

Bahá'í Faith

Foi bahá'ie

Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Iran's 300,000 Baha'is were dealt yet another devastating blow yesterday when eight members of their National Spiritual Assembly were arrested and imprisoned in an unidentified location.

This group, including one woman, were among the nine elected to replace the previous Assembly, the governing body of the Baha'i community, who were arrested in August, 1980, and whose fate is still unknown.

Yesterday's arrests follow last week's news of the confiscation of Teheran's only remaining Baha'i cemetery, which left tens of thousands of Baha'is with no burial ground. It has been learned that the the graves are being bulldozed and rings and other jewellery stolen from the bodies. In the same week, another Baha'i holy site was demolished, and its land and gardens offered by the authorities for sale to the public.

At the same time, Baha'is around the world were shocked and grieved to learn from Iranian newspaper reports that the children of Baha'i families in two villages, who had fled into the mountains following mob attacks on their homes, had been forcibly separated from their parents and placed in what were termed "training centres" by order of the local Muslim clergy.

With such reports of summary arrests, widespread mob harrassment and the wholesale confiscation of property, the alarm voiced by a recent report in the London Times of a "grim new phase" in the persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran has been fully borne out. At the present time, the authorities are issuing "identity cards" as a means of denying those whose religion is deemed by the ruling Muslim clergy to be "heretical" and "illegal" from attending schools, receiving public services, holding bank accounts, travelling and working or engaging in business and trade.

Baha'is around the world are appealing to other governments to intervene. It is only concerted international intervention that has so far prevented the extermination of the Baha'i community in Iran called for by the fanatical Shiite clergy there.

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