel was then taken to the office where he was told very sharply that he should go the University of Tabriz and meet with Mr. Faghihinia immediately, who he was told was the representative of the Sanjesh Organization for the entire province. After going to the university, he found that Mr. Faghihinia was, in fact, the deputy director of the Office of Hirasat at the University of Tabriz until his retirement, after which he had been appointed

¹ Educational Measurement and Evaluation Organization (EMEO)

² Herasat: An intelligence service that has an office in every university and government organizations in Iran

director of the Office of Hirasat for all the non-profit institutions of higher education in the entire province and that he was actually situated at the central library of the university.

Mr. Nourdel again continued to attend classes until he was prevented from entering the campus on 30 November 2013 by the same security guard that had previously stopped him. He was told that specific instructions had been issued not to allow him to enter the institution. At Mr. Nourdel's insistence, he was taken to the office of another official who also refused to let him attend classes. In response to Mr. Nourdel's request for an official notification, he was told he could not be provided with one as the secretaries had all gone home but that he could receive it the next day. Following this meeting, Mr. Nourdel went to class. However, after approximately thirty minutes, the security guard came and spoke to the lecturer who then asked him to leave the classroom. Mr. Nourdel requested an official notification in writing from him. The guard said that he could not provide him with one as the secretaries had gone home and that he could get one the next day.

The next day, a meeting was scheduled for 4 December with Mr. Faghihinia. During this meeting, Mr. Faghihinia opened a file with a letter that had the word "confidential" stamped on it and said to Mr. Nourdel: "You are a Bahá'í, therefore, according to the law and the orders received, you cannot attend the university." When Mr. Nourdel asked "According to which law?" Mr. Faghihinia responded, "I do not have to explain the law to you!". Mr. Nourdel then reminded him about Article 23 of the Constitution, and asked to receive the reasons for his dismissal officially and in writing. He said that such a letter should be issued by Dr. Nawrouzi, the president of the Seraj Institute for Higher Education. A few days later, Mr. Nourdel visited Dr. Nawrouzi, who indicated that he had been expecting Mr. Nourdel. Dr. Nawrouzi informed Mr. Nourdel that in accordance with the Constitution of the land, he was not permitted to continue his education because he is a Bahá'í. When Mr. Nourdel asked him where in the Constitution this is specified, Dr. Nawrouzi responded angrily and loudly, "I teach the law and, according to the unwritten article of law, you do not have permission to get an education!" Mr. Nourdel asked, "How could there be an unwritten law? If there is truly such a thing, then put it in writing and expel me on those grounds." Dr. Nawrouzi refused, stating that if he were to do so, the Bahá'ís would publish and broadcast it through social networks.

After a short discussion on the Constitution of the country, Mr. Nourdel left. He submitted a letter he had prepared for Dr. Nawrouzi in which he had asked Dr. Nawrouzi to kindly take the steps required to allow him to continue attending his classes. Some two weeks later, he had not yet received a response. He subsequently visited Dr. Nawrouzi in person a few times, and all Dr. Nawrouzi stated was that he was discussing the matter with the higher authorities, who have not yet given him an answer.