

PRESS BRIEFING

New executions of Bahá'ís in Iran

Husbands, wives, teenage daughters among latest victims
of religious fanaticism

Gerald Knight, Alternate Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations, will brief correspondents on the latest developments in the religious persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran and the role of the United Nations in resolving "the grave human rights situation prevailing in that country, including the situation of the Bahá'ís"*
*Paragraph 3 of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1983/34

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TEN WOMEN AMONG SIXTEEN BAHÁ'I VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS EXECUTIONS IN IRAN

Ten women, ranging in ages from 18 to 54, were among the sixteen Bahá'í victims of summary executions carried out on 16 and 18 June 1983 by the fanatical religious authorities in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz. The sixteen were among the over 80 Bahá'ís arrested in Shiraz in late 1982. They were held in prison without charges while severe pressure was put upon them to recant their faith and embrace Islam. When they refused to recant, they were condemned to death without trial. The executions were carried out late at night, without prior warning, and the authorities have so far refused to hand over the bodies of the victims to their families for burial.

The following Bahá'ís were executed by hanging during the evening of 16 June 1983:

Dr. Bahram Afnan (48), a prominent physician

Mr. Bahram Yalda'i (23), a student

Mr. Jamshid Siyavushi (39), a merchant

Mr. 'Inayatu'llah Ishraqi (60), a retired oil company officer

Mr. Kurush Haqbin (27), an electrical technician

Mr. 'Abdu'l-Husayn Azadi (60), a Health Ministry employee

Two days later, during the evening of 18 June 1983, the authorities executed by hanging ten Bahá'í women - some of whom were related to previous victims of summary executions. The ten executed on 18 June were:

- Mrs. Nusrat Yalda'i (54), mother of Bahram (hanged 16 June)
- Mrs. 'Izzat Janami Ishraqi (50), wife of 'Inayatu'llah (hanged 16 June)
- Miss Ruya Ishraqi (early 20's), daughter of the above
- Mrs. Tahirih Siyavushi (32), wife of Jamshid (hanged 16 June)
- Miss Muna Mahmudnizhad (18), daughter of Yadu'llah (hanged in Shiraz on 12 March 1983)
- Miss Zarrin Muqimi (early 20's)
- Miss Shirin Darvand (early 20's)
- Miss Akhtar Thabit (19)
- Miss Simin Sabiri (early 20's)
- Miss Mahshid Nirumand (18)

All sixteen victims of these latest religious executions in Iran were well-known Bahá'ís who had been imprisoned solely because of their Bahá'í activities. In the case of the ten women, these activities were concerned largely with the education of children. It is known that the ten women underwent long interrogations in prison and were warned that they would be subjected to force if they did not agree to sign prepared documents of recantation. All ten preferred to die rather than recant their faith.

In the light of these latest outrages, the Bahá'í International Community is gravely concerned for the safety of the approximately 200 Bahá'ís currently held without charges in Iranian prisons and, in particular, for the 60 or more Bahá'ís still in detention in Shiraz.

In February 1983, the religious authorities in Shiraz publicly announced that 22 of the many Bahá'í prisoners in that city had been condemned to death and that the sentences had been approved by the Supreme Court of Iran. In order to exert the maximum psychological pressure on the Bahá'í community, the authorities declined to reveal the names of those condemned to death. Following the announcement, urgent appeals for commutation of the death sentences were made to the Government of Iran by the United Nations Secretary-General, by the human rights organs of the United Nations, by concerned Governments throughout the world and, most recently, by the President of the United States. All these appeals have gone unheeded and, since March 1983, a total of nineteen Bahá'ís have been summarily executed in Shiraz. It is, of course, impossible to confirm whether or not they were among the 22 whose death sentences were announced in February.

The 22 February 1983 issue of the Iranian daily newspaper "Khabar-i-Junúb" carried a report of an interview with the President of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Shiraz, during which he was asked for his comments on the Bahá'ís and on the death sentences recently handed down by the court. In the course of his reply, the judge stated:

"It is absolutely certain that in the Islamic Republic of Iran there is no place whatsoever for Bahá'ís and Bahaism . . . Before it is too late, the Bahá'ís should recant Bahaism, which is condemned by reason and logic. Otherwise, the day will soon come when the Islamic nation will deal with them in accordance with its religious obligations, as it has dealt with other hypocrites who have appeared in more dangerous garb and have satanic religious gatherings."

On 8 March 1983, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution in which it expressed its concern at the continuing persecution of the Bahá'í minority and requested the Secretary-General to continue direct contacts with the Government of Iran on the human rights situation in that country, including the situation of the Bahá'ís. On 10 March 1983, the European Parliament adopted a resolution which focused specifically on the 22 condemned Bahá'ís and appealed for clemency. Two days later, three Bahá'ís - two men and a woman - were summarily executed in Iran.

Since the start of the Islamic Revolution, 141 Bahá'ís (including 31 in Shiraz) have suffered death because of their religious beliefs. Fourteen more have disappeared without trace. Countless others have been assaulted, driven from their homes, dismissed from their jobs and deprived of all their possessions. Bahá'í students have been refused admission to schools and universities. Hundreds of Bahá'ís, both men and women, have been imprisoned without charges.

The Bahá'í International Community publication "The Bahá'ís in Iran: A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority" (second edition) chronicles the persecutions suffered by the Bahá'í community from the start of the Islamic Revolution to July 1982. In the months following publication of that document, the persecutions have continued in all parts of Iran and have included the following incidents:

Five Bahá'ís condemned to death in Shiraz (23 September)
offered their lives by the judge if they would agree to recant.
All five refused. (Three later executed.)

Fifty Bahá'ís in Saysan subjected to violence and abuse for
16 days, finally forced to sign prepared documents of recanta-
tion.

October 1982: Start of mass arrests in Shiraz, culminating in imprisonment
of 85 Bahá'ís.

Bahá'í prisoners in Shiraz beaten, deprived of their prayer
books, ordered to recite only Muslim prayers.

November 1982: Mr. Habibu'llah Awji summarily executed in Shiraz (16 November)
Mr. Ziya'u'llah Ahrari summarily executed in Shiraz (21 November)
(Both condemned on 23 September)

December 1982: Fanatical mobs in Qumsar, near Kashan, harassed Bahá'ís and
set fire to Bahá'í properties.

January 1983: Mr. Hidayat Siyavushi summarily executed in Shiraz (1 January)
(Condemned on 23 September 1982)
Mrs. Guldanih 'Alipur (in her 60's) attacked by a fanatical mob
in the remote village of Sari, Mazindaran, strangled and her
body burned (10 January)

- February 1983: Two Bahá'ís condemned to death in Shiraz. (One of them - Dr. Bahram Afnan - was executed on 16 June 1983.)
- March 1983: Mr. Yadu'llah Mahmudnizhad, Mr. Rahmatu'llah Vafa'i and Mrs. Tuba Za'irpur executed by hanging in Shiraz (12 March)
- April 1983: Summary arrest of all nine members of the local Bahá'í administrative council of Zahidan (29 April)
- May 1983: Mr. Suhayl Safa'i and Mr. Jalal Hakiman summarily executed in Teheran (1 May). Both involved in the education of Bahá'í children.
- June 1983: Six men, ten women summarily executed by hanging in Shiraz (16 and 18 June). Full details earlier in this report.

During the past eleven months, scores of Bahá'ís have been summarily arrested in various parts of Iran and are being held without charges while intense pressure is put upon them to recant their faith and embrace Islam.

Despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Iranian Government is persisting in its denial that Bahá'ís are being persecuted in Iran because of their religious beliefs.

20 June 1983