


[About Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [Subscribe](#)

[HOME](#) [PROGRAMS](#) [PUBLICATIONS](#) [RESOURCES](#) [INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS](#)
[MEMBERSHIP](#) [EVENTS](#)
[home](#) > [publications](#) > [cultural survival quarterly](#) > [volume 7.3](#) > [article](#)

The Baha'is of Iran

By Martin, Douglas

September 30, 1983 | Cultural Survival Quarterly | Issue 7.3

On the night of June 18th, 1983, the Islamic revolutionary authorities in Shiraz, Iran, hanged ten women and teenage girls for refusal to deny their belief in the Baha'i Faith. For three days before their deaths the victims had endured barbarous treatment at the hands of Shi'ih Muslim clergymen and revolutionary guards who, on June 15th, had similarly executed the husbands, father and son of four of them. These new deaths brought to 160 the number of Baha'is in Iran who have been shot or hanged by the Islamic regime. The great majority of the persons executed have been members of the elected local and national governing bodies of the Baha'i community, the Spiritual Assemblies. The other victims were principally persons who held high rank in the teaching institutions of the Faith or who were otherwise prominent in its service. Tens of thousands of Iranian Baha'is have lost homes, jobs, pensions, savings and businesses, have seen their shrines and cemeteries desecrated, and their children driven from school. The entire community, over 300,000 persons, the largest religious minority in Iran, live as pariahs in their own country.

Initially, it was assumed that these outrages were an integral part of the political upheaval which was occurring. It is now generally recognized that political developments in Iran have little or no relevance to the subject. Independent forums such as the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the national legislatures of several states, the European Parliament, and Amnesty International, as well as some of the most respected figures in the journalistic world, have repeatedly charged that the attacks on the Iranian Baha'is represent nothing other than a systematic campaign of religious persecution.

Nor is the persecution a recent phenomenon. Virtually from the moment of its inception in mid-nineteenth century Iran, this religion has been the object of intense hostility by the Shi'ih Muslim clergy and the target of successive waves of attacks against its membership. One of the two founders of the Faith, known to his followers as the Bab (the "Door" or "Gate"), was executed in 1850 at the urging of Shi'ih clerics, and some 20,000 of the early believers perished in massacres also incited by the latter. Over the next seventy years the Baha'i community intermittently experienced persecution of one kind or another; a proscribed minority, it survived only by keeping a very low profile, and by adhering strictly to the Baha'i principle of not engaging in partisan political activity. The Baha'i Faith began in 1844 with the announcement of the Bab that his mission was to prepare the way for the Messenger of God for this age. Baha'is believe that Baha'u'llah, who announced his own mission in 1863, was that Messenger. It was Baha'u'llah who elaborated the teachings of the Faith and founded the Baha'i community.

The mainspring of the hostility to the Baha'i minority has been the Islamic clergy's rejection of the idea that there could be a revelation from God after that of Muhammad, who is regarded by them as "the last of the Prophets." This theological objection is immeasurably strengthened by ecclesiastical fear of the Baha'i social teachings. Essentially, the new Faith teaches that

Quarterly Details

Continent: Asia

Country: Iran

Issue: Conflict

Related Information

There are no related articles.

BP000595