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The Bahá’ í International Community commends the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Ms. Farida Shaheed, for undertaking this study on the issue of historical and memorial narratives in divided societies. It is certain that as long as a society is not prepared to recognize its diversity and build upon it in a constructive manner, it will not be able to fully reap the benefits of its cultural heritage and move forward towards a harmonious future.

Regrettably, minorities often serve as one of the easiest targets for a nation’s historical blind spots, particularly if the government is bent on suppressing their human rights.

In Iran, for decades history books have either distorted or simply removed any mention of the inception and existence of the Bábí and Bahá’í Faiths in that country. Iranian history books and textbooks fail to mention that more than 20 000 followers of the Faith were killed in its early history in the mid-1800s either by government forces or by mobs incited by religious leaders. Such texts also fail to acknowledge renowned Iranian historical figures associated with this Faith. The figure of Táhirih *Qurral’ul-Ayn* is a case in point. Not only is she one of the most prominent Iranian poetesses, she was also a pioneer in women’s rights being widely recognized as the first woman to remove the forced Islamic veil in 1848. However, her poetry is ignored and sometimes attributed to other unknown individuals, including men.

The amnesia of the Iranian government does not limit itself only to books that are produced in Iran. It also extends to omitting the parts that concern the Bábí or Bahá’í Faiths in the translation of foreign history books:

Christopher Partridge’s *The New Lion Handbook: The World's Religions*has been translated and published in Iran by the Iranian Society of History (<http://ishistory.ir/?a=content.id&id=1129&print=1>). In this translation, the entire chapter on the Bahá’í Faith has been omitted. Also, any paragraphs or sentences in other chapters that had mentioned the Faith were deleted. In a few other places, when the name Bahá’u’lláh (the Founder of the Bahá’í Faith) was mentioned, it was replaced by the name “Ibn `Arabí.”

These are just two examples in a whole host of examples that we hope to submit to the Special Rapporteur for her upcoming report. In a country like Iran, where the government is unrelenting in its incitement of hatred against members of the Bahá’í Faith, such omissions and distortions represent a far more grave concern. It is therefore essential that these practices be exposed in order for Iranian children ̶ and adults ̶ to have access to an uncensored account of its historical diversity, in order that they may be enabled to decide for themselves how they want to read their history.