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## THE BAHAI FAITH IN THE UNITED STATES

### Present Status

The United States membership of the Baha'i Faith is as rich in racial and cultural diversity as the American population itself. Baha'is are found in some 7,200 localities throughout the country, whether on the Indian reservations or in the large metropolitan centers, whether in the hundreds of rural hamlets in the South or the farming communities of the Midwest. Local governing bodies, known as Spiritual Assemblies, are currently elected and functioning in 1,650 cities and towns. These assemblies are responsible for the performing of Baha'i marriages, the holding of property as trustees of the community, the advising and counseling of individuals on personal matters, the insuring of the moral and spiritual education of Baha'i children, youth and adults, and the maintenance of the integrity and accuracy of all Baha'i teaching.

Since the first National Convention of Baha'i representatives in 1909, a Baha'i national governing body has been annually elected to administer the affairs of the national community. In 1927, this body was incorporated as the Baha'i National Spiritual Assembly. As in all Baha'i elections, the nine men and women who comprise the National Spiritual Assembly are elected by secret ballot, without campaigning or nominations.

Wherever they reside, Baha'is are, as a matter of religious principle, obedient to the law and loyal to the government. They are adherents of the tenets of the Baha'i Faith, some of which are:

- the oneness of God;
- the oneness of mankind;
- the common divine foundation of the world's great religions;
- the equality of men and women;
- elimination of all forms of prejudice;
- the essential harmony of science and religion;
- the establishment of a world peace upheld by a world government;
- the need for universal compulsory education; and
- the application of a spiritual solution to economic problems.

### Early History

The first mention of the Baha'i Faith in the United States was made in a presentation by a Presbyterian missionary to the World Parliament of Religions at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, forty-nine years after the beginning of the religion in Persia (Iran). In the following year, a Chicago insurance salesman, who had served as a captain in the Civil War, investigated the Baha'i Faith and, completely on his own, declared himself a Baha'i. Thornton Chase became the first American Baha'i, and for that matter, the first Baha'i in the West. By the end of 1894, four other Americans had joined Chase in his new-found Faith.

In the years that followed, Baha'i groups emerged in cities across the country so that in 1909, the first National Convention greeted thirty-nine delegates from thirty-six cities.

## Highlights of the Growth of the United States Baha'i Community

In the 1920's, Baha'i communities, representing over sixty localities, increased their activities in several areas, notably in the arena of racial harmony. Racial Amity Conferences were hosted in several major cities throughout the country with the participation of the NAACP, the National Urban League, various senators and congressmen, and college presidents. In 1927, the National Spiritual Assembly framed its constitution which has served since as a model for the formation of the more than 130 national assemblies throughout the world.

By 1930, eighteen books of Baha'i scripture were available in English. Scores of other compilations, expository works, and pamphlets were being published. By the mid-1930's, Baha'is were to be found in over 200 localities. In 1944, the centennial year of the Baha'i Faith, there was no state in the country without at least one Baha'i spiritual assembly.

The year 1953 saw the dedication of the Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois. The completion of that world-renowned building symbolized the firm establishment of the American Baha'i community. Three educational centers had been established in California, Michigan, and Maine, where Baha'is gathered for study of the Baha'i Faith. A Baha'i Home for the Aged later became an auxiliary institution to the House of Worship.

By 1963, Baha'is were resident in 1,700 localities; by 1968, in 2,200. At present, Baha'is reside in over 7,200 localities throughout the United States with the largest number of Baha'is found in the states of South Carolina, California, Texas, Georgia and Illinois.

Baha'i Office of Public Affairs  
April 1982

97TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. CON. RES. 377

Condemning the persecution of the Baha'is by the Government of Iran and calling upon the President to take steps to bring an end to their persecution.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 20, 1982

Mr. LEACH of Iowa (for himself, Mr. DEWINSKI, Mr. PORTER, and Mr. STARK) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Condemning the persecution of the Baha'is by the Government of Iran and calling upon the President to take steps to bring an end to their persecution.

Whereas at least 111 Baha'is and Baha'i religious leaders have been executed by the Government of Iran;

Whereas some Baha'is in Iran have disappeared, other Baha'is have been tortured, persecuted, harassed, and deprived of personal property and employment, and Baha'i holy places in Iran have been desecrated;

Whereas the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes only the Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians as minorities that are free to practice their religion, and does not so recognize the Baha'i faith;



Whereas the stated justification for the repression of the Baha'is has been unfounded allegations that the Baha'is have acted as the agents of foreign political interests;

Whereas despite this stated justification, the continued execution and repression of the Baha'is is evidence that the Government of Iran has launched a deliberate effort to destroy the Baha'is as a religious community, an action constituting a crime against humanity for which the international community would hold the Government of Iran responsible;

Whereas the Government of Iran is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which in Article 18 states that everyone shall have the right to freedom of religion and in Article 27 states that persons belonging to religious minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to profess and practice their own religion;

Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Commission adopted a resolution in March 1982 expressing deep concern over human rights violations in Iran and requesting the United Nations Secretary General to establish direct contacts with the Government of Iran on the human rights situation in Iran and to continue his efforts to ensure that the Baha'is are guaranteed their basic human rights; and

Whereas the United Nations General Assembly, of which Iran is a member, adopted by consensus in November 1981 the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief: Now, therefore, be it

- 1        *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
- 2 *concurring)*, That (a) the Congress condemns the persecution
- 3 of the Baha'is in Iran by the Iranian Government.

1 (b) The Congress urges the Government of Iran, as a  
2 party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political  
3 Rights, to comply with its obligations to respect the human  
4 rights of the Baha'is without distinction as to religion.

5 (c) The Congress calls on the President—

6 (1) to use every opportunity in international fora  
7 to emphasize the extent to which the people of the  
8 United States deplore and condemn the religious perse-  
9 cution of the Baha'is;

10 (2) to urge foreign governments to make urgent  
11 appeals to the Iranian authorities to cease the execu-  
12 tion and persecution of the Baha'is and to respect their  
13 right, under international law, to religious freedom;

14 (3) to cooperate with the United Nations Human  
15 Rights Commission and the United Nations Secretary  
16 General in their efforts on behalf of the Baha'is in  
17 Iran, and to support the establishment of a United Na-  
18 tions working group on religious persecution which  
19 would deal with the Baha'i issue; and

20 (4) to take all necessary steps to assure that ap-  
21 propriate humanitarian assistance is provided to  
22 Baha'is fleeing repression in Iran.

23 SEC. 2. The Congress requests the President to forward  
24 copies of this resolution to the United Nations Secretary  
25 General, the Chairman of the United Nations Human Rights

1 Commission, the Government of Iran, and appropriate for-  
2 eign governments which maintain diplomatic relations with  
3 that Government.





H. Con. Res. 378 is identical to S. Con. Res. 73 (the Heinz Resolution, approved by the Senate June 30). H. Con. Res. 378 was approved by the House Foreign Affairs Committee's subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organization July 29, and will soon go to the full Committee and to the House floor.

Sponsors of House Congressional Resolution 378

BONKER, Don, (D WA - 3), Olympia - Foreign Affairs; Chairman, Human Rights and International Organizations Subcommittee

BUTLER, M. Caldwell, (R VA-6), Roanoke-Judiciary Committee

DERWINSKI, Edward J., (R IL-4), Flossmoor - Foreign Affairs; Ranking minority member, International Operations

EMERY, David F., (R ME-1), Rockland

FITHIAN, Floyd J., (D IN-2), Lafayette

FLORIO, James J., (D NJ-1), Stratford

FORD, Harold E., (D TN-8), Memphis

FOWLER, Wyche, Jr., (D GA-5), Atlanta

HORTON, Frank, (R NY-34), Rochester

LAGOMARSINO, Robert J., (R CA-19), Ventura - Foreign Affairs; ranking minority member International Economic Policy and Trade subcommittee

LE BOUTILLIER, John, (R NY-6), Westbury - Foreign Affairs;

LENT, Norman F., (R NY-4), East Rockaway

LOWERY, Bill, (R CA-41), San Diego

MARKEY, Edward J., (D MA-7), Malden

PEPPER, Claude D., (D FL-14), Miami

ROSENTHAL, Benjamin S., (D NY-8), Elmhurst - Foreign Affairs

SCHROEDER, Patricia, (D CO-1), Denver - Judiciary

WEBER, Ed, (R OH - 9), Toledo

WEISS, Ted S., (D NY-20), New York

WOLF, Frank R., (R VA-10), Vienna

WOLPE, Howard, (D MI-3), Lansing - Foreign Affairs; Chairman Africa subcommittee

YATES, Sidney R., (D IL-9), Chicago



Marjorie H. Sonnenfeldt  
Director, International  
Government Affairs

August 2, 1982

Memo to: *Mr. Morton Blackwell*

A Congressional Resolution condemning the persecution of Baha'is in Iran has been approved by the Senate, and is now moving through the House. Its sponsors expect the Congress to complete action on the Resolution within the next few weeks.

SENATE: The Senate approved June 30, by unanimous consent, a Resolution introduced by Sen. John Heinz and more than twenty co-sponsors.

S. Con. Res. 73 finds that "the continued harassment and murder of Baha'is demonstrates that the government of Iran has launched a conscious effort to destroy the Baha'i community," and urges the Iranian government to cease persecuting "law abiding citizens who only wish to worship in freedom."

The wide range of support for the Baha'is is indicated by statements by Senators Heinz, Sarbanes, Denton and Kennedy. (excerpts of Congressional Record, June 30, 1982, enclosed.)\*\*\*

HOUSE: Language identical to the Senate Resolution was approved by the House Foreign Affairs Committee's subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations on July 29. Twenty-two Congressmen (list enclosed) sponsored this measure, which is tentatively scheduled for action *August 4 (Sarbanes) p/s* by the full House Foreign Affairs Committee.

There may be an effort to substitute a stronger measure (sponsored by Reps. Leach, Derwinski, Porter and Stark) which urges the President of the United States to take various actions in support of the Baha'is (H.Con.Res.377, enclosed).

The House Committee is expected to report one of the Resolutions, and Congressional sponsors expect a Resolution to clear Congress within a few weeks.

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\*\*\* In addition, the following Senators have publicly expressed support for the Baha'is, in the form of statements in Congress, and/or letters directed to Iranian Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan in 1979: *(attached)*

Republicans Boschwitz, Chafee, Cohen, D'Amato, Danforth, Denton, Dole, Domenici, Durenberger, Garn, Hatfield, Hayakawa, Heinz, Humphrey, Lugar, McClure, Murkowski, Percy, Pressler, Rudman, Thurmond.

Democrats Baucus, Boren, Cannon, Chiles, Cranston, Eagleton, Exon, Hart, Hollings, Huddleston, Inouye, Kennedy, Levin, Melcher, Metzenbaum, Moynihan, Pell, Proxmire, Sarbanes, Sasser, Zorinski.

*Please note that Senator Dole was the first to take this initiative.*

# Iran's terror tactics reaching U.S. Baha'is



Richard Matthews

LARGELY UNNOTICED amongst the terror and turmoil that is revolutionary Iran, an entire religious group is in danger of being exterminated.

With the fire of fundamentalist fanaticism burning in their breasts, the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini's "One Way" have been waging a campaign to wipe out the Baha'i religion in Iran. The sect, founded in Iran in 1844 as an offshoot of Islam, is now a small but worldwide faith that preaches universal peace, equality of all people and the underlying oneness of all religions.

At last count, according to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the U.S., at least 113 members of this gentle faith have been executed or abducted by the religious extremists who now rule Iran. The government

has thrown others out of their jobs, destroyed their homes, confiscated their property and desecrated their cemeteries.

All of this has been done without trial, or with nothing more than religious kangaroo courts which find Baha'is guilty of being "corrupt" and "fighting God and His Messenger" simply because they are Baha'is.

The campaign of slow genocide against the Iranians who follow the Baha'i faith is, for all its horror, not surprising. Baha'is have been the target of attacks periodically throughout the last century or so, often with the connivance of the government (including that of Shah Reza Pahlavi). And the new constitution of Iran, drawn up by the fervent Shiite Moslems who overthrew the shah, refuses to recog-

nize Baha'i as a religion, even though it promises freedom of worship for Christians, Zoroastrians and even Jews.

The current repression and slaughter are more frightening, though, because they are so systematic and because they are being officially endorsed by the highest judicial and governmental officials in Khomeini's revolutionary regime.

Iranian Baha'is have tried to protest the terror tactics since they began shortly after the overthrow of the shah, but they've had little success — especially since almost all their leaders have been abducted or killed. Outside the country, members of the faith and such organizations as the United Nations, the European Parliament and various national governments have

called on Khomeini's government to stop the repression, but to no avail.

There may be nothing anyone can do to end the brutality within Iran. Unlike the Baha'is, who believe in "the elimination of prejudice of all kinds," the zealots who control the country are totally prejudiced against anyone who does not believe exactly as they do — even fellow Moslems.

But we should be aware that the persecution is spreading beyond Iran's borders — and into the United States.

Last week a group of American Baha'is were planning a prayer service at a hotel in Morgantown, W. Va., as part of a national day of prayer honoring their counterparts in Iran. On the morning of the scheduled service, hotel officials came to them and reported that Iranian students at the University of West Virginia had called

and threatened violence if the meeting were held. According to a national Baha'i spokesman, the Iranians threatened to harm the Baha'is and to damage the hotel. The hotel officials returned the group's deposit and asked them to move the meeting, which they did.

This wasn't the first run-in between American Baha'is and Iranians. Last month in Reno, Nev., a small group was meeting when a number of Islamic Iranians burst into the hall and interrupted the session. No one was hurt, but the Iranians went outside the room and stood chanting and screaming, disrupting the meeting. A similar incident occurred recently in Toronto, Baha'i officials said.

We may not be able to stop the attacks on Baha'is in Iran, but we surely can do something about attempts to

rob American Baha'is of their right to gather and worship as they please in this country. Islamic Iranians visiting or living here can bring with them whatever bigoted beliefs about other faiths they want, but they must not be allowed to import the vicious tactics of their bloody homeland.

Authorities in Morgantown ought to be doing their damndest to find out who made the threats against the Baha'i group there. And authorities everywhere else in America should be prepared to make it clear, if incidents occur, that Khomeini-style religious bigotry and terrorism don't go here. Iranians may succeed in their inhuman campaigns at home, but if they try to persecute Baha'is in this country they should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law — or shipped out on the next boat.



# The American Bahá'í

## Prayer meeting is disrupted in West Virginia

The shadow of persecution of the Faith in Iran darkened the landscape in Morgantown, West Virginia, March 27 as a Bahá'í observance of the Day of Prayer called for by the National Spiritual Assembly to honor Bahá'ís martyred in the Cradle of the

Faith had to be moved because of telephoned threats that were believed to have come from Iranian students at West Virginia University.

Representatives of the Hotel Morgan, which was to have been the site of the meeting, called on the Bahá'ís shortly before it was scheduled to be held and refunded a deposit, explaining that they had received threats from a group of Iranian students who promised to disrupt the gathering, damage the hotel, and cause the Bahá'ís physical harm.

IT MARKED the second time in as many months that a Bahá'í gathering in this country was disrupted by Iranian students.

