## Bahais are desperately trying to stop persecution in Iran

Latest episodes

Latest episodes

Some of the latest episodes of violence cited by
the Bahais include:

In June, 12 men and 10 women were hanged in
the Iranian city of Shiraz after refusing to save
themselves by recanting their Bahai faith. Khomeint
fersied an appeal from President Reagan to spare
their lives, declaring that Reagan's intervention
proved the 22 were American and Zionist agents.

By Bahai count, the hangings brought the number
of Bahais executed by the government since the
1979 Iranian revolution to 132. Another 14 have
disappeared, at least 200 remain in prison, and the
number murdered by Islamic zealots in the countryside is difficult to determine.

In June, 130 Bahai men, women and children
were rounded up in the village of Ival and held for
three days in an open field without food, water or
shelter from the sun. After constant harangues, they
were released, but Barrett said the incident illustrated the growing campaign of intimidation against

By Michael Precker
Dallar Morning News

HAIFA, Israel — Through secret channels to the
West, word of the Iranian government's campaign
against the Bahai faith reaches its international
headquarters on the Bahai faith reaches its international
headquarters of the Bahai faith reaches its international
headquarters of the wooded, picturesque hillside of
Mohammed as a prophet,
but they cannot accept any
other prophet after
Mohammed.

"It is a systematic campaign, and it is intensitying," said Donald Barret is Californian who serves
as secretary-general of the Bahai international community, which numbers 2 million people in more
than 100 countries. "The sole purpose is to exterminate the Bahai faith in Iran."

Latest episodes but they cannot accept any

- Bahai official Donald Barrett

the 300,000 Iranian Bahais, most of whom live in villages.

In early July two prominent Iranian Bahais, Jahangir Hidayati and Ahmad Bashri, were kidnapped on the streets of Tehran Authorities refuse to provide information or even acknowledge they were detained, raising fears the two may never be seen again.

The Bahais have urged Iran to permit an independent investigation by the United Nations or any other independent organization, but Iran has refused the request.

Regarded as heretics by Moslems, Bahais have suffered persecution in Iran since a Persian merchant declared himself the founder of a new religion 139 years ago. Known as the "Bab" (sgate in Arabic), he began preaching — despite warnings from Moslem authorities — that his religion would usher in an era of peace and brotherhood. He was executed by a 750-man firing squad in 1850.

'Messenger'

'Messenger'

Thirteen years later a Tehran nobleman pro-claimed he was the messenger of God predicted by the Bab as the successor to Abraham, Moses, Zoro-

aster, Buddha, Krishna, Christ and Mohammed. He called himself the Baha'u'llah — "Glory of God" in Arabic and his followers "Bahai."
Baha'u'llah was exiled and imprisoned in Palestne but later was freed to spend the rest of his life in Acre, 10 miles north of Haifa. His tomb, in a landscaped garden near Acre, and the golden-domed shrine of the Bab in Haifa, are the two holiest spots for Bahais.

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The religious differences between Islam and the Bahais now are compounded by a geographic twist of fate. In Khomeini's eyes, the Bahais are synonymous with the "Great Satam" of Zionism.

"Bahais naturally turn here," Barrett said. "Their holy places are here, their world center is here. They contribute to the bullding and the upkeep. Their passports are stamped with Israeli visas.

"The Iranians say, 'Here's the proof that Bahais are spies for Israel and Zionism," he said. 'It's so easy to prove that is a false charge."

No clergy.

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No clergy.

The Bahai faith espouses a mixture of puritanism, racial and sexual equality and a Utopian view that all mankind will eventually unite in harmony and world government, there is no clergy and almost no liturgy, but Bahais are urged to study Bahai teachings, but the state of the control of the

tics."
From the start, Bahais have paid the price for their dissent. An estimated 20,000 early followers of the Bab and Baha'ullah were put to death, and in the Moslem world only Iran has a streable Bahai community.

Barrett acknowledged that Iranian Bahais were urged to flee Iran before Khomeini took power, and about 10,000 did. Because Islamic fundamentalists view Bahais as Moslem dissidents, not a separate religion, their religious freedom is not protected under the Iranian Constitution.

## Three stages of persecution

Barrett, a former senior legal counsel for Gulf Oil, said the persecution under the Khomeini regime developed in three stages. Shortly after the revolu-tion, the nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly, the highest Bahai authority in Iran, disap-peared and are presumed to have been murdered.

When nine men were elected in their place, all were arrested and executed when they refused to renounce their faith. Other prominent Bahais met the same fate.

The second stage, Barrett said, was economic strangulation. Bahai property and financial holdings were seized, and holy places desecrated. Bahais were fired from their jobs and denied pensions, their children expelled from school.

The final stage, the Bahais believe, is mass intimidation of believers. Stories abound of mobs attacking Bahais throughout Iran, destroying property, seizing teen-age girls to be married to Moslems against their will and murdering men and women who refuse to recant.

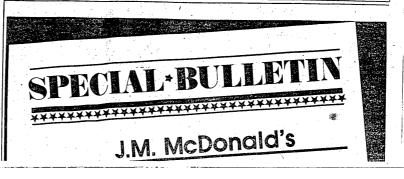
Through it all Bahais around the world have remained quiet, partly because their faith proscribes noisy political action and partly because diplomacy seemed the best way to deal with Khomeini.

## Soviet construction boss reportedly has been ousted

The head of the Soviet Union's construction industry has left his post as deputy premier, in what appears to be one of the highest-level demotions since Yuri V. Andropov took charge last year.

In addition to being one of a dozen or so deputy premiers, Novikov was chair-man of the State Committee for Con-struction Affairs, a powerful govern-ment agency that supervises the spe-cialized construction ministries.

According to recent Soviet press reports, the official, Ignati T. Novikov, r. 6, asked to be relieved of his duties so be could go into retirement. The reports were not accompanied by the usual expression of gratitude for services rendered, which has become common under Andropov when leading officials leave the government on reaching retirement are.



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