

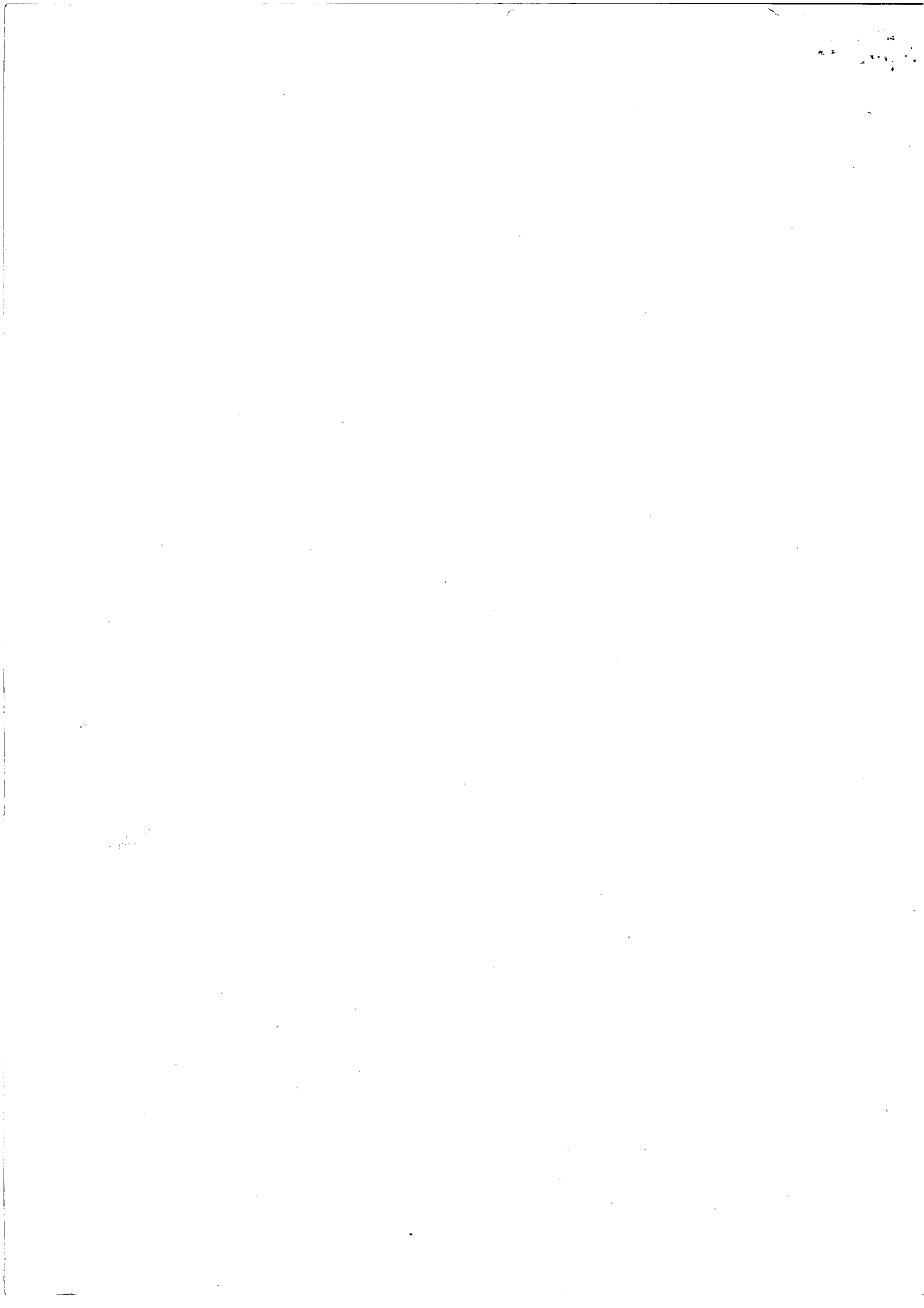
Baha'i International Community Statement
at the 36th session of the
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination
and Protection of Minorities

Geneva - 19 August 1983
9th Meeting

Agenda item 6:

*Question of the violation of human rights
and fundamental freedoms*

BP000403



Regrettably, the Baha'i International Community once again finds it necessary to bring to the attention of the Sub-Commission under this agenda item the matter of the continuing gross violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the members of the Baha'i religious minority in Iran.

As we have explained in statements at previous sessions of the Sub-Commission, the persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran is motivated solely by primitive religious prejudice. Since the Islamic Revolution took place, the 300,000 members of the Iranian Baha'i community - the largest religious minority in Iran - have suffered intimidation, discrimination, violence and even death simply because their religious beliefs differ from those held by the ruling authorities.

However, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary - including documentary evidence previously submitted to the Secretariat and available for inspection - the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is continuing to assert that no Baha'i has been or is being persecuted in Iran because of his religion.

In order to lend credence to this assertion, to justify its actions against the Baha'is and to try to divert international attention from this humanitarian issue, the Government of Iran has embarked upon a campaign of defamation designed to discredit the Baha'i Faith and its followers. Whereas, in the early days of the persecution, the Iranian authorities flatly denied that Baha'is were being persecuted and executed in Iran, these same authorities are now claiming that they are fully justified in persecuting and executing Baha'is, on the grounds that the Baha'i Faith is not a religion at all but that it is a subversive political organization whose followers are engaged in international espionage. These allegations are totally false and the Baha'i International Community categorically denies them.

The latest attempt to defame the Baha'i Faith and its followers is contained in the publication "Bahaism - its origins and its role", which has just been circulated to members of the Sub-Commission by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to this document, the Baha'is were not only responsible for the policies of the late Shah and for the operations of his secret police force, SAVAK, but were also - or are also - agents of Russian imperialism, agents of British colonialism, agents of American expansionism, and agents of Zionism. All of this presupposes a truly remarkable degree of versatility on the part of the Baha'is - and of course the charges contained in the Iranian document are so exaggerated and so contradictory that it is very clear that they are false.

It is not our intention, in this brief statement, to deal with the charges contained in the Iranian document, but we would like to draw to the attention of the members of the Sub-Commission the fact that the Baha'i International Community has prepared a Commentary on that document, in which the false allegations are briefly discussed and refuted. We have made this document available to Sub-Commission members and we have it available for anyone else who is interested.

Turning once more to the situation of the Baha'i community in Iran, we regret to have to report that, during the twelve months that have elapsed since the Sub-Commission last considered this matter, the religious persecution of the Baha'is has continued unabated. Large numbers of Baha'is have been imprisoned solely because of their religious beliefs and many have been executed because they refused to recant their faith and embrace Islam. Countless others have suffered harassment, dismissal from employment, confiscation of their property and denial of education to their children. The entire Baha'i community in Iran has suffered intimidation, discrimination and hardship as a result of the Government's anti-Baha'i policies. Thousands of Baha'is are now homeless and countless others have been deprived of their means of livelihood. Upwards of 250 Baha'is are currently being held without charges in Iranian prisons - some of them already under sentence of death.

At the end of June, two prominent Baha'is were kidnapped in Teheran, bringing to a total of 16 the number of prominent Baha'is who have disappeared without trace.

Since the start of the Islamic Revolution, 142 Baha'is have been killed for their religious beliefs. Some have been stoned to death or beaten to death or burned to death by mobs. A number have been assassinated. But the overwhelming majority - 116 out of 142 - have been summarily executed by order of the revolutionary authorities.

During the past year, the persecution of the Baha'is has been particularly intense in Shiraz - the city in which the Baha'i Faith was born. In September 1982, five Baha'is were tried in Shiraz on unspecified charges, were offered their lives if they would recant their faith, and were condemned to death when they refused to do so. In October and November 1982, over 80 Baha'is were summarily arrested in Shiraz and imprisoned without charges. Twenty-two were subsequently condemned to death, but - in order to exert the maximum psychological pressure on the Baha'i community - the authorities did not reveal their names.

The most notorious of the many incidents of persecution in Shiraz took place only two months ago, in June 1983, when the authorities summarily executed 17 Baha'is. Ten of the victims were women, including three teenage girls. All had been arrested several months previously and held without charges while severe pressure was put upon them to recant their faith and embrace Islam. When they refused to do so, they were condemned to death without trial.

All the incidents I have just mentioned are described in more detail in materials published by the Baha'i International Community and available to anyone who is interested.

More recently, the Baha'i International Community has received the disturbing news that, during the past five weeks, 63 Baha'is - including 25 women - have been seized by the authorities in a renewed wave of summary arrests. Almost half of these arrests took place in the Teheran area, where the authorities have apparently embarked upon a concerted campaign to hunt down the members of Baha'i administrative institutions.

We are profoundly distressed at the plight of the Baha'i community in Iran, and very gravely concerned for the safety of our fellow believers who are currently being held in prison - especially those under sentence of death in Shiraz. We urgently appeal to the Sub-Commission to do everything in its power to intensify the efforts of the international community to persuade the Government of Iran to halt its cruel and senseless persecution of an innocent and defenceless minority.

19 August 1983