On February 27, Muslim students at the University of Nevada-Reno appeared at an Ayyám-i-Há party being held in a building across from the university campus in Reno.

The students chanted pro-Kho-

meini slogans and distributed anti-Bahá'í literature. No violence was reported, and the 100 believers and their guests left the building without further incident.

On learning of the possibility of violence in Morgantown, Gloria Allen, secretary of the Spiritual Assembly, immediately contacted the Bahá'í National Center, and her report was brought to the attention of the National Spiritual Assembly, which was conducting its monthly meeting that weekend.

Telegrams were sent to Gov. John D. Rockefeller of West Virginia, Mayor James Craig of Morgantown, and E. Gordon Gee, president of West Virginia University, in which the National Assembly appealed for a full investigation of the threats of violence against the Bahá'í community of Morgantown.

The telegrams read: "We are deeply shocked that threats of

Please See MEETING Page 4

### What's inside

THE PUBLIC Affairs Committee reports a great upsurge in media publicity for the Faith. Page 6

SUMMER teaching projects around the world are detailed by the International Goals Committee. Page 8

A COMPLETE listing of U.S. Bahá'í Summer Schools. Pages 10-11

A CRY from the Heart, a powerful new book by the Hand of the Cause of God William Sears, is now available. Page 15

## Meeting

Continued From Page 1

property damage and bodily harm by a group suspected of being Islamic Iranian students at West Virginia University have been allowed to prevent local Bahá'is in Morgantown from holding a publicly announced prayer meeting for their co-religionists recently executed in Iran. Meeting was scheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday, March 27, at the Hotel Morgan.

We urgently request a full investigation, public disclosure of the facts of this incident, and assurance that the rights of American Bahá'is to assemble freely will be protected."

MEANWHILE, in Morgantown, local police were sent to the hotel to guard against possible trouble even though the Bahá'í meeting was moved to Mrs. Allen's home outside the city.

The reported threat against the Bahá'is came only a week after a

group alleged to be Iranian students disrupted a "Women's Day" gathering in Morgantown and attacked an Iranian woman for wearing western clothing.

News releases about the Morgantown incident were prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and sent to media in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Charleston and Parkersburg, West Virginia, including regional offices of the two national wire services.

Reports of the threat were broadcast on the West Virginia public television network, by two local radio stations, local TV stations in Charleston and Parkersburg, and by Pittsburgh's KDKA-TV, which sent a reporter to Morgantown to interview Mrs. Allen, hotel representatives, and local police.

Articles were published in the Morgantown Dominion-Post, the Clarksburg Telegram and the Atlanta (Georgia) Journal.

The Atlanta paper printed a lengthy article on its editorial page April 2 under the headline "Iran's terror tactics reaching U.S. Bahá'is" after contacting the Office of Public Affairs for more details.

"We may not be able to stop the attacks on the Bahá'is in Iran," the article said, "but we surely can do something about attempts to rob American Bahá'is of their right to gather and worship as they please in this country."

Referring to Iranian Muslims, it concluded by stating that "... if they try to persecute Bahá'is in this country they should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law—or shipped out on the next boat."



On Friday, February 12, Mayor John Johnson (right) of Morristown, Tennessee, was given the book *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* along with several Bahá'í pamphlets by Linda Cote, secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of Hamblen County, and Zia Ah-

madzadegan, chairman of the Assembly. The mayor was reportedly quite pleased, promised to read the book, and pledged his support to the Bahá'is in his area. This photo appeared in the local newspaper, the *Morristown Tribune*.



# Middle East Focus

## The Baha'is of Iran Under the Pahlavi Regime, 1921-1979

by Douglas Martin

On January 16, 1979, his regime discredited and his person reviled on all sides, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi fled from Iran and the Pahlavi dynasty came to an end. Less than four weeks later the Ayatollah Khomeini seized civil and military power and dismissed the Bakhtiar ministry, the last remnant of the imperial regime. Immediately, a wave of attacks began against the Baha'i community, the largest religious minority in the country, on a scale unparalleled since the horrors of the 1850s.<sup>1</sup> These attacks have steadily intensified in the past three years and now affect almost every region of the country.<sup>2</sup>

*This paper, edited here for publication, was delivered at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Association for Baha'i Studies held in Ottawa, May 29-31, 1981.*

Initially, it was assumed by superficial observers of the scene that these outrages were an integral part of the political upheaval which was occurring. It is now generally recognized that political developments in Iran have little or no relevance to the subject. Independent forums such as the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the national legislatures of several states, the European Parliament, and Amnesty International, as well as some of the most respected figures in the journalistic world have repeatedly charged that the attacks on the Iranian Baha'is represent nothing other than a systematic campaign of religious persecution.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the deliberate efforts which the Iranian authorities are making to conceal the condition of the Baha'i community, in contrast to their handling of political

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Mr. Martin, Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, one of the founders of the Association for Baha'i Studies, holds degrees from the Universities of Waterloo and Western Ontario. He has lectured and published extensively.

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questions, serves to further distinguish the Baha'i issue from other contemporary developments in Iran.<sup>4</sup>

The impression persists, however, that the persecution is a new phenomenon. In part, this impression arises from the sheer violence of the current wave of attacks and the relative ignorance on the part of Western observers of the profound changes which are taking place in Iran behind the façade of an "Islamic Revolution". In large part, however, the idea that attacks on the Iranian Baha'is are a phenomenon of the new revolutionary era has been sedulously cultivated by the Khomeini regime as part of an effort to identify the community with the ruling order under the Pahlavi shahs. The argument is that the Baha'is were in some way political allies of the Pahlavis, or, at the very least, a kind of "favoured élite" who benefited



from the former regime at the expense of their hapless Muslim fellow citizens.<sup>5</sup>

We are told that, even if it is granted that Baha'is are the victims of severe attacks, this is merely another instance (the argument goes) of "revolutionary zeal", the understandable excesses of a suffering people bent on purging their beloved homeland from a corrupt and corrupting social order. Since the Baha'i community is alleged to have been a part of this order, it was bound to attract hostility.<sup>6</sup>

The record of the Pahlavi period not only fails to support this imaginative thesis, but contradicts it in almost every significant detail.

## II

### The Regime of Reza Shah, 1921-1942

In order to understand the treatment accorded to the Baha'i minority in recent decades, it is important to appreciate the depth and extent of public prejudice against them and their religion in modern Iran. The prejudice affects not only the Islamic clergy and the illiterate masses, but is commonplace among the educated elite and the middle class. The prejudice is instinctive and has communicated itself to almost every Western observer of the scene. Michael Fischer, for example, a sympathetic observer of the Iranian revolution, remarks that: "Still today, even relatively well-educated middle-class Muslims will launch into a string of obscenities and curses against the Baha'is at the slightest excuse."<sup>7</sup> Richard W. Cottam, author of the influential work, *Nationalism in Iran*, points out the problem of discussing the subject of the Baha'i Faith in a country in which the word "Baha'i" has long been freely used as an epithet, along with such words as "infidel", to describe anyone to whom the speaker is strongly opposed.<sup>8</sup> This prejudice is probably the first important point for any Westerner wishing to understand the situation of the Baha'is in Iran, to grasp.

The second is that the prejudice is, paradoxically, combined with an almost universal ignorance in the land of the Baha'i Faith's birth, its nature, its teachings, and its history. For the past century a curtain of silence has surrounded the subject.

The Baha'i community itself has long been denied the use of the usual means of communication with the general public: radio, television, newspapers, films, free distribution of literature, the holding of public lectures, etc. The academic community in Iran has acted as if the world-wide faith born in the country literally did not exist; the subject is not treated in university courses or text books. Indeed, the existence of the community is denied by the fact that the census figures which provide statistics on all of the other religious and ethnic minorities in Iran are silent on the subject of the Baha'i community, the largest religious minority of all. Coupled with this, the public mind has been subjected, for decades, to a steady diet of violently sectarian propaganda by Shi'ih Muslim clergy, in which the role of the Baha'i community in Iran, its size, its beliefs and its objectives have been grotesquely misrepresented.

Both the ignorance and the prejudice arise from the tragic events surrounding the birth of the Babi and Baha'i faiths in mid-nineteenth century in Iran. The subject is far beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the Bab, the first of the two founders of the faith, was martyred in 1850 at the urging of Muslim clerics, and Baha'u'llah himself suffered years of imprisonment and exile initiated by the same forces. A series of pogroms were responsible for the deaths of over 20,000 of the early followers in the decade immediately after the Bab's proclamation of his mission. The horror of those days, little more than a century ago, has left a deep scar on the Iranian psyche.<sup>9</sup>

The motive for the persecution was the Shi'ih clergy's refusal to accept that there could be a revelation from God after that of Muhammad who is regarded as "the last of the Prophets". While conversion to Islam on the part of followers of earlier faiths is considered a natural and desirable phenomenon, conversion of Muslims to a successor faith is characterized as "apostasy" and, theoretically, punishable by death. These theological objections are immeasurably strengthened by the Baha'i social teachings. Essentially, the new faith teaches that mankind has entered upon the age of its unification, and that the principal

concern of religion must be to establish unity and overcome differences of race, creed, language and nation. Baha'u'llah, the founder of the faith, placed great importance on such goals as the establishment of equality between the sexes, the encouragement of universal education, with particular emphasis on the sciences, and the creation of an international government. Such concepts were anathema to the Shi'ih establishment of his own day, and are equally repugnant to their modern-day successors.

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century the community intermittently experienced persecution of one kind or another, during all of which time it was a proscribed minority which survived only by keeping a very low profile, and by adhering strictly to the Baha'i principle of avoidance of involvement in political activity. Because of the leading role which Shi'ih Muslim clerics took on both the royalist and constitutionalist sides of the political struggles of the late nineteenth century, the Baha'is were persecuted regardless of which faction was temporarily in the ascendant. In the words of Hamid Algar, an Iranian scholar who is essentially hostile to the Baha'i Faith, the Baha'is:

"came to occupy something of a position between the State and the ulama, not one enabling them to balance the two sides, but rather exposing them to blows which each side aimed at the other. The government, interested in maintaining order, would resist the persecution of the Baha'is by the ulama, but would equally, when occasion demanded, permit action against the Baha'is."<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of the 1906 constitution, which theoretically brought a new era of liberty to Iran, in fact formalized the discrimination against the Baha'is. Unlike the Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians whom they far outnumbered, the Baha'is were denied any form of recognition in the constitution and its attendant acts, with the result that they were virtually "non-persons" in Iranian public life. This point is especially important. As we have noted, Baha'is were not recognized under the law as anything other than Muslim heretics, and it is for this reason that their community does not appear in any



government census.<sup>11</sup> Baha'i marriages were not recognized, Baha'is could not count on redress in the courts, they were refused the right to operate schools, their literature was proscribed, their religious observances were at the mercy of capricious local officials, and they themselves were exposed to whatever abuse their Muslim neighbours might wish to visit upon them. From time to time, a particularly hostile mullah would incite open violence against the Baha'is in a particular town or village, with only minimal interference from the civil authorities. The Baha'is' situation was analogous in many ways to that of the Jews in medieval Europe.

With the rise of the Pahlavis in 1925, a number of important developments occurred which were to have major repercussions on the welfare of the community. It is difficult to remember today, as the Shi'ih clergy engage in an orgy of destruction of every vestige of the Pahlavi regime, that ulama were themselves among the principal allies of both Reza Shah and his son, Muhammad Reza Shah, during critical periods of their respective reigns. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of the Pahlavis having seized and maintained control of Iran for fifty-five years without the implicit and sometimes vigorously explicit support of the Shi'ih establishment.

The story of the seizure of power in Iran by Reza Khan, a Cossack officer, need not detain us.<sup>12</sup> By 1921, following the upheavals of the First World War, Iran appeared to be sinking into anarchy. It was relatively easy for Reza Khan, with the support of his Cossack troops, the assistance of certain Persian politicians, and the complaisance of the British government, to march on Tehran and carry out a *coup d'état*. Within a few months he had ousted his political allies and made himself Prime Minister. Temporarily, the deplorable Ahmad Shah, last of the Qajar rulers, was maintained on the throne as a figurehead monarch, but it was apparent to all observers that Reza Khan's intent was the dissolution of the monarchy and the establishment of an Iranian republic modelled on that of his hero, the Turkish reformer, Kamal Ataturk. In preparation for the realization of this objective, the army was expanded and uprisings by various ethnic minorities and op-

position groups were ruthlessly suppressed.

These plans were called into question in 1924 when the triumph of the Ataturk regime resulted in the abolition not merely of the Ottoman monarchy but of the Caliphate itself and in the disestablishment of the Muslim clergy in Turkey.<sup>13</sup> The lesson was not lost on the Shi'ih hierarchy in Persia. Widespread public opposition to the idea of a republic was generated, and Reza Khan was advised that a republic would be "contrary to the Islamic faith".

With the cynicism and political sagacity which were to characterize his regime, Reza Khan expressed his ready submission to this hitherto unappreciated principle of Shi'ih theology, and hastened to Qum to seek the advice of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. These worthies agreed that the best solution to the problem would be for Reza Khan simply to depose the Qajar ruler and have himself named Shah. This was accomplished on December 6, 1925, when Reza Shah drove to the meeting of the Constituent Assembly in a glass coach drawn by six horses recently purchased from the British Army, and was formally recognized as emperor. Prominent ayatollahs participated in the ceremony and presented a holy relic of the Imam Husayn to the new monarch in token of their recognition of him as not merely Head of State but regent for the Hidden Imam. Very shortly after, the name of the new Shah was duly introduced into the sacred formula of the khutba, the daily prayers and sermon in all of the mosques.

As had happened to most of the earlier alliances between various Qajar shahs and the ulama, this new partnership began to break down shortly after it was created. Reza Shah's program of modernization threatened virtually every aspect of the clergy's dominant position: plans for a secular school system, the introduction of the provisions of the Code Napoléon, new codes in dress, the introduction of the solar calendar, and a special "endowments law" aimed at bringing the clergy's vast economic preserves under the control of the State.<sup>14</sup>

Many of the mullahs continued to accept posts and honours under the Shah, but a tide of resentment began to rise among the more fundamentalist elements. Significant-

ly, one of the epithets which this growing opposition used against the regime was the all-purpose term "Babi".

The charge had its origin in the initial tolerance which Reza Shah had shown to the community after his rise to power. By that time, more than half a century had passed since the pogroms of the early Babi period, and hostility to the community was diminishing, even though the general prejudice remained. As the Shah's modernization program gathered momentum, the principles with which the Baha'is were identified came to enjoy a certain vogue among the educated classes. The Baha'i community began to hope that a new and more liberal era had dawned, and that they might be able to play a part in it.

From the Shah's perspective, too, the Baha'i minority appeared to have a high potentiality for usefulness. Apart from their progressive social teachings, the Baha'is held to two religious tenets which would have commended them to any regime in a period of crisis: loyalty to civil government and avoidance of all involvement in partisan political action. Further, they were without either foreign protectors or any independent means of redress in the Iranian social order.

During the early days of his reign, Reza Shah appointed a number of Baha'is to important positions in the civil administration, particularly those branches of government related to finance.<sup>15</sup> Although laws were passed as a salve to the mullahs, restricting the general employment of Baha'is in the civil service, minor improvements in their position began to make their appearance. Baha'is could count on a limited degree of protection from persecution and were eventually permitted to open schools. As these latter rapidly gained a reputation for excellence, the monarch was moved to enroll his own children in them.<sup>16</sup> It seemed possible that, given time, the restrictive laws might be lifted and the miasma of prejudice and hostility eventually dissipate.

A number of factors prevented this from occurring. One was certainly the success of the clergy in using the charge of "Babism" as the one safe weapon in criticizing the regime. The word still carried so deep a taint in the minds of Iranians that not even as



powerful a ruler as Reza Shah could associate himself with it in the public mind without running a risk that he would lose the loyalty of important segments of the population. At the same time, Reza Shah was showing himself adept at the "divide and rule" philosophy which was to play so important a part in the perpetuation of the Pahlavi regime. The more exposed and vulnerable the Baha'i community was, the more dependent it presumably would be upon the ruler's good will and the greater was the temptation to abuse it when interests of state dictated. This attitude was strengthened by a hostility which the Shah himself appears to have gradually developed towards the Baha'i community. For him, the monarchy had become the focal point of Iranian life, the fulcrum on which he would lift the nation into the twentieth century. The Shah demanded that those who served him place it first in their loyalties. He became aware, however, that the loyalty of his Baha'i subjects was a derived one. Since, for them, it was one of the tenets of their faith, it was conditioned by that faith. Baha'i concepts and laws affected the members' relationship to the monarch in both large questions and small. Highly competent believers would serve readily in the civil service, but refused absolutely to accept political posts. Since the Baha'i writings forbid the kissing of hands, Baha'i army officers and civil officials would bend low over the Shah's hand, but would refrain from touching it with their lips, as protocol expected them to do.

The result was that the government began to formalize a policy of discrimination which was to characterize the treatment of the Baha'i community for the next five decades. The Baha'is became, in effect, a safety valve for the regime. They were the one target against whom the clergy were permitted to vent their mounting frustration with the restrictions under which they themselves were having to live. The publication of Baha'i literature was banned; Baha'i marriage was deemed concubinage, and prison sentences were set for those who admitted to marrying according to Baha'i law; a number of Baha'i cemeteries were expropriated; Baha'is in the public service were demoted or fired; attacks in the press

were freely permitted; and eventually the Baha'i schools were closed.<sup>17</sup> Once again, the community sank to its former status as a proscribed and hated minority.

The difference between the kind of persecution which the Iranian Baha'is experienced under Reza Shah and that which they had endured during the earlier decades will already have suggested itself. A totalitarian state had begun to take shape in Iran, and its treatment of its Baha'i minority, like all other matters of public polity, was characterized by the application of system. Under the Qajars, as incompetent as they were degenerate, the persecution of the Baha'is had been a spasmodic affair, limited by whatever whim or passing interests of state might motivate the ruler of the day.<sup>18</sup> By the end of Nasir'ud-Din Shah's reign, the State had become distracted by the assaults of the constitutionalist movement which had assumed the dimensions of a revolutionary upheaval. While, as we have noted, the Baha'i community had experienced attacks from both sides in the dispute, the energies which might have gone into a more concentrated effort to suppress the Baha'i Faith had instead been diverted to the political arena where the Baha'i question was essentially irrelevant.<sup>19</sup>

Far different was the experience of the Iranian Baha'is under the first of the Pahlavis. Motivated by a determination to subject all other loyalties to allegiance to his person, Reza Shah sought, through a program of discriminatory legislation, the judicious use of physical violence and economic exploitation, and the manipulation of the Shi'ih clergy's bigotry, to break down the integrity of the Baha'i community and harness the energies of its most capable members to the purposes of the State. While the full structure of a totalitarian regime did not take shape till much later, several of the elements had already emerged during Reza Shah's period, and the Baha'i community gradually became aware of the threat to its welfare which this systematization of persecution represented.

### III

#### Muhammad Reza Shah: The Early Period, 1941-1955

With the outbreak of World War

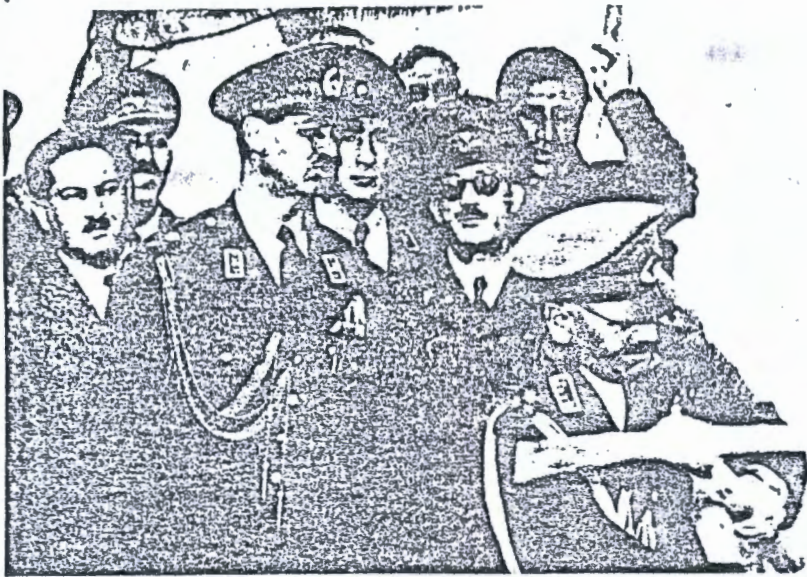
II, the possibility of relief for the Baha'i community came from an unexpected series of events. The British and Russian governments saw Iran as a vital "back door" route through which British supplies could reach the battered Soviet forces. When Reza Shah refused to co-operate in this plan, and when his well-known Nazi sympathies appeared to pose a threat to British control over the Near East, the two nations acted swiftly to solve the problem. Russian troops entered Azerbaijan from the north to seize the vital rail communications, while their British allies moved into southern Iran, deposed Reza Shah, and sent him into exile. In his place, the British installed his 21-year old son, Muhammad Reza Shah, who was expected by all concerned to serve as a complaisant puppet.<sup>20</sup>

These developments created once again the impression that the country was entering on a new era of social freedom. Political parties were set up, and power shifted from the throne to the Majlis or Parliament. The Baha'is began to hope that the restrictions on their community might also, in time, be lifted.

They were quickly disabused of this notion by the political resurgence of the Shi'ih clergy. No group took more enthusiastic advantage of the new order. Although, for the most part, the clergy did not become directly involved in party membership, prominent mujtahids became the ideological leaders of much of the political development which took place. This was perhaps natural, given the political theory inherent in Shi'ih Islam that all political authority belongs to the Hidden Imam. Theoretically, all worldly authority is essentially a trusteeship and necessarily imperfect. To reduce imperfection to a minimum, the Shi'ih theoreticians who had led the constitutionalist movement called for the creation of a small Majlis or general assembly to limit the power of the ruler and to implement the consultative principle enunciated in the Qu'ran. In order to make certain that the Majlis, too, would not stray beyond its mundane limits, Shi'ih scholars were to serve as its guides.<sup>21</sup>

Responding to clerical influence, the State began retreating from the restrictive policies of the ousted leader. The ban on publicly-held passion plays was repealed; the use of the veil in the city streets was again





Gen. Batmangelich, the Shah's Military Governor of Teheran (with pickaxe) and Gen. Bakhtiar, then head of SAVAK, participating in the destruction of the Iranian Baha'i National Centre, May 1955.

permitted and even encouraged; public officials who had been particularly identified with secular attitudes were demoted; various prohibitions associated with Ramadan and other Muslim holy periods were applied in government offices; and official sanction was again given for Iranian Muslims to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The importance of the clergy's political influence was demonstrated in the events related to the rise to power of Muhammad Mossadeq in 1951 and his overthrow two years later. The notorious Ayatollah Kashani, who had secured election as Speaker of the Majlis, played a leading part in both developments.<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, when Muhammad Reza Shah recovered his throne after his brief period of exile in 1953, he sought another of the "accommodations" with the clergy which had intermittently been important to the stability of earlier regimes. The nature of this unwritten agreement has been described by a number of scholars.<sup>23</sup> Essentially, it involved a willingness on the part of the ecclesiastical establishment to leave political matters in the hands of the State, in return for concessions by the latter in fields which were of particular importance to the clergy.

The press began to give wide publicity to the activities of the leading mujtahids; the government agreed to ban the manufacture and sale of alcohol (largely a *pro forma* submission in Iran); and the Shah himself took every opportunity to

make an ostentatious display of his religious orthodoxy. But the area in which, once again, State and ulama found it most easy to make common cause was the treatment of the Baha'i community. Shahrough Akhavi, in his fascinating study, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran*,<sup>24</sup> has speculated that "some elements in the ulama were feeling a newly-acquired self-confidence and therefore 'wanted to make a horse deal between themselves and the Shah' ".<sup>25</sup> For its part, the government was in urgent need of an issue which would distract attention from two vital but highly vulnerable matters of state: the compensation of the shareholders of Anglo-Iranian Oil, nationalized by Muhammad Mossadeq; and the Iranian government's decision to join the Baghdad Pact. Large segments of the public regarded both projects as further illustrations of the domination of Iran by Western Powers, and the regime would have been particularly vulnerable had the clergy decided to orchestrate a general outcry.<sup>26</sup>

In such a situation, the Baha'is were an irresistible target. During the month of Ramadan, 1955, a rabble-rousing Shi'ih divine, Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Falsafi, began a series of incendiary sermons in a Tehran mosque, calling for the suppression of the Baha'i Faith as a "false religion" dangerous to the welfare of the nation. The government signalled its approval by hastening to put both the national and army radio stations at the Shaykh's service, thus disseminating his attacks throughout

Iran. When the Baha'i delegates gathered on April 21 for their national convention in Tehran, therefore, the situation throughout the country had become extremely volatile. The spark was provided by the decision of the government to seize the national headquarters of the Baha'i community and undertake the destruction of its impressive dome. High-ranking army officers joined representatives of the clergy in personally participating in this act of vandalism.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the Minister of the Interior was sent to Parliament to announce that he had ordered the suppression of all activities on the part of what he termed "the Baha'i sect". At once, a wave of violence swept the country: murders, rapes and robberies being reported in many areas. The House of the Bab in Shiraz was pillaged and severely damaged, cemeteries were seized and handed over to mobs for desecration, and corpses were dragged through the streets and burned in public.

The regime had, in short, demonstrated its commitment to the Shi'ih concept of society. The clergy reciprocated. The Ayatollah Behbehani, second-ranking figure in the hierarchy, heaped praise on the Shah, calling the Iranian army "the Army of Islam" and assuring the government that the anniversary of the attacks on the Baha'i National Centre would henceforth be observed as a religious holiday.<sup>28</sup> The most powerful ayatollah in the country, Muhammad Husayn Burujirdi, published an open letter of thanks to Mullah Falsafi for his services both to Islam and to the monarchy. The ayatollah described the Baha'i Faith as a "conspiracy" which endangered the State as well as the national religion, and called for a general purge of Baha'is from all positions in public service.

Once again, however, the alliance ran aground on the reef of political realities. Iran had become an integral part of an interlocking global system of economic and political relationships. In response to a summons from the Guardian of their faith, Baha'i communities around the world vigorously protested the regime's support for the persecution. In this, they were joined by leading organs of the international press.<sup>29</sup> The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, and the



U.S. State Department brought pressure on the Iranian government to call a halt to the attacks. Dependent as it was on foreign support and approval, the regime was in no position to resist this pressure, regardless of the domestic political price which such surrender would entail.

Professor Akhavi's study of the confrontation between the spokesmen of the Shah and the representatives of the clerical establishment which followed, provides a fascinating window on the forces which were at work in the crisis. With their appetite fully whetted, the clergy pressed for a formal piece of legislation which would declare the Baha'i Faith illegal and which would permit a wide range of penalties against Baha'is, prison terms for anyone found guilty of Baha'i membership, the sequestration of all Baha'i properties and the disbursement of the proceeds for the use of Islamic propaganda agencies, the discharge of all Baha'is from public service and the prohibition of any form of Baha'i religious activity. Their spokesmen in the Majlis found themselves facing an embarrassed cabinet which, while assuring them that every means would be taken "within the law" to protect Islam, stubbornly refused to permit the passing of the legislation which would have accomplished the ulama's objectives. Nor would the government even pronounce itself on the subject of its official attitude towards the Baha'i Faith. The regime was reduced to the ludicrous lengths of engaging in a debate in the Majlis on the subject of the Baha'i community, in which its apologists appear to have been forbidden to mention the word Baha'i.<sup>30</sup>

#### IV

##### The Establishment of a Totalitarian Regime: 1955-1979

Only a superficial observer of the scene would have concluded, however, that the end of the 1955 crisis marked an improvement in the basic position of the Baha'i community in Iran. Far from it. In this, as in a number of other instances, the Shah had endured a series of humiliations and frustrations which had compelled him to recognize the weakness of his regime and its vulnerability to pressures from both domestic and foreign sources. His

response was to set in motion a series of programs which brought into existence in Iran the full apparatus of a totalitarian state. These developments were to have particularly grave consequences for the Baha'i community.

The establishment of the new regime has been examined by a number of scholars, and its main features are familiar to most students of modern Iranian history.<sup>31</sup> By 1957, the agency known by its initials as SAVAK, the National Information and Security Organization, had been set up as a major organ of state control. Various agencies of this central body multiplied rapidly, invading every area of public life, and producing finally the infamous "Internal Security and Action Branch", which used torture, secret prisons and trials, and a network of informers in its efforts to paralyze all opposition to the regime.<sup>32</sup> Economic life, too, was to be harnessed to the service of the State. In 1962, the Shah announced the launching of what he called a "White Revolution" which included a land bill involving a major redistribution of the ownership of agricultural lands throughout the country. A simultaneous program of intense industrial development tightly harnessed the fortunes of the emerging capitalist class to the interests of the State. The state's bureaucracy mushroomed, bringing under secular control fundamental areas of culture such as law and education, and creating an insatiable demand for trained personnel.<sup>33</sup>

To provide ideological underpinnings for the new regime, the Shah wholeheartedly adopted what he doubtless saw as a new metaphor capable of seizing the imagination of the Iranian people and channelling their energies into the service of the State. This metaphor was the cultural glory which Persia had known before the coming of the alien and "inferior" influence of the Arabs. The theme can be detected in some of the features of the reign of Reza Shah, but during the concluding two decades of the rule of his son, it bloomed into a national credo. All of the agencies of the government were mobilized in its service. Efforts were made to purge the Persian language of Arabic corruptions; the great achievements of the ancient Persian dynasties were celebrated; pride in the "Aryan race" became an article of

faith in the schools; the Iranian calendar, which Reza Shah had based on the solar year, was shifted again to begin with the coronation of Cyrus the Great in 558 B.C., with the odd result that Iranians went to sleep one night in the year 1355 and awoke the next morning in the year 2535.

In short, the regime appeared bent on trying to resolve the problem presented by the adherence of ninety-five percent of its subjects to Islam, by setting Islam aside. Faith was relegated to those areas which were considered of little or no importance to the "Great Civilization" which the Shah envisioned, areas in which it could be expected gradually to atrophy through neglect. This vast exercise in self-delusion culminated with the celebration in 1971 of the twenty-five hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Iranian monarchy in a Disneyland extravaganza among the ruins of Persepolis.

The program excited a rage of opposition among the fundamentalist clergy, who saw the new society as literally "Satanic". They were joined in this by the younger and radicalized group of Shi'ih Muslim thinkers who were convinced that modern technology could be assimilated to a basically Islamic intellectual and political structure. Only the Shah's autocracy and the foreign patrons who were perceived to be its supporters, stood in the way of this fulfilment of Islam's historic mission.<sup>34</sup>

What of the Baha'i community during this period? The events of 1955 were a continuing reminder to the regime of the need to avoid a level of anti-Baha'i violence which might attract renewed international disapproval. There were, however, new factors, which deepened antipathy towards the Baha'is on the part of the political establishment. The Shah himself, who has been suspected by more than one observer of clinical megalomania, shared his father's resentment of the ways in which the religious beliefs of certain of his Baha'i subjects, some of them close to his own person, impinged on their relationship to him.<sup>35</sup> More importantly, Baha'i teachings represented a potential intellectual rallying point for the growing Iranian intelligentsia, which was independent of the Pahlavi myth. James Alban Bill, for example, says:



"The Iranian intelligentsia has very decidedly discarded old values and value systems. Indeed, one result of this has been an intellectual wandering in continuous search of a new framework... It is perhaps natural that the secularization of the educational process would result in a different view of Shi'ih Islam. The result has been a sharp move away from this most basic of value systems which organized all phases of a Muslim's life... In the move away from Islam, large numbers of the intelligentsia have embraced Baha'ism (sic), a religion that demands great commitment, but at the same time claims progressive and liberal goals."<sup>36</sup>

The dangers facing the community deepened in 1965 with the appointment as Prime Minister of Amir Abbas Hoveida. Although himself a Muslim, the new head of government came from a family with distinguished Baha'i antecedents. A grandfather had been a prominent member of the Baha'i Faith, and Hoveida's father had returned to Islam only after being expelled from the Baha'i community for persistent involvement in political activities. These associations were used by the prime minister's political enemies to attempt to discredit him by attaching the familiar "Babi" tag to his name. Accordingly, he appears to have felt called on to be particularly severe in his treatment of Baha'is, an attitude which his family history may in any event have made congenial to him.<sup>37</sup>

This combination of circumstances, coupled with the demands of the clergy that the regime protect the country from the spread of a "dangerous heresy" led to a series of extremely discriminatory legislative and administrative acts aimed at the Baha'i minority. The new Civil Service Code required applicants for government jobs to state their religion, and attendant regulations made it clear that candidates could be accepted only if they professed one of the "recognized faiths" and did not hold "opinions" which were out of harmony with the traditions of the country. Acting on these directives, government departments, crown corporations, and even private industries which relied heavily on government orders discharged their Baha'i employees. At the same time, orders were given to erase from the history books all events associated

with the Baha'i Faith. In the United Nations, the Shah's representative, Mrs. Teimourtash, denied to her startled hearers that the Baha'i community any longer existed in Iran!<sup>38</sup>

Once again, after a brief period of hope inspired by the United Nations interventions in the mid-1950s, the Baha'i community sank back to its familiar twilight existence as the scapegoat of the Iranian social order. During the early 1960s, employment for many Baha'is, outside private industry, was a serious problem and depended always on the ability of a Muslim superior to demonstrate that no other applicants possessed the particular talents or technical knowledge required by the position. Always, the application of law or regulation was left to the caprice of individual chiefs of police, heads of government departments, and local and provincial functionaries. On occasion, as happened in 1963 following anti-government riots in several regions of the country, the authorities turned a blind eye to violent attacks on Baha'is and the destruction of their property during the Muslim months of Muharram and Ramadan.

In the 1970s, as the regime consolidated its position, and particularly as the creation of the OPEC monopoly reinforced its leverage in foreign affairs, minority elements of all kinds came under steadily increasing pressure. Several new factors made the Baha'i community a particularly attractive target. The first of these was related to the advantage the community had come to enjoy in consequence of its response to the Baha'i teaching on the importance of education, particularly education in the sciences. As the Shah's ambitious modernization campaign gained momentum, and the need for qualified personnel became acute, it was obvious that one of the major pools of qualified personnel in Iran was the Baha'i minority. Accordingly, exceptions to the rule excluding Baha'is from government employment multiplied. The same thing occurred in the self-employed professions. This prominence, together with the economic prosperity which tended to accompany it, particularly in a socio-economic milieu like that of Iran, exposed the community to charges on the part of the clergy that its members were a "favoured elite"

who benefitted not through their own efforts, but because of some secret sympathy with their faith on the part of the Shah and his ministers.<sup>39</sup> Much the same charges were made against Iran's Jewish minority.

A related problem<sup>40</sup> was the success of the Baha'i community itself in gradually and quietly increasing its ownership of properties. Holy places associated with the lives of the founders of the faith, the sites of many of the great events of Babi history, cemeteries and administrative offices were painstakingly acquired by individual believers and donated to the community. Donations and charitable bequests also made possible the acquisition of hospitals, clinics, orphanages, old people's homes, community centres and the like. Handicapped by the refusal of civil law to recognize its collective existence, however, the community could not hold property in its own name. For a period of time, many of the endowments had been registered in the name of the Guardian of the faith, as an individual. After his death in 1957, however, these had been transferred to the Umana Corporation, a company created under the provisions of Iranian and Islamic law, with directors appointed by the Baha'i national assembly.

These successes, and the community's efforts to consolidate them in law became, however, a vulnerable target for extortion. An initial tax of 28 million tumans was collected from the Baha'is, but this proved to be only an opening demand. When an arbitration commission, from whose judgment there was no appeal, ruled against the government's attempt to impose the tax twice over, legislation was introduced with a retroactive clause permitting the judgment of the commission on such matters to be set aside. During the parliamentary debate, the Shah's spokesman assured the Majlis that the law would be applied only to the Baha'i community, and represented no threat to any other group in society. Once the legislation was in place, a government commission imposed a supplementary tax of 50 million tumans on the holdings of the Baha'i community, and a few days later raised this figure to 80 million tumans. Neither sum bore any relation to the value of the property nor to the financial resources of the



hapless community. The raising of this vast ransom involved sacrifice on the part of Baha'is throughout the entire country, but even so, only a part could be put together. The regime thereupon fixed an interest-bearing bill of exchange for the remainder, and the community found itself saddled with a staggering financial burden for the indefinite future.<sup>40</sup> The parallels with the exploitation of the Jews in medieval Europe are nowhere more striking than in the economic aspects of the Pahlavi persecution of the Iranian Baha'i community.

In 1975, a further development added to the deepening isolation of the Baha'i minority from the rest of the nation. Deciding that political opposition was sufficiently divided and demoralized, the regime announced the formation of a new single-party system, the so-called *Rastakhiz*, or "Resurgence Party". Government spokesmen made it clear that any subject invited to join the organization and refusing would have to justify his refusal, and that such justification would be subject to review by the courts. In the Shah's own words:

"We must straighten out Iranian ranks. To do so, we divide them into two categories: those who believe in the monarchy, the Constitution, and (the White Revolution); and those who do not... Everyone must be man enough to clarify his position in this country. He either approves of the conditions or he does not. As I said before, if his disapproval has treacherous overtones, his fate is clear. If it has ideological roots, he is free in Iran, but he should not have any expectations."<sup>41</sup>

The Baha'i community quickly discovered what these ominous words implied. Iranians from all walks of life, all groups and social orders, flocked to join the new organization in order to continue to play a role in the system and to have a part in the apparently limitless economic boom which the country was enjoying. Alone among the population, the Baha'i community wrote formally to the Shah to indicate that, while he could be assured of their wholehearted loyalty, they would have to decline to join the *Rastakhiz* on the grounds of their religious belief

which prohibited participation in political activities.<sup>42</sup> The isolation of the Baha'is thus became complete.

At the same time, the community had become the object of a systematic program of harassment by SAVAK, who regarded it as an unpredictable force in public affairs. The Baha'is were highly unified in both belief and organization; their liberal principles and their close ties to Baha'i communities in other parts of the world might attract efforts at foreign interference; and their efforts to maintain their community life under the countless restrictions imposed by the regime and the *ulama* had caused them to adopt so low a profile as to seem "secretive". What SAVAK required, some of its leaders concluded, was a counterforce which would keep the Baha'i community under close observation, create an atmosphere that would render its activities difficult and insecure, and provide an independent system of reporting on any suspicious circumstances. The solution was an organization formed of the remnants of earlier right-wing religious movements, and named the *Anjuman Tablighat-i-Islami*, the "Society for the Propagation of Islam". The membership appears to have been drawn mostly from the lower clergy, civil servants, school teachers, clerks and students, under the leadership of a handful of fundamentalist clerics.<sup>43</sup>

Under the aegis of SAVAK, the *Anjuman Tablighat-i-Islami* was granted freedom to carry out vigorous propaganda aimed at preventing the conversion of Muslims to the Baha'i Faith and, wherever possible, attempting to coerce Baha'is to convert to Islam. The program included the publishing of abusive literature, the disruption of Baha'i meetings and religious services, and attempts to identify Baha'is in public employment and pressure officials to enforce various discriminatory regulations against them. The arrangement provided an outlet for the frustrations of Shi'ih fundamentalists, while giving SAVAK another coercive instrument entirely dependent on its good will.

On rare occasions, as happened in 1956, 1963 and 1978, when the regime was facing various domestic challenges, SAVAK and *Tablighat-i-Islami* carried out joint attacks on the Baha'i community as diversions.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, SAVAK was the senior

partner. When, from time to time, attacks by undisciplined elements in the *Tablighat-i-Islami* led to official protests by the Baha'i community or threatened to arouse the protests of its foreign sympathizers, SAVAK did not hesitate to deliver up its collaborators to the civil courts for prosecution.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, when the marches and protests began in 1978, the singling out of the Baha'i community as a scapegoat was one of the regime's instinctive responses. Throughout that summer, SAVAK organized a number of incidents aimed at driving a wedge between the more radical elements of the Shi'ih clergy and the main body of the *ulama*. It is very likely that the horrifying burning of the Rex cinema in Abadan, which the regime attempted to attribute to Islamic fundamentalists, was one of these attempts. A related objective was to draw the extremist Shi'ih groups into acts of violence which, it was hoped, would arouse the disapproval of the clerical establishment and justify, in the eyes of Iran's Western patrons, the imposition of martial law in key areas of the country. Accordingly, in Shiraz, where some of the *ulama* were known as not only aggressive opponents of the regime, but bitter enemies of the Baha'i Faith, the *Tablighat-i-Islami* organized a riot in which some three hundred homes owned by Baha'is were burned. A mob attack on the House of the Bab was then incited. To the surprise of Shirazis, all too familiar with the local clergy's hatred of the Baha'i "heresy", mullahs came into the street to stop the riots before the shrine had been destroyed. The excuse given to the faithful was that the building had "once belonged to a *siyyid*" (i.e. the Bab had been a lineal descendant of Muhammad). This respite, however, was short-lived. By December, public protest had turned into revolution, the clergy were united in their opposition to the regime and a number of Baha'is in Shiraz were killed with impunity during the course of attacks incited by the Shi'ih leaders.<sup>45</sup>

## V

### Conclusion

From this brief survey of the experience of the Iranian Baha'i community under the two Pahlavis, 1921 to 1979, it is impossible to



escape two major conclusions. The first is that the charges by leaders of the current Islamic regime that the Baha'i community gave political support to the Shah is contradicted by all the historical evidence. No Baha'i accepted appointment to any one of the cabinets formed under the rule of either Reza Shah or his son, despite intense pressures to do so. As we have noted, the community formally advised the Shah that membership in a political organization such as the Rastakhiz Party was not permitted to Baha'is, and the present regime has been unable to produce a single instance where a member of the community violated this tenet of his faith. Nor can any independent observer accept the myth that the Iranian Baha'is were a protected social elite. Excluded, solely on the grounds of their religious faith, from the protection granted by the constitution to the members of all other religious minorities, denied the right to conduct some of the most elementary practices associated with the religious life of the community, exposed to endless harassments from Muslim fundamentalists and pillaging by rapacious officials, and condemned to watching helplessly as their holy places and cemeteries were regularly desecrated, the Baha'i community in Iran survived only because of the spiritual strengths inherent in it. Whatever economic, educational or professional success members of the community enjoyed were achieved despite, not because of, the State's policies towards them. The evidence is conclusive that the successive Pahlavi regimes moved from an attitude of discrimination against this largest religious minority in the country to a deliberate program aimed at suppressing and eventually eliminating the faith that distinguished it.

The second conclusion that emerges from an examination of the religious policies of the Pahlavi regime is an ironic one. If political support of the regime or the enjoyment of a favoured position conferred by it are blameworthy, then such charges can certainly be brought with compelling force against Iran's Shi'ih majority. The persons who persuaded Reza Shah to establish the Pahlavi monarchy in 1925 and who played a key role in restoring his son to power when he

was temporarily overthrown by Muhammad Mossadeq in 1953 were leading Shi'ih ulama. The most respected ayatollahs in the land hailed the Pahlavis as agents of God and their military machine as the "Army of God". It was they who initiated the agreement with the regime by which major interests of the Iranian people in the economic and foreign policy fields were subordinated to the clergy's obsession with the Baha'is. One must assume that, with few exceptions, the members of the Pahlavi cabinets during those 60 years were, nominally at least, Shi'ih Muslims, accepted as such by the Shi'ih community. It is equally obvious that the Shi'ih majority in the country provided the bulk of the estimated 5 million members who joined the Rastakhiz Party. While certain Shi'ih institutions were the object of a systematic program of attrition pursued by the regime, it is also undeniable that Shi'ih Islam enjoyed the privileged position of a state religion in Pahlavi Iran, compelling submission by all segments of the population to certain of its beliefs and observances. Even before the land redistribution program began, Shi'ih clergy and organizations of all kinds accepted generous funding from the Pahlavi State and some, like the Tablighat-i-Islami, were active agents of the regime in harassing members of minority groups.

Without doubt, this historical record will, sooner or later, come under review by the Iranian people. Whether the collaboration of the ulama and their supporters with the Pahlavi regime was justifiable is a matter for decision not by outsiders but for the 35 million people who experienced the consequences. Given the intensity of the political debate now going on in Iran, and the climate of violence which accompanies it, this review is likely to be very searching indeed.

For the Iranian Baha'i community, it will be sufficient if the upheaval now convulsing Iran results in the raising of the curtain of silence and misrepresentation which has surrounded their faith since its inception 138 years ago, and they are permitted to play their part in the building of a society that will serve the interests of all the peoples of Iran. In the scriptures of their faith, they find the promise that God will, in the

future, "raise this mighty nation up to its ancient pinnacles of glory, and restore this withered land to sweet new life".<sup>46</sup> The Baha'is of Iran believe they have a contribution to make in the fulfilment of the divine promise. ❖

#### NOTES

1. A detailed report on the initial phase of the persecution was prepared by the human rights commission of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, September 12, 1979, and subsequently presented to the UN Sub-Commission on the Protection of Minorities, by the Baha'i International Community.

2. See the White Paper prepared by the Baha'i International Community, June, 1981, under the title *The Baha'is of Iran*, 68 pp. (New York, 1981). The Community is one of the Non-Governmental Organizations, with consultative status, associated with ECOSOC. An *Update* was published in November, 1981.

3. The texts of the Resolutions passed by the organizations mentioned, together with a representative selection of some of the articles referred to, are contained in the White Paper and the *Update*.

4. An illustration of the regime's efforts to conceal its treatment of the Baha'i community can be appreciated in a series of statements made by the Ayatollah Ardibili, President of Iran's Revolutionary Supreme Court, on the subject of the recent killings of 15 prominent Baha'is. The victims died in secret executions carried out in Evin Prison on December 29, 1981, and January 4, 1982. On January 3, the Ayatollah called a press conference to deny that the eight members of Iran's Baha'i National Assembly had been killed, as reported by *Le Monde* (Paris, December 30, 1981). When the Baha'i community produced documentary evidence of the executions, the Ayatollah was forced to issue a second statement (*Le Monde*, January 8, 1982), admitting the killings, but insisting that the victims had been condemned on charges of espionage. The Ayatollah added: "There was no discrimination in this case, and a Muslim would have been executed similarly on the same charge." In fact, a second secret execution had taken place at Evin, this time of six members of the local Baha'i Assembly in Tehran, as well as the lady in whose home they had been meeting when they were arrested. The value of this "second statement of clarification" was shown when subsequent reports revealed that the owner of the house had been released because he was willing to sign a statement that he was a Muslim. (*Le Monde*, January 9, 1982).

5. See, for example, a public statement issued by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the United States, Washington, D.C., October 17, 1979.

6. See, for example, a public statement issued by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Brazil, Buenos Aires, September 26, 1979:



"On the 17th of Shahrivar, the first anniversary of Black Friday, the day on which many Iranians died (i.e. in riots against the Pahlavi regime), faithful Muslims were mourning in the whole country. In Shiraz, the mourners began to destroy the birthplace of Ali Mohamed, the Bab, and the security forces and the guards of the house were not able to stop them doing so, as this could have resulted in the martyrdom of many Muslim champions of Shiraz."

In fact, the house was demolished and eventually razed in a series of attacks through September and October, led by mullahs and government officials. The regime is currently constructing a public roadway across the former site, an act which involves the destruction of a considerable portion of the old city of Shiraz, one of the great historical treasures of Iran.

7. Michael J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 1980), p.150.

8. *Nationalism in Iran* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), p.88.

9. See F. Kazemzadeh, "For Baha'is in Iran, A Threat of Extinction", *New York Times*, Op. Ed., August 6, 1981.

10. *Religion and State in Iran: 1785-1906* (U. of California Press, 1969), p.151.

11. This exclusion is made even more explicit in the new Islamic Constitution, in which the "tolerated minorities" are specifically named in the constitution itself.

12. An excellent survey of the rise to power of Reza Khan can be found in Wilfrid Knapp, "1921-1941 The Period of Reza Shah", *Twentieth Century Iran*, Ed. H. Amirsadeghi and R.W. Ferrier (Heinemann, London, 1977, pp.23-27).

13. *Idem*

14. *Ibid*, pp.27-51 and Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran* (Stanford University Press, 1951), *passim*.

15. *Ibid*, pp.25-27.

16. *Ibid*, p.96.

17. *Ibid*, p.97.

18. Momen, pp.251-256, 266-305.

19. For a discussion of this period, see N.R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution* (Yale University Press, 1981), chapters 3 and 4. Professor Keddie distinguishes the Baha'is who "eschewed direct political activity" and "declared their neutrality" from the small Azali sect of the former Babi Faith, members of which took an active role in the constitutional revolution of 1905-1911.

20. Robert Graham provides a very interesting analysis of the formative influences on the mind of Muhammad Reza Shah in his *Iran: The Illusion Power* (New York, 1980), pp.57-72.

21. For a discussion of this subject, see Hamid Algar, "Iran", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, pp 163-167.

22. The Mossadeq period and the events related to the restoration of the Pahlavi regime have been examined by a number of writers. See, for example, Keddie, pp.113-141, Graham, pp.67-72, and Barry Rubin, *The American Experience and Iran* (Oxford University Press, 1980), pp.54-90. Kermit

Roosevelt, who coordinated the overthrow of the Mossadeq regime, has provided an interesting personal memoir: *Counter Coup* (McGraw Hill, 1979).

23. Akhavi, see note 24 below.

24. (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1980), pp.76-90.

25. *Ibid*, p.77.

26. *Idem*

27. The officers included General Batmangelich, Military Governor of Tehran, and General Timur Bakhtiar, the head of SAVAK. Shaykh Falsafi was invited as guest of honour at the event.

28. Akhavi, pp.77-78.

29. When the regime discovered the extent of the protest aroused in the West they denied that army officers had participated. An attempt was made to suppress the series of photographs which had been taken of the destruction of the dome of the Baha'i National Centre, but copies of these had already been smuggled out of Iran and were given wide currency in Baha'i publicity releases.

30. Akhavi, pp.80-87.

31. See particularly Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (Penguin Books, 1979), pp.38-172.

32. *Ibid*, pp.78-90.

33. James Alban Bill has provided a searching sociological analysis of the effects of this development: *The Politics of Iran* (Charles E. Merrill Publishing, Columbus, Ohio, 1972).

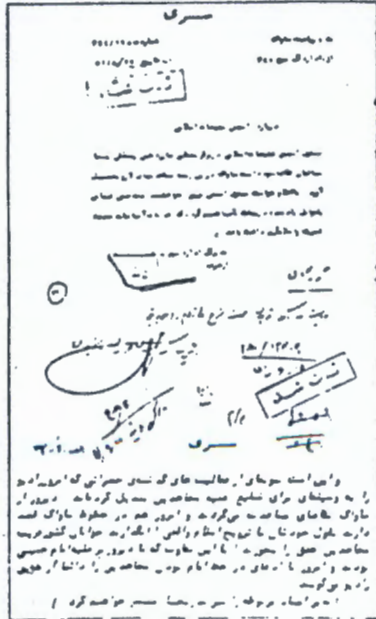
34. See Keddie, pp.183-230.

35. Because visits by Persian Baha'is to the United States were being misrepresented by Islamic fanatics, the Guardian of the faith requested that these not take place. Accordingly, when it became necessary for the Shah's personal physician, Dr. Ayadi, to accompany the ruler on a State visit, it was necessary for him first to secure the approval of the Guardian, since he was himself a member of the faith. The permission was readily accorded, since the request from the Shah had the character of an official order, and the Guardian pointed out that submission to it represented no more than an act of civil obedience. The implication was not, however, lost on the monarch.

36. Bill, p.61.

37. It is revealing that Hoveida's brother, Fereydoun Hoveida, formerly the Shah's representative at the United Nations, makes no reference to the Baha'i connection or indeed to the existence of the Baha'i faith or community in his recent book, *The Fall of the Shah* (New York, 1980). The book is essentially an attack on the author's former master and an

The document at left, published on 9 June 1980 in "Mujahid", one of the dailies of Iran, clearly indicates that Tablighat-i-Islami, the Society for the Propagation of Islam, was supported by the Shah's secret police, SAVAK, in its anti-Baha'i activities. This Society has spearheaded activities against the Baha'is for many years, and most of the present difficulties facing the Baha'is of Iran are a direct result of actions by this group.



To: The Director of SAVAK  
 From: Third Bureau 341  
 No. 341/1950  
 Date: 27.8.1351 A.H.  
 (November, 1972)

(SECRET)

Subject: **Anjuman-i-Tablighat-i-Islami**

The head of Anjuman-i-Tablighat-i-Islami in the capital has requested aid from SAVAK to attack the Baha'is in a systematic way. We convey the request of the above-mentioned Society, and request you to get in touch with all the agents of that Society in your area, and make them understand that their activities in this respect must not be the cause of provocation and disturbance.

(signed)  
 Muqaddam  
 On behalf of the Director-General  
 of the Third Bureau

apology for his brother's political career.

38. Fischer, p.187.

39. The ulama were, of course, fully aware of the falsity of these charges since they had themselves participated in the drafting of the regime's discriminatory legislation and in monitoring its enforcement.

40. The Baha'i International Community prepared an extensive dossier of photocopies of the documents related to this and other aspects of the persecution of the Baha'i community under the Pahlavis, and offered it to Mr. Mansour Farhang, then the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, in a letter dated July 7, 1980. A complete set of these documents, both photostats of the originals and English translations, was subsequently sent by the National Assembly of the Baha'i community of the United States to Mr. Ali Agha, then Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United States. The documents are available for study by qualified scholars at the

library of the Baha'i International Community, Suite 444, 866 UN Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.

41. Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, in a speech of March 2, 1975, published by the Ministry of Information and Tourism, and cited by Halliday, p. 48, (*italics added*).

42. The community adopted the same attitude when called upon by the Islamic revolutionary regime to vote on a one-option ballot for the new Constitution created by the mullahs.

43. The founding of this organization, is attributed by Hamid Algar, to a Dr. Ata Alla Shiahabipour (*Encyclopedia*, p.166). Its ostensible purpose was to serve the propagation of the Islamic faith by means of books, tracts, sermons and periodicals, but the largest part of its polemical literature was devoted to what Professor Algar calls "the refutation of Baha'ism". Today, the organization is one of the principal power centres in the Islamic regime, a position which it has

used to spearhead the current persecution of the Iranian Baha'i community in the same fashion as it formerly used its relationship with SAVAK.

44. Shortly after the Islamic Revolution occurred, the leaders of the Tablighat-i-Islami, then prominent figures in the new Islamic power structure, were embarrassed by the publication in the opposition newspaper *Mojahed* of documents from SAVAK files exposing its close collaboration with the infamous "Third Bureau". (see illustration this page)

45. Fischer states that, when the summer's efforts to create diversions failed, the regime "pandered to the allegation that the Shah relied excessively on Baha'is" and dismissed those in prominent positions, including his own physician (p.198).

46. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Secret of Divine Civilization* (Baha'i, Wilmette, Illinois, 1957), p.116.



# BAHA'I OFFICE of PublicAffairs

Wilmette, Illinois 60091

/312-869-9039

## AN UPDATE ON THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHAI'S IN IRAN

Since the 1979 revolution in Iran, members of the 300,000-member Baha'i religious minority there have been subject to a ceaseless storm of systematic and officially-sanctioned persecution. It's national leadership has twice been decimated-- fourteen national leaders have disappeared and eight have been executed.

Local Baha'i leaders account for most of the 107 Baha'is who have been assassinated or executed. Baha'i holy places, properties, and cemeteries have been confiscated or destroyed. Hundreds of Baha'is have been dismissed from their jobs or deprived of their business and trade licenses. No child of Baha'i parentage has been allowed to register for school at any level. The highlights of these and other persistent attacks on Iran's beleaguered Baha'i community make it clear that government authorities intend to pursue to its grim conclusion, their avowed campaign to eliminate the Baha'i Faith from Iran.

### Summary Executions and Arrests

- Executed on December 27, 1981, in Tehran, were eight of the nine men and women of Iran's Baha'i National Assembly, the elected governing body for the Iranian Baha'i community. The secret executions came two weeks after their summary arrests. There were no charges, no trials and no notification of family members. Fourteen months earlier the entire membership of the National Assembly had been abducted and had disappeared.
- Executed on January 4, 1982, in Tehran, were six of the nine members of the Tehran Baha'i Local Assembly. Executed with the six local leaders was the woman at whose home they were meeting when summarily arrested. Again, the executions were carried out in secret without charges, trials, or notification of kin.
- Executed secretly on February 26 and 28, 1982, were two Baha'is, one in Babu'l-Sar, the other in Tehran. There were no charges, trials or notification of family members.
- Killed in April 1982 were three more Baha'is in various parts of Iran. A man was assassinated in his home in the early part of the month by revolutionary guards. Another was executed by firing squad in Urumiyyih on April 12 after intense pressure failed to force the man to deny his faith. On April 29, a Baha'i was hanged in Mashhad by order of the revolutionary court. As reported in Kayhan, a Tehran daily newspaper, he was convicted of heresy, a crime punishable by death.
- Five more Baha'is were put to death in the first part of May 1982. Two men and a woman, local Baha'i assembly members in Karaj, were executed by firing squad on May 8. Also in early May, two members of the local Baha'i assembly in Urumiyyih, were executed by firing squad.
- To date, 107 Baha'is are known to have been executed or assassinated; and some 200 Baha'is are known to be still languishing in Iran's prisons-- many for more than a year-- without any formal charges following their summary arrests.



# BAHA'I OFFICE of PublicAffairs

## Intimidation to Induce Recantation of Faith

- All the Baha'is of Hisar village in the province of Khurasan have been forced to flee their homes to Mashhad, the provincial capital. All Baha'is in the village of Saysan near Tabriz have been given a month to convert to Islam or face grave consequences. Scores of Baha'is' homes have been confiscated, looted and, in many cases, destroyed in Birjand, Shiraz, Ardikan, Yazd, and other towns.

## Destruction of Baha'i Holy Places and Cemeteries

- The November 1981 demolition of the house of the prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith in Takur was one of many such actions of destruction of Baha'i properties, holy places, and cemeteries. In 1979, the holiest Baha'i shrine in Iran, the House of the Báb, was demolished.

## Dismissals From Jobs and Revocation of Passports

- Scores of Baha'is have been dismissed from their jobs or have been deprived of their business and trade licenses for as long as they refuse to recant their faith. In a recent government memo marked "very confidential-urgent," consular officials all over the world have been instructed to collect the names of all Baha'is residing outside Iran. Their passports have been revoked, and they will only be issued travel documents permitting their return to Iran.

## Denial of Educational Opportunities

- In September 1981, school authorities in Iran carefully scrutinized students' religion and refused to register Baha'i children for classes. A Ministry of Education document published in the September 30, 1981, edition of Kayhan, decreed that professors and students alike are barred from Iran's universities if they are members of "the misled and misguided sect," terms often used by authorities to describe the Baha'i religion.

15 May 1982



## The New York Review

of Books

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## The Terror Facing the Bahais

Firuz Kazemzadeh

The threat of genocide hangs over the Bahais of Iran. Since 1979 more than 110 men and women, most of them leaders of the Bahai community, have been put to death. Hundreds have been jailed. Some have been abducted and never heard from again. Thousands have been made homeless. Retired government employees have lost their pensions. Teachers have been fired. Children have been denied public education and some have been kidnapped and placed in Muslim homes where they could be compelled to embrace Islam. Property has been confiscated. Bahai shrines have been demolished.

There are reasons to think that all of this is part of a systematic effort to force the four or five hundred thousand Iranian Bahais to recant their faith. Should the effort fail, tens or even hundreds of thousands could be massacred.

The West is largely unaware of the peril in which the Iranian Bahai community, in spite of its law-abiding and

no foreign influences, no Western literature or music, and even Persian classical poets tainted with free thought would be censored. Women would know their place; and religious minorities—Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews—would live, as they had lived for centuries, isolated, restricted, and disdained. Of course, in the clerical republic there would be no room for Bahais, hated as renegades and unprotected by the Koranic injunction to tolerate Christians and Jews.

The Shiite clergy's hatred of the Bahai faith goes back to the very inception of the new religion. For a thousand years the majority of Shiites had waited for the advent of the twelfth Imam, descendant and successor of the Prophet Muhammad, who, according to tradition, had mysteriously disappeared in AH 260. A thousand lunar years later, in AH 1260 (AD 1844) a young merchant of Shiraz, Sayyid Ali Muhammad, proclaimed himself the Bab, the gate to the Hidden Imam. The Bab rapidly gained a number of devoted followers, many of them mullahs.



nonpolitical character, finds itself. Neither the fury of the mullahs nor the nature of the Bahai religion is well understood here. Thus a situation may arise in which mass murder could once again be committed without the world's taking notice.

The Iranian revolution occurred under the banner of Islam. The crowds that challenged the monarchy in the streets were led by a coalition of Westernized intellectuals and the clergy, but it was the clergy who played the dominant role and fashioned the new regime. Therefore it is not surprising that the constitution of the Islamic Republic, its educational and social policies, its treatment of religious minorities and of women, and its view of the world beyond Iran's borders should have been heavily influenced by the beliefs and attitudes of the radically conservative, activist elements among the mullahs.

Once in control of state power, the clergy initiated measures to turn Iran into the utopia of their dreams. In the clerical republic only the ayatollahs would think and decide, the rest would practice *taqlid* (imitation), walking in the footsteps of stern, turbaned gurus. In the clerical republic there would be

As the mission of the Bab evolved, he declared to his disciples that he was not merely the gate but the Hidden Imam himself and that his role was that of a prophet and the herald of one whom God shall manifest, a messenger who would fulfill ancient prophecies and bring about righteousness on earth.

The Bab's teachings were a radical departure from the literalist fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. The Shiite clergy could neither tolerate the rejection of its theology, nor could it permit criticism of itself as an institution. Faced with the rapid spread of the Babi movement, the clergy induced the government to crush what it saw as a pernicious and dangerous heresy. The Bab was executed in Tabriz in 1850, and in the next few years thousands of Babis were put to death. By the end of 1852 the mullahs and the government felt certain that the danger had passed. A majority of the Babis were dead. A few were exiled abroad. The remnant were dispirited and inactive.

The situation changed drastically in the next decade. A leading disciple of the Bab, Mirza Husayn Ali, known as Baha'u'llah, proclaimed himself the messenger foretold by the Bab. Most of the surviving Babis accepted the claim



and became Bahais, followers of the new religion, the Bahai faith.

Exiled first to Baghdad, then to Constantinople and Adrianople, and finally, in 1867, to Acre in Ottoman Syria, Baha'u'llah died in 1892, leaving a body of writings his followers hold to be the equivalent of the Bible or the Koran. Baha'u'llah taught that God was unknowable in his essence but that his will was known through an unending succession of messengers among whom were Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster, and Muhammad. Each was a link in the chain of progressive revelation that provided the spiritual impetus for the development of humanity. Man had a twofold destiny: inwardly he must engage in a never-ending quest for divine qualities, while his life in society must be dedicated to the advancement of civilization.

The Bahai faith shared with Islam belief in God, the immortal soul, revelation, and the prophetic station of Muhammad. However, it interpreted traditional eschatological notions as allegories, and it abolished or drastically modified Islamic law. While the prohibition of alcohol remained, polygamy, holy war, ritual purity, and hundreds of rules governing personal and social conduct, elaborated over the centuries by learned interpreters of the scriptures, were set aside. Last but not least, the Bahais had no clergy, each individual being enjoined independently to investigate religious truth and the community being entrusted to elective governing bodies.

As the numbers of its adherents increased, the Bahai community became a cross section of Iranian society. Within its ranks there were merchants, artisans, officials, workers, peasants, professionals, and even tribesmen. Strongly committed to education, the rights of women, and the work ethic, the Bahais tended to be better educated, more prosperous, and less provincial than average Iranians. They also developed a strong sense of solidarity and commitment, while keeping the door to their community wide open to those who wished to join.

Stung by what they quite correctly saw as a revival of the hated Babi movement, the members of the clergy resumed their assault. There were killings in 1896, in 1903, during the revolution of 1906-1911, and there have been occasional outbreaks since. However, modernization was gradually changing the mental climate among the Iranian elite. The influence of religion declined, opening the way to secularism, nationalism, and communism. During the reign of Reza Shah (1925-1941) the clergy lost much of its economic and all of its political power. To preserve their hold on the masses and to restore their influence on the educated, the mullahs needed a scapegoat that could be blamed for the decline of Islam and for all the ills that beset a rapidly changing society experiencing the full force of Westernization.

Reza Shah felt no sympathy for the Bahais. He closed their schools, forbade the publication of their literature, and periodically subjected them to general harassment, but he did not permit them to be massacred. The clergy had to find new means of struggle. As early as 1938 a group of mullahs in Mashhad, a holy city in eastern Iran, concocted what purported to be a Persian translation of the memoirs of Prince "Dalqurki," presumably Dolgorukov, who had served as Russian minister in Iran. "Dalqurki"

tells of being sent to Iran in 1044 by Tsar Alexander II (who was not to ascend the throne for another eleven years, but the mullahs were not good at Russian history) to weaken the country by destroying Islam. "Dalqurki" boasts of having been the true founder of the Babi religion.

This crude fabrication with its blatant appeal to the new Iranian nationalism was rejected even by known antagonists of the Bahai faith, such as the historian Ahmad Kasravi, as well as by Mojtaba Minovi and other less partisan scholars. Yet "Dalqurki's" memoirs entered the mainstream of Iranian thought. To this day most Iranian intellectuals take that illiterate forgery for an authentic document explaining the origins of a faith of which they are otherwise surprisingly ignorant.

At about the same time in the USSR an Iranist, M.S. Ivanov, in his book *The Babi Uprisings in Iran*, advanced the thesis that whereas the religion of the Bab was a revolutionary attempt by the Iranian bourgeoisie to resist Western commercial penetration, the Bahai faith, with its emphasis on universal peace, world government, tolerance, and non-violence, represented cosmopolitanism and surrender to the forces of foreign imperialism. Echoes of this view, supported by the most flimsy evidence and reflecting simple-minded Marxism at its lowest intellectual level, can be heard in the works of some European and American writers, including *Roots of Revolution*, the recently published history of modern Iran by Nikki Keddie.

After 1953, with the cooperation of SAVAK, the political police, there arose clerically inspired organizations such as Tabliqat-e Eslami (Islamic Propaganda) dedicated primarily to slandering the Bahai faith, disrupting Bahai meetings, and attacking individual Bahais. These organizations disseminated rumors linking the Bahais to everything that could be perceived as harmful to the interests of the people. Denied freedom to reply, the Bahais could not disprove allegations made against them.

The establishment of the Islamic Republic made it seem possible for the clerical extremists to carry out a final solution of the Bahai question. There began a systematic campaign of terror against the leadership of the Bahai community. In August 1980 the National Spiritual Assembly, governing body of the Bahais of Iran, was abducted and disappeared without a trace. Eight of the nine members of the new Assembly that succeeded the earlier one were executed on December 27, 1981.

The campaign against the Bahais was carried abroad. Appearing on "The MacNeill-Lehrer Report," a supporter of the new regime, later its chief delegate to the UN, referred to the rumors of Bahai cooperation with the SAVAK. Three years later, now a fugitive in the United States, he repudiated every allegation made against the Iranian Bahais. In a letter to an American friend he wrote that "the Iranian Bahais are the only people whose persecution, which includes confiscation or destruction of property as well as sum-

mary attacks and persecutions, is motivated solely by fascistic aggression without any provocation whatsoever."

Yet the damage has been done. Doubt has been planted in many minds. The limit of irrationality was reached by a certain Robert Dreyfuss in a grotesque pamphlet that turned Khomeini himself into a secret ally of the Bahais. In his *Among the Believers* V.S. Naipaul, writing out of an abundance of ignorance, delivered himself of a few vacuous remarks about the Bahai faith. Perhaps Naipaul could claim poetic license. After all, he was only expressing his feelings. Professor H.R. Trevor-Roper has no such excuse. Commenting on Naipaul's travelogue in *The New York Review*,<sup>1</sup> he mentions the Bahai heresy which "has its temple in Haifa, and has established itself, like other deviant cults, in California." The application to the Bahai faith of terms such as "heresy" and "cult" may be a matter of opinion, but the mention of California clearly expresses disdain for a movement that would establish itself in such a sordid place and suggests a kinship with unsavory groups. It may come as a surprise to Trevor-Roper that there is no Bahai temple in Haifa and that the American state with the largest Bahai population is South Carolina.

Yet information on the history and the teachings of the Bahai faith is easily available. Already in the nineteenth century there appeared in Europe books by Gobineau, Kazembek, Tumanskii, and Browne. Since then the literature has expanded and now includes studies by Balyuzi, Taherzadeh, and Bausani.<sup>2</sup>

Some perceive a secularization of religion in the Bahai commitment to the unity of mankind, world peace and world government, the harmony of religion and science, universal education, the equality of the sexes, the abolition of extremes of poverty and wealth. Bahais see in these principles a contemporary expression of the externally valid quest for the brotherhood of man. That their beliefs, aspirations, and actions are frequently misunderstood and at times misrepresented is the result of a century of oppression in the country where the faith was born, of malice on the part of some and of ignorance on the part of others.

Perhaps the horrors that are being perpetrated against the Iranian Bahais will lead to a clearer understanding of the Bahais and their beliefs. □

<sup>1</sup>November 5, 1981.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Arthur comte de Gobineau, *Les religiones et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* (Paris, 1865); A.K. Kazembek, *Bab i babidi* (St. Petersburg, 1865); A. Tumanskii, trans. and ed., "Kitab al-Aqdas," in *Zapiski Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk* (St. Petersburg, 1899); E.G. Browne, trans. and ed., *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Bab* (Cambridge, 1891); and *The Tarikh-i-Jadid* (Cambridge, 1893). H.M. Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* (Baha'i, Wilmette, Ill., 1980); A. Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah* (2 vols., Baha'i, Wilmette, Ill., 1974, 1977); A. Bausani, *Persia religiosa da Zaratustra a Baha'u'llah* (Milan, 1959).



# UPDATE

## **The Bahá'ís in Iran**

A Report  
on the  
Persecution of a  
Religious  
Minority

**Issued November 1981**

**as an update to the comprehensive report  
published in June 1981**

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## July - October 1981

Recent events in Iran compellingly testify to the fact that the government's campaign of persecution against the country's 300,000 Bahá'ís is motivated solely by religious intolerance. Even at a time when the government is facing widespread disaffection, the authorities are continuing to pursue with unabated vigour their campaign to eradicate the Bahá'í minority, whose members pose no threat at all to the regime. Indeed, during the months since June 1981, the campaign against the Bahá'ís has been intensified in most parts of Iran.

Having accomplished the confiscation or destruction of Bahá'í holy places and Bahá'í community properties and financial assets in Iran, the authorities have recently concentrated their activities upon the remaining two stages of their systematic three-point plan for the annihilation of the Iranian Bahá'í community - namely, the arrest and execution of prominent Bahá'ís, and the intimidation of the rank and file of believers to force them to recant their faith.

### Summary executions

Between 26th July and 11th September, 18 Bahá'ís were executed by firing squad after summary trials on spurious charges. Seven of the condemned men had already been held in prison for periods in excess of one year. All 18 were prominent and respected members of the Bahá'í community.

The total number of Bahá'ís killed for their religious beliefs since the start of the Islamic Revolution now stands at 81. (A full list is enclosed at page 8). Almost all of them were either elected members of local Bahá'í administrative institutions or appointed officers of the Faith.

Following a storm of international protest over the treatment of the Bahá'ís, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on 1st August 1981, issued a categorical denial that any Bahá'í had been executed in Iran because of his religion. Thereafter, although the executions continued, attempts were made by the authorities to conceal the fact that the victims were Bahá'ís. The families of the condemned men received no warning of their imminent deaths, and no official announcements were made concerning the executions.

### Summary arrests

A wave of summary arrests during July and August resulted in the imprisonment without charges of over 40 Bahá'ís, several of whom were subsequently executed. Further arrests in October led to the detention of over 50 more

believers, including at least ten women and also eight children, ranging in age from two months to 15 years.

Summary arrests of Bahá'ís are taking place with such frequency that it is impossible to compile a definitive, up-to-date list of the victims. It is conservatively estimated, however, that at least 150 Bahá'ís are currently in detention - many of them having been held without charges for over a year. The overwhelming majority of the prisoners may be described as "prominent Bahá'ís", and it is feared that they may soon share the fate of their executed fellow-believers.

Still unknown is the fate of a further fourteen distinguished Bahá'ís (including all nine members of the national administrative council of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran) who were either kidnapped or who disappeared following their arrest.

### **Confiscation of personal property**

The months July to October 1981 witnessed large-scale confiscations of property belonging to Bahá'ís. Many Bahá'ís were ordered to leave their homes, which were first looted then occupied. In numerous towns and villages, revolutionary guards carried out late-night raids on Bahá'í homes, terrorising the occupants and making off with furniture, cash and other personal property. The most frequent targets for attacks were the homes of members of local Bahá'í administrative institutions, whose books and papers were invariably confiscated. Following a raid on the home of a prominent believer in Teheran, the authorities falsely listed "armaments" and "drugs" on the inventory of the contents they found there.

A new and growing trend in recent months has been the confiscation of the movable and immovable properties of executed Bahá'ís, despite the fact that the judgements against them contained no orders for confiscation. Bahá'í widows and their children have thus been deprived of their homes. In addition, extremist Muslim groups have harassed and abused bereaved families, demanding that the properties not only of executed Bahá'ís but also of their near relatives be handed over to various newly-created Islamic religious foundations.

### **Physical intimidation to induce recantation**

Bahá'í communities in the rural areas were the principal targets of the renewed campaign of intimidation. Hundreds of Bahá'ís were threatened, beaten and driven from their homes and villages. Others were subjected to barbaric cruelties to force them to embrace Islam. In the village of Vadiqan, near Kashan, the Bahá'ís were herded into a stable into which smoke was funnelled. When they were on the point of suffocation, they were taken to a nearby mosque and forced to recant their faith. In the village of Rustaq, near Yazd, the Bahá'ís were loaded into hydraulic-lift trucks, driven to a mosque, dumped outside, and forced to recant.



## Abduction of young girls

The following incidents, reported in July, clearly demonstrate that religious extremists in Iran are prepared to go to any lengths in order to "convert" Bahá'ís to Islam.

In Kashan, a teenage Bahá'í girl was abducted and, despite being under age, was forced into marriage with a Muslim. In the village of Balu, near Urumiyyih, a 14-year-old Bahá'í girl was abducted from school by her Islamic religious instructor. Her distraught parents, who were denied any information as to her whereabouts or her fate, were later informed in writing that she had converted to Islam and wanted nothing more to do with her family. An identical incident, this time involving a 13-year-old girl, took place in Musa-abad village near Teheran. In neither case have the parents been allowed to see or communicate with their daughters, and their appeals to the secular authorities and religious courts have proved fruitless.

On 1st August 1981, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quoted by Reuters press agency as flatly denying that any abductions had taken place at all. (A letter from the father of one of the abducted girls in response to this denial is appended at page 10).

## Denial of education and vocational training

Throughout the entire Iranian education system, Bahá'í schoolchildren are being subjected to constant harassment, coupled with indoctrination, to try to induce them to recant their faith. Many primary and secondary schools have introduced new registration forms which require that the applicant's religion be stated, and admission is refused to those who give their religion as Bahá'í.

In the field of higher education, the pressure upon Bahá'í students has increased daily. Bahá'í nurses, after completing their training, have been denied their diplomas, and the authorities have demanded that they repay the money spent on their training. Students who received scholarships have been forced to repay the money to the government. By order of the Ministry of Education, a young Bahá'í student in her sixth and final year at the Isfahan Medical School, and other Bahá'í students at the University of Isfahan, were expelled because of their religion.

In August 1981, the Ministry of Education issued a directive stating that permission to send foreign exchange to Iranian students overseas would be granted only to the followers of the officially recognized religions of Iran - a ruling which has effectively cut off the funds required by Bahá'í students abroad to complete their education.

In a recent decree, the text of which was published in the daily newspaper Kayhan on 30th September 1981, the Ministry of Education listed various crimes which barred professors and students from being employed by or admitted to universities in Iran. One of the "crimes" listed in this decree is member-

ship in what the text describes as "the misled and heretical sect" - i.e. membership in the Bahá'í Faith.

### **Deprivation of means of livelihood**

The inclusion of Bahá'í teachers, as well as students, in the aforementioned decree represents a further step in the government's campaign to deprive Bahá'ís of employment in both the public and private sectors. During recent months, this long-standing campaign has proceeded without pause. Large numbers of Bahá'ís have been dismissed from their jobs solely on account of their religion. A large proportion of the dismissal notices contained the provision that the individual's job would be restored to him if he would publicly recant his faith. (Typical dismissal order appended at page 18).

In one province, the business licences of all Bahá'í traders were withdrawn and their shops closed down.

### **Increasing scale of persecution**

The case of the Bahá'í traders cited above is illustrative of a disturbing new trend - namely, the introduction by the authorities of measures which are not only directed exclusively at Bahá'ís but which also apply indiscriminately to all Bahá'ís. Such measures, which lay the way open for systematic attacks on a vast scale, are further evidence of the fact that the Iranian Bahá'ís are being persecuted solely because of their religious affiliation.

An ominous new development under this heading was reported by Voice of America in its Persian language programme on 20th October 1981:

"A report from Teheran says Iran's Central Revolutionary Committee is planning a new campaign to round up members of the Bahá'í Faith. The Bahá'ís reportedly will be arrested on the grounds that their marriages are illegal and their children illegitimate, since Iran does not recognize the Bahá'í Faith."

Action by the Iranian government against the members of the Bahá'í community has now been extended to encompass Iranian Bahá'ís in every part of the world. In a letter dated 12th August 1981 (full text enclosed at page 12), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed its consular representatives in foreign countries to prepare and send to Iran a list of all Bahá'ís residing within their jurisdiction, and further directed that the passports of those listed should not be renewed.

The effect of this directive has been to render extremely precarious the status and future of the many thousands of Iranian Bahá'ís who are currently residing outside Iran.



## International reaction to the persecution

The international community has continued to demonstrate its anxiety over the plight of the Bahá'ís in Iran. In a resolution dated 19th August 1981 (its second on the Bahá'í case), the Australian Parliament expressed its "grave concern" over the continued persecution. On 9th September 1981, the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, meeting in Geneva, adopted its second resolution on the case, expressing its "profound concern" for the "perilous situation" facing the Bahá'ís in Iran. (Copies of the resolutions appear on pages 13 and 14 respectively of this report).

The response of the Iranian government to the repeated appeals of international bodies, national parliaments and Bahá'í communities the world over has been a consistent denial that any Bahá'í in Iran is being persecuted because of his religion. The most recent official denial was contained in a Note Verbale dated 14th September 1981 from the Permanent Mission of Iran to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. The full text is appended at page 16 of this report.

The ever-worsening plight of the Iranian Bahá'ís has continued to attract world attention and sympathy, coupled with a growing awareness that the only hope for this innocent and defenceless minority lies in urgent international intervention at the highest level.





## Supporting documentation

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- 10           Letter from father of abducted Bahá'í schoolgirl to  
Foreign Ministry spokesman
- 12           Circular letter from Foreign Ministry ruling that  
passports of Iranian Bahá'ís living abroad should not  
be renewed
- 13           Resolution of the Australian Parliament, 19th August 1981
- 14           Resolution of the United Nations Sub-Commission on  
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9th September 1981
- 16           Note Verbale from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic  
Republic of Iran to the United Nations Office and other  
international organizations at Geneva, 14th September 1981
- 18           Revolutionary Court ruling ordering dismissal of Bahá'í  
employees from the Zamzam Company unless they publicly  
recant their faith

## Bahá'ís killed in Iran since 1978

Name	Date	Place	Details
1. Mr. Ahmad Isma'ili	1978	Ahram	Killed
2. Mr. Diya'u'llah Haqiqat	12 Aug 1978	Jahrum	Intentionally run over and killed by motor-cycle
3. Mr. Naw-Ruzi	27 Aug 1978	Shahmirzad	Burned to death
4. Mr. Akhavan-i-Kathiri	27 Aug 1978	Shahmirzad	Burned to death
5. Mr. Haji-Muhammad 'Azizi	10 Oct 1978	Khurmuji	Beaten to death
6. Mr. Hatam Ruzbihi	Dec 1978	Buyr-Ahmad	Killed by mobs
7. Mr. Jan-'Ali Ruzbihi	Dec 1978	Buyr-Ahmad	Killed by mobs
8. Mr. Shir-Muhammad Pishdast	Dec 1978	Buyr-Ahmad	Killed by mobs
9. Mr. Sifatu'llah Fahandizh	14 Dec 1978	Shiraz )	Killed by mobs
10. Mrs. Fahandizh	14 Dec 1978	Shiraz )	(husband and wife)
11. Mr. Parviz Afnani	22 Dec 1978	Miyan-Du'ab )	Killed by mobs and
12. Mr. Khusraw Afnani	22 Dec 1978	Miyan-Du'ab )	their bodies burned (father and son)
13. Mr. Ibrahim Ma'navi	Early 1979	Hisar, Khurasan	Killed
14. Mr. Husayn Shakuri	2 Apr 1979	Ushnaviyyih	Killed
15. Mr. Bahar Vujdani	27 Sep 1979	Mahabad	Executed
16. Mr. 'Ali Sattarzadih	28 Oct 1979	Bukan	Killed
17. Mr. 'Azamatu'llah Fahandizh	14 Dec 1979	Shiraz	Executed
18. Mr. Habibu'llah Panahi	4 Feb 1980	Urumiyyih	Assassinated
19. Mr. Ghulam-Husayn A'azami	6 May 1980	Teheran	Executed
20. Mr. Badi'u'llah Yazdani	6 May 1980	Teheran	Executed
21. Mr. 'Ali-Akbar Mu'ini	6 May 1980	Teheran	Executed
22. Mr. 'Ali-Akbar Khursandi	9 May 1980	Teheran	Tortured and hanged
23. Mr. Parviz Bayani	11 May 1980	Piranshahr	Executed
24. Mr. Mir-Asadu'llah Mukhtari	18 May 1980	Andrun, Birjand	Stoned to death
25. Mr. Hasan Isma'ilzadih	Jun 1980	Sanandaj	Killed
26. Mr. Yusuf Subhani	27 Jun 1980	Teheran	Executed
27. Dr. Faramarz Samandari	14 Jul 1980	Tabriz	Executed
28. Mr. Yadu'llah Astani	14 Jul 1980	Tabriz	Executed
29. Mr. 'Ali Dadash-Akbari	16 Jul 1980	Rasht	Executed
30. Mr. Yadu'llah Mahbubiyani	30 Jul 1980	Teheran	Executed
31. Mr. Dhabihu'llah Mu'mini	15 Aug 1980	Teheran	Executed
32. Mr. Nuru'llah Akhtar-Khavari	8 Sep 1980	Yazd	Executed
33. Mr. Mahmud Hasanzadih	8 Sep 1980	Yazd	Executed
34. Mr. 'Azizu'llah Dhabihiyani	8 Sep 1980	Yazd	Executed
35. Mr. Firaydun Faridani	8 Sep 1980	Yazd	Executed
36. Mr. 'Abdu'l-Vahhab Kazimi Manshadi	8 Sep 1980	Yazd	Executed
37. Mr. Jalal Mustaqim	8 Sep 1980	Yazd	Executed
38. Mr. 'Ali Mutahhari	8 Sep 1980	Yazd	Executed
39. Mr. Rida Firuzi	9 Nov 1980	Tabriz	Executed
40. Mr. Muhammad-Husayn Ma'sumi	23 Nov 1980	Nuk, Birjand )	Burned to death
41. Mrs. Shikkar-Nisa Ma'sumi	23 Nov 1980	Nuk, Birjand )	(husband and wife)
42. Mr. Bihruz Sana'i	17 Dec 1980	Teheran	Executed
43. Dr. Manuchihr Hakim	12 Jan 1981	Teheran	Assassinated
44. Mr. Mihdi Anvari	17 Mar 1981	Shiraz	Executed



Name	Date	Place	Details
45. Mr. Hidayatu'llah Dihqani	17 Mar 1981	Shiraz	Executed
46. Mrs. Nuraniyyih Yarshatir	Apr 1981	Teheran	Assassinated
47. Mr. Yadu'llah Vahdat	30 Apr 1981	Shiraz	Executed
48. Mr. Sattar Khushkhu	30 Apr 1981	Shiraz	Executed
49. Mr. Ihsanu'llah Mihdi-Zadih	30 Apr 1981	Shiraz	Executed
50. Mr. Suhrab (Muhammad) Habibi	14 Jun 1981	Hamadan	Tortured & executed
51. Mr. Husayn Khandil	14 Jun 1981	Hamadan	Tortured & executed
52. Mr. Tarazu'llah Khuzayn	14 Jun 1981	Hamadan	Tortured & executed
53. Dr. Firuz Na'imi	14 Jun 1981	Hamadan	Tortured & executed
54. Dr. Nasir Vafa'i	14 Jun 1981	Hamadan	Tortured & executed
55. Mr. Husayn Mutlaq	14 Jun 1981	Hamadan	Tortured & executed
56. Mr. Suhayl (Muhammad-Baqir) Habibi	14 Jun 1981	Hamadan	Tortured & executed
57. Mr. Buzurg 'Alaviyan	23 Jun 1981	Teheran	Executed
58. Mr. Hashim Farnush	23 Jun 1981	Teheran	Executed
59. Mr. Farhang Mavaddat	23 Jun 1981	Teheran	Executed
60. Dr. Masih Farhangi	24 Jun 1981	Teheran	Executed
61. Mr. Badi'u'llah Farid	24 Jun 1981	Teheran	Executed
62. Mr. Yadu'llah Pustchi	24 Jun 1981	Teheran	Executed
63. Mr. Varqa Tibyaniyan (Tibyani)	24 Jun 1981	Teheran	Executed
64. Mr. Kamalu'd-Din Bakhtavar	26 Jul 1981	Mashhad	Executed
65. Mr. Ni'matu'llah Katib-pur Shahidi	26 Jul 1981	Mashhad	Executed
66. Mr. Allah-Virdi Mithaqi	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
67. Mr. Manuchihr Khadi'i	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
68. Mr. 'Abdu'l-'Ali Asadyari	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
69. Mr. Husayn Asadu'llah-Zadih	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
70. Mr. Isma'il Zihtab	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
71. Dr. Parviz Firuzi	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
72. Mr. Mihdi Bahiri	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
73. Mr. Habibu'llah Tahqiqi	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
74. Dr. Masrur Dakhili	29 Jul 1981	Tabriz	Executed
75. Mr. Husayn Rastigar-Namdar	5 Aug 1981	Teheran	Executed
76. Mr. Habibu'llah 'Azizi	29 Aug 1981	Teheran	Executed
77. Mr. Bahman 'Atifi	11 Sep 1981	Darun, Isfahan	Executed
78. Mr. 'Izzat 'Atifi	11 Sep 1981	Darun, Isfahan	Executed
79. Mr. 'Ata'u'llah Rouhani	11 Sep 1981	Darun, Isfahan	Executed
80. Mr. Ahmad Ridvani	11 Sep 1981	Darun, Isfahan	Executed
81. Mr. Gushtasb Thabit Rasikh	11 Sep 1981	Darun, Isfahan	Executed

The above list updates the list previously published in Appendix II of the original report dated June 1981.

جناب آقای رضا فلسوی  
سخنگوی محترم وزارت امور خارجه جمهوری اسلامی ایران

توفیراً "بهرض میرساند طبق اظهارات جنابعالی درخصوص خبری بوده شدن و دختر خود سال بهائی که در روزنامه اطلاعات شماره ۱۶۴۹۱ مورخ ۱۳/۵/۶۰ درج گردیده است اینجناب مطأالله اقدس اصل پدر بهترا اقدس یکی از دو دختر مذکور ضمن شرح واقعه مطالب آنجناب را تکذیب مینماید :

بطوریکه در شکوائیه های اینجناب به ریاست دادسرا ، دادستان و ریاست آموزش و پرورش ناحیه ۲ ارومیه مندرج است بهضمیمه ایفاد میگردد ، دختر اینجناب از تاریخ ۶۰/۳/۹ که آخرین امتحانش را گذرانده بود بخانه مراجعت نمود . پس از بررسیهای زیاد معلوم شد که بوسطه خانم صفیه اسد اوغلی معلم فقه به شهر ارومیه برده شد و متعاقباً تحصیل حاکم شهر ارومیه گردیده است . اینجناب به مراجع قانون شکایت کردم و بحاکم شرع ارومیه نیز مراجعه و تظلم نمود ولی مطأ سفینه تا این تاریخ هیچ پاسخ قانع کننده ای بمن نداد . اید و ملاوه برآن با اجبار شنا صنامه و مدارک تحصیلی دخترم را از من گرفته اند اجازه ملاقات با او را نیز ندادند . اممواره سعی کرده ام شرف و منقبت خانوادگی خود را حفظ کنم . حال سئوال من از آنجناب اینست که آیا چنین رفتاری شایسته عدالت اسلامی است ؟  
آباد رهرا میطنی که هیچگونه ناراحتی خانوادگی که زمینه فرار و احتراز از خانواده باشد وجود نداشته است مطلقاً ممکن است دختر من با میل شخصی به خانه مراجعت نکند . باشد آیا با اطلا می که من از میزان معلومات وی دارم امرا حال تحقیق و تخری را راجع به ادیان طی کرده که بتواند در این سن راه ایده آل خود را انتخاب کند ؟  
بفرش اینکه بچنین حقیقتی رسیده باشد مگر چه مانعی در محیط خانوادگی وجود دارد که طبرقم هرگونه عقیده ای که اطفال داشته باشند نتوانند تحت سرپرستی پدر خود باشند ؟  
برائرض محال که دختر من بطور ناگهانی چنین تصمیمی گرفته باشد ملاقات من با او حتی در دادگاه چه اشکالی داشته است که او را مخفی نموده اند ؟  
چنانچه سن شرمی در اسلام ۹ سالگی باشد آیا در قانون اساسی و سایر قوانین مملکتی چنین تصمیمی وجود دارد که دختران از ۹ سالگی مختار اعمال و تصمیمات خود میباشند و نمیتوانند از تحت تکفل خانواده خارج شوند یا مستقلاً امور قانونی را انجام دهند ؟

Text of letter from a Bahá'í father concerning the abduction of his 14-year-old daughter. (Translation on facing page).

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باتوجه به نکاتی که مختصراً "مرض شد امید است حقیقت موضوع آنطور که بوده بر شما آشکار شده باشد و نسبت به تکذیب فرمایشات خود اقدام فرمایند .

باتقدیم احترام  
مطأالله اقدس اصل پدر بهترا اقدس اصل



ضمائم :

فتوکپی سه برگ شکوائیه اینجناب به مقامات محلی .

۲

آدرس :

روستای بالومحال نازلوچای ارومیه .



TRANSLATION.

(To) His Excellency Mr. Rida 'Alavi, spokesman for the  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran

I respectfully submit the following:

Your statement about the abduction of the two under age Bahá'í girls, which was published in the daily newspaper Ettela'at, No. 16491, dated 12/5/60 (2 August 1981), was read, and the undersigned, Mr. 'Ata'u'llah Aqdasi-Asl, father of Mitra Aqdasi, one of the two abducted girls, wishes to describe the event and to refute your statement.

Enclosed are documents which list my complaints to the head of the Revolutionary Court, to the Attorney General, and to the Director of the Department of Education, Branch 2 of Urumiyyih, and which include the following:

My daughter did not return home after her final examinations on 9/3/60 (29 May 1981). After much searching, it became evident that she had been taken away by Mrs. Safiyyih Asadughli, the teacher of religious instruction, from the village of Balu to the city of Urumiyyih. My daughter was later placed under the charge of the governor of Urumiyyih.

I have launched my complaints to all of the appropriate authorities, but unfortunately none of my appeals has been adequately answered. Instead, my daughter's birth certificate and school records have been forcibly taken away from me. I have not even been given permission to meet with my daughter. I have always insisted on preserving my family's honour. The only questions I have for you are the following:

Do you consider this an act of Islamic justice?

Do you think it is possible that my daughter, of her own volition, would wish to leave her own home, where no family difficulties or disharmony exist?

Do you think that at her young age, and according to what I know of her intelligence, she is capable of studying religions and of choosing her own? Suppose she is able to do so. Is it wrong for a girl, irrespective of her religious beliefs, to be under the shadow and authority of her parents?

Even if, for the sake of argument, I believed that my daughter quite suddenly decided to change her religion, why then is she not allowed to meet her own father, even in court? Why is she hidden from her family?

Even if, according to Islam, the age of maturity (for girls) is 9 years old, can you find in the Constitution or in any other law of the country a clause which states that girls of 9 years of age and above are legally free to decide for themselves whether they may abolish the authority of their parents, and be legally empowered to carry out transactions?

Considering the above brief letter, I earnestly hope that the truth is now evident to you and that you will be kind enough to correct your statement.

Yours sincerely,

Enc: Three letters of complaint  
to the local authorities

(Signed) 'Ata'u'llah Aqdasi-Asl  
Village of Balumhal,  
Nazluchay, Urumiyyih



جمهوری اسلامی ایران  
وزارت امور خارجه

اداره : دفتر معاونت فرهنگی و کنسولی  
شماره : ۱۷/۵۳۳-۱۰/۴۴۶۲  
تاریخ : ۱۳۶۰/۵/۲۱

بسمه تعالی

بمقتضا به بکلیه نمایندگان کتبی جمهوری اسلامی ایران در خارج

از تاریخ ابلاغ این بمقتضای کتبه مسئولین نمایندگان کتبی فرهنگی  
اساسی تمامی بهائیان چقم حوزه آن نمایندگی و ضد انقلابیون بخصوص به اصطلاح  
دانشجویان را با دقت تهیه و ارسال نمایند. همچنین از تجدید گدرنامه  
این افراد خودداری فرموده و نقد برگه صادر داده شود.

معاون امور فرهنگی و کنسولی

جواد منصور

Text of circular letter from the  
Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
published in various newspapers.

TRANSLATION

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Office: Deputy for Educational and Consular Affairs  
No. : 17/533-10/4462  
Date : 21/5/1360 (12 August 1981)

Strictly confidential - Urgent - Direct

IN THE NAME OF HIM WHO IS EXALTED

Circular letter to all representatives of the  
Islamic Republic of Iran in foreign countries

From the date of this circular letter, all representatives are required  
to carefully prepare a list of the names of all Bahá'ís residing within  
their jurisdiction, and the names of anti-revolutionaries, especially  
the so-called students. These lists should be sent to us. Represent-  
atives should also refrain from extending the passports of these indi-  
viduals. Only laissez-passer documents may be issued to them.

Deputy for Educational and Consular Affairs

(Signed) Javad Mansuri





PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Daily Hansard

WEDNESDAY, 19 AUGUST 1981

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That this House—

- (1) expresses its grave concern over the persecution of the adherents of the Baha'i faith in Iran by the regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini, and notes with alarm and abhorrence the continuing executions of Iranian Baha'is purely on the grounds of their religious faith;
- (2) calls upon the Government of Iran to release from custody those Baha'is who have been unjustly detained, and to restore the holy places, properties, community centres and companies that have been confiscated;
- (3) commends the Australian Government for its assistance to Australian Baha'is in expressing their protest to the Iranian Government, and
- (4) requests the Australian Government to continue to lend its support to moves in international forums designed to restore to the Iranian Baha'is their freedom to live in peace and practice their religion in harmony with their fellow citizens of other faiths.

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



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LIMITED  
E/CN.4/Sub.2/L.778  
2 September 1981  
Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sub-Commission on Prevention of  
Discrimination and Protection  
of Minorities  
Thirty-fourth session  
Agenda item 6

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS  
INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF  
APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL  
AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-  
COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Draft resolution submitted by: Mr. Eide, Mr. Foli, Mr. Joinet,  
Mr. Martinez Baez, Mr. Masud, Mr. Mubanga-Chipoya, Mrs. Odio Benito,  
Mrs. Perdomo de Sousa, Mr. Whitaker, Mr. Yimer

The Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of  
Minorities,

Welcoming the adoption by the Commission on Human Rights at its thirty-seventh  
session and by the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1981 of  
a Draft Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of  
Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,

Recalling its resolution 10 (XXXIII) in which it expressed its profound concern  
for the safety of the members of the Baha'i Community in Iran and requested the  
Secretary-General to invite the Government of Iran to grant full protection of  
fundamental rights and freedoms to this religious minority,

Having now heard statements clearly demonstrating the systematic persecution of  
the Baha'is in Iran, including summary arrests, torture, beatings, executions,  
murders, kidnappings, disappearances, abductions, and many other forms of harassment,

Convinced that the treatment of the Baha'is is motivated by religious intolerance  
and a desire to eliminate the Baha'i Faith from the land of its birth,

GE.81-12315



Concerned that the Government of Iran appears to have ignored all previous approaches made on behalf of this Community,

1. Expresses its profound concern for the perilous situation facing this religious Community;
2. Appreciates the efforts already made by the Secretary-General on behalf of this Community;
3. Urges the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to persuade the Government of Iran to prevent further attacks on the Baha'i Community and to grant them religious freedom;
4. Draws the attention of the Commission on Human Rights to the perilous situation faced by the Baha'i Community of Iran and requests the Secretary-General to submit all relevant information about the treatment of the Baha'is in Iran to the Commission on Human Rights at its thirty-eighth session.

The above draft resolution was adopted on 19th September 1981 by nineteen votes to none, with five abstentions. The Chairman, Mr. Ferrero, asked that his name be added to the list of co-sponsors.

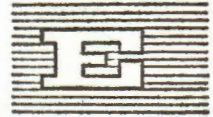
UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Thirty-eighth session

Item 12 of the draft provisional agenda <sup>\*/</sup>

Sub-Commission on Prevention of  
Discrimination and Protection  
of Minorities

Thirty-fourth session

Item 6 of the agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND  
OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Note verbale dated 14 September 1981 from the Permanent Mission of  
the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Office and the  
other international organizations at Geneva addressed  
to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Office of the United Nations and other international organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the United Nations Secretariat and, further to its note No. 442/1/678 of 10 June 1981, and in connection with the work of the thirty-fourth session of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, concerning human rights, has the honour to inform it, on instructions from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as follows:

The human rights and fundamental freedoms of the individual are enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including, in particular, articles 13, 14 and 23.

Article 13 provides that "Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian Iranians shall be the sole recognized religious minorities which shall be free, within the limits of the law, to perform their religious rites and to act, as far as their personal status and religious teachings are concerned, according to their liturgy".

According to article 14, "In conforming to the holy verse of the Koran, 'the Almighty never forbids you to act kindly and fairly towards those who do not war against you on account of your religion, and do not expel you from your homeland. God loves the just'. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Muslims shall act with Islamic morality, justice and equity towards non-Muslims and respect their human rights. This principle shall be valid for those who do not engage in any activities or plot against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran."

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<sup>\*/</sup> E/1981/25, chapter XXVI.



Under article 23, "The control of opinions shall be prohibited and no one may be attacked or censured for his opinions".

The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran is authorized to quote statements made by two of the highest authorities of the Islamic Republic.

According to Ayatollah Moussavi Ardebili, President of the Supreme Court of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "The courts of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the procedures which they apply are governed by Islamic standards and laws, as well as the Constitution and the country's official laws and regulations. Under those same laws, no one is to be molested, prosecuted or persecuted on account of his religious beliefs. Anyone who is brought to trial is to be judged by the lawful judicial bodies regardless of his faith and shall be entitled to all the facilities he needs for his defence. In no circumstances may he be denied those rights".

According to Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "The rights of non-Muslim Iranians are protected in the same way as those of Muslim Iranians and the law does not tolerate any discrimination towards them. If non-Muslim Iranians are brought to trial before the judicial bodies, it is in no way because of their faith, but solely on account of the acts of which they are accused. It goes without saying that an Iranian Baha'i who has been the subject of a judicial measure may not be absolved from responsibility for an indictable offence merely by virtue of belonging to the Baha'i sect. It should be noted that there are numerous Iranian Baha'is living in complete security in Iran, with nothing whatsoever to fear. The only ones who are prosecuted and sentenced are those who have been involved in acts of espionage and other activities contrary to the higher interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Mention may also be made of the propaganda campaign mounted by the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran to discredit the Islamic Revolution. But all that in no way tallies with the true facts and is therefore totally unfounded."

آذربایجان اسلامی  
۱۳۶۰

کرمشاه  
کرمشاه



بزرگوار گما. ان لا اله الا الله انما الله

شرکت زمزم کربان

در موضع کارخانه و کارکنان بهائیان در آن شرکت

مقرر شده اطلاع میزند بدو روز تا کارکنان و کارکنان

ساعتی برای حاضر شدن میسر شود و در بریدن بر سر بی  
خوردن و خوردن که در بین اسلام و مذمت سفید است

سیاست و همین در صورتی را در روزنامه های انتشار  
کس جانی و سگس با این میسر است او را فرد در آن شرکت

ادامه دهند و در غیر این صورت میبایست اقرار کرده و  
تسلیم شوند تا از سر کار برود و سیاست

TRANSLATION

From: The Islamic Revolutionary Court of Kirmanshah

To: Zamzam Company

Concerning the Bahá'í employees and staff members of this Company, it is hereby announced that if the Bahá'í workers and employees repent, and write in their personnel files that they adhere to the Islamic Ithna 'Ashari creed (the followers of the twelve Imams), and publish the same in the widely circulated newspapers with their photographs, then they will be allowed to continue their work for the Company; otherwise they should be dismissed. The deadline is until the end of Shahrivar 1360.

(Signed) Siyyid Rida Lavasani  
Judge of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Kirmanshah









## BACKGROUND: UNITED STATES CONGRESS AND THE BAHAI'S

Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, members of the Baha'i religion have been subjected to incidents of persecution by Islamic fundamentalists.

The Baha'i faith, the youngest of the world's religions, split from the mainstream of Islam over 150 years ago. Shiite Muslims view the Baha'is as heretics.

The systematic and government sanctioned persecution and execution of Baha'is in Iran has escalated so dramatically over the past three years, worldwide concern has arisen that the Baha'i faith will be eliminated in that country.

Desperately concerned about the plight of their Iranian brethren, the 100,000 members of the American Baha'i community appealed to the United States Government and the American people to decry these atrocities.

Several U.S. congressmen introduced official statements before Congress on the plight of the Iranian Baha'is:

- Rep. Ron de Lugo (D-V.I.) indicated his concern about the plight of the Iranian Baha'is.
- Rep. Edward Derwinski (R-Ill.) spoke about the Baha'is in Iran and their threat of extinction.
- Rep. John Porter (R-Ill) proposed Resolution H.Con.Res.249 which condemns religious persecution and bigotry as an official policy or practice of national governments. He specifically cited the Iranian government and the persecution of the Baha'is.
- Rep. Fortney "Pete" Stark (D-Calif) submitted Resolution H.Con.Res.283, which urges the President and other official representatives of the United States to use their international forum to deplore and condemn religious persecution of the Baha'is in Iran.

- Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan) appealed to President Carter "do all we can" to reduce the harrassment of Iranian religious minorities. Dole specifically cited the Baha'i, Jewish and Christian communities.
- Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis) commended the House Subcommittee on Human Rights and Internatioal Organizations on the initiation of hearings to address the issue of worldwide religious persecution and particularly its focus on the suffering of Iranian Baha'is.

On May 25, four members of the American Baha'is testified before the House Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations, chaired by Rep. Don Bonker (D-Wa). Judge James Nelson, Chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, documented the scope and savagery of Baha'i persecution under the current Iranian regime. Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh, Vice Chairman, reviewed the history of the Baha'is in Iran. Mr. Glenford Mitchell, Secretary, discussed possible United States Government response to Iranian actions against the Baha'is; and Ramna Mahmoud Nourani related a moving account of the execution of her family because of their faith.

Being an advocate of human and religious rights, Sen. John Heinz (R-Pa) submitted resolution S.Con.Res. 73 before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The resolution proposes that the Congress of the United States "condemns persecution of the Baha'is, holds the government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of ~~all~~ its citizens including the Baha'is, and expresses the hope that the discrimination and brutal executions within the Baha'i community cease immediately."

Further, the resolution "urges the Iranian government to take whatever means are necessary to end this extermination of law abiding citizens who only wish to worship in freedom."

The Resolution was unanimously adopted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 20, 1982. As of May 26, 1982, the co-sponsors of the resolution were Senators Huddleston, Boren, Melcher, Cannon, D'Amato, Pressler, Sasser, Cranston, Boschwitz, Levin, Exon, Pell, Kennedy, Moynihan, Chafee, Denton, Murkowski, Durenberger, Rudman, Metzenbaum and McClure.

On June 30, 1982, Sen. Heinz will introduce the resolution for consideration and debate before the entire Senate.