

# BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION IN CONSULTATIVE STATUS WITH  
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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## NEWS RELEASE

A number of Bahá'í Holy Places, properties, and institutions were occupied by armed men in various parts of Irán in recent days. These actions received the encouragement of the important religious leaders in Mashad, Ayatollah Shirazi and Ayatollah Tabatabai-Qomi.

The ayatollahs declared that all Bahá'í centers should be occupied and all documents confiscated. According to a statement published in the March 6 issue of the daily newspaper, Etalaat, Ayatollah Qomi further stated that Bahá'ís had "always been spies for the British, Russian, American, and Israeli governments."

The Bahá'ís fear that such inflammatory statements were designed to justify further harassment of Bahá'í communities and the occupation of all Bahá'í institutions.

In Mashad alone, the local Bahá'í center was occupied, and twenty-eight Bahá'í homes were raided by armed men claiming to be from the Revolutionary Committee. Books and other properties were also removed from these places.

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The incident in Mashad added to the occupation of Bahá'í Holy Places in Irán, including the house in which Bahá'u'lláh, Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was born. The publishing offices at the Bahá'í National Center, as well as the local Bahá'í center in Tehran, have also been closed and sealed; books and documents were removed from these places by armed men. The house of Bahá'u'lláh in Takur, the house of Hujjat in Zanjan, and the house of Quddús in Babul -- all holy places for the Bahá'ís -- have also been occupied.

The occupation of Bahá'í institutions and properties is the latest in a series of distressing developments affecting the Iránian Bahá'í community over the last several months. For example, during the month of December, organized mobs attacked Bahá'ís -- and their properties -- in Shiraz and its environs. As a result of these attacks, over 450 homes were looted, burned, or otherwise destroyed. In those events, fifteen Bahá'ís were wounded and two were killed.

The spirit of aggressive animosity towards the Bahá'ís spread to several centers throughout the province of Fars, including the town of Marvdasht, where 31 Bahá'í homes were looted, and the imposing structure of the Bahá'í center was razed to the ground.

Following these events, the wave of persecution spread to the north of the country. In several towns and villages of Azerbaijan, and particularly in Miandowab, the onslaught was severe. In the latter town, the first target was the local Bahá'í center, which was totally destroyed, and this was followed by the burning or looting of 80 homes and the

brutal murder of two Bahá'ís, a father and his son, whose bodies were then dragged through the streets, cut in pieces, and consigned to the flames.

The organization of these violent assaults on Bahá'í lives and properties has emboldened and incited hooligans all over the country, and the oppressed Bahá'ís are constantly under the threat of mass aggression and assault. These acts of hostility against the Bahá'ís have so far cost four lives and the displacement of some 700 individuals who have become homeless, as well as millions of dollars in loss of properties.

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