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Forbidden Education ^[1]

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On February 3rd, 2012, the USC School of Cinematic Arts held a screening for “Education Under Fire,” a film that provides a provocative insight into the lives of Bahá’ís in Iran who lack access to the country’s education system.

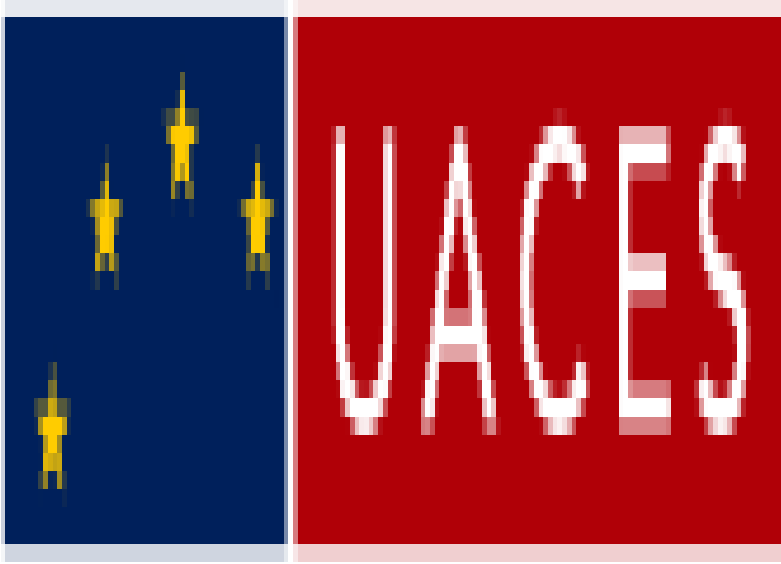
According to the United Nations, education is a human right. Unfortunately, not every government agrees with this principle. In countries such as Iran, education is denied to individuals solely because they are Bahá’í, a faith that is based on spiritual unity of all humankind.

While watching the film, I was deeply moved by the struggles Bahá’ís would endure to access an education – while their non-Bahai’ counterparts (Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Mandeans, Yarsanis, and Zoroastrians) were able to take advantage of Iran’s educational institutions.

Some Bahá’ís secretly meet at undisclosed locations to learn – oftentimes with large groups of individuals in a small room. They travel to these locations with the ongoing fear of being caught, incarcerated and possibly even executed, all for an education.

The film reminded me of my mother in many ways. Growing up, my mother told me stories of being denied an education by her father due to economic reasons in Guatemala. She instilled in me a thirst for education, a passion for intellectual growth, and an appreciation for life’s opportunities.

In some ways, I connected with the Bahá’í students in the film through their personal narratives. I cannot claim to have faced the struggles they have, but I relate and am inspired by their efforts in seeking a higher education.



Post screening discussion

This film presents an open door for the global audience to become involved in the Bahá'ís education advocacy movement in Iran. Awareness of the persecution these students face is a critical first step. The Education Under Fire campaign skillfully utilizes documentary filmmaking as a public diplomacy tool to address the needs of the Bahá'í in Iran. Additionally, the film persuades Iranian officials to acknowledge the unethical treatment towards the Bahá'í. The Bahá'í testimonies provide a window of understanding to audiences and builds cultural awareness. As a soft power medium, the film is working towards expanding global partnerships with Amnesty International and American educational institutions. For more information, visit the Education Under Fire website at www.educationunderfire.com where you can sign their petition to create change for the Baha'i students.
