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1601: IRAN - BAHAI'I:

UNITED NATIONS, MAY 27, REUTER - REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BAHAI'I COMMUNITY TODAY EXPRESSED ALARM AT REPORTS THE IRANIAN AUTHORITIES PLANNED TO OBLITERATE ONE OF THE FAITH'S MOST HOLY SHRINES, IN THE CITY OF SHIRAZ, AND TO BUILD OVER THE SITE.

IN A LETTER TO IRAN'S DEPUTY U.N. REPRESENTATIVE, JAMAL SHEMIRANI, THE BAHAI'I INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S U.N. OFFICE SAID: 'THIS INFAMOUS DECISION TO OBLITERATE A SITE THAT IS AS HOLY TO BAHAI'IS AS IS THE KA'ABA IN MECCA TO MUSLIMS IS AMPLE EVIDENCE OF THE DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENT AUTHORITIES TO ERADICATE THE BAHAI'I COMMUNITY.'

THE SITE IS THAT OF A HOUSE OCCUPIED IN THE LAST CENTURY BY MIRZA ABEI MOHAMMED, REVERED BY BAHAI'IS AS THE BAB, OR FORERUNNER OF THEIR FAITH.

THE LETTER SAID--: 'WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THE DISTRESSING AND OMINOUS NEWS THAT THE OCCUPANTS OF THE HOUSES ADJACENT TO THE HOUSE OF THE BAB IN SHIRAZ HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO VACATE THEM TO ALLOW THE AUTHORITIES TO OBLITERATE THIS SACRED HOUSE AND CONSTRUCT ON ITS SITE ROADS AND A PUBLIC SQUARE. WE REQUEST YOUR URGENT INTERVENTION WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT TO PREVENT THIS PLAN.'

THE LETTER SAID THE DECISION BEHELD OFFICIAL STATEMENTS THAT THE HOUSE WAS SEIZED BY REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS IN APRIL 1979 ONLY TO PROTECT IT, AND THAT AN UNRULY MOB WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS DESTRUCTION THE FOLLOWING SEPTEMBER.

'UNFORTUNATELY, THE TOTAL DISREGARD BY THE IRANIAN AUTHORITIES OF ALL OUR PREVIOUS APPEALS ON BEHALF OF THE PERSECUTED LAW-ABIDING BAHAI'I MINORITY IN IRAN LEAVES US NO CHOICE BUT TO BRING BEFORE THE CONSCIENCE OF MANKIND THE GRAVE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS LATEST VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS,' THE LETTER SAID.

'BAHAI'IS THE WORLD OVER HAVE GRIEVED AT THE DEPTHS TO WHICH IRAN, THE BIRTHPLACE OF THEIR FAITH AND THE OBJECT OF THEIR DEAREST HOPES, HAS SUNK,' IT ADDED.

THE BAHAI'I INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, WHICH HAS CONSULTATIVE STATUS WITH A NUMBER OF U.N. BODIES, SAYS THERE ARE SOME 300,000 ADHERENTS OF THE FAITH IN IRAN.

UNLIKE OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, THEY ARE NOT RECOGNISED UNDER IRAN'S NEW CONