

Alarm expressed at human rights violations in Iran

The Government should take steps within the framework of international law over the persecution of members of the Baha'i faith in Iran, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bowen, said yesterday.

The issue could be raised in the International Commission of Human Rights, of which Australia was a member. International law had been violated by the regime in Iran.

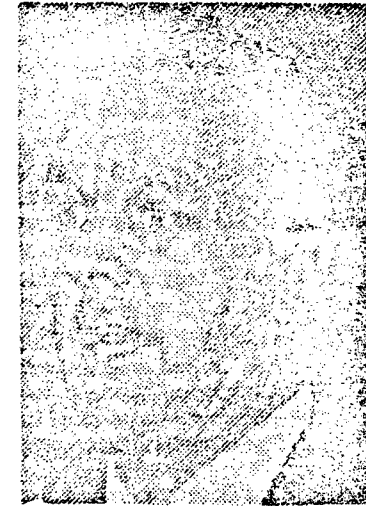
"We have a duty and a right to raise the matter in the Human Rights Commission and should do so", he said.

Mr Bowen was speaking during debate on a motion by Mr Carlton (Lib, NSW) which expressed grave concern at the persecution of members of the Baha'i faith by the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini.

The motion expressed alarm at executions solely on the grounds of religion, called on the Iranian Government to release those unjustly detained and to restore holy places and property, and commended the Australian Government for protesting to the Iranian Government.

Mr Bowen said it was important that the Australian Government speak out, and there was no doubt that the Baha'i faith in Australia was anxious that the Australian Government took some action.

Mr Carlton said members of the faith



Mr Bowen

were a very gentle people and were not considered a threat to anyone.

The reason they were a threat to the ayatollah was that they were a very liberal sect. They could not be harmful to anyone except a fanatic.

They had openness, equality of the sexes, an independent investigation of the truth and advocated the use of science in advancing the human race, he said.

The former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Peacock, had called in the Iranian Charge d'Affairs to express the Australian Government's concern over the persecution.

The motion was agreed to.

In Parliament

YESTERDAY

The House of Representatives met at 2.15pm: prayers; petitions; notices; questions without notice; Mr Speaker announced the presence in the gallery of a Nigerian delegation; presentation of papers by Ministers; discussion of matter of public importance: Mr Uren, interest rates and hardship on home buyers; general business: debate on treatment of adherents to the Baha'i faith in Iran, Mr Carlton; debate on proposed House of Representatives procedure, Mr Scholes; second reading debate continued on Freedom of Information Bill; adjournment 11pm.

The Senate met at 2.15pm: prayers; petitions; notices; questions without notice; discussion of matter of public importance: Senator Button: absence of a coherent Government industrial relations policy and Government's exacerbation of disputes; presentation of papers; ministerial statements, Senator Messner; discovery of formal business, general business; notices of motion 51 to 60; placing of business; consideration of business; government business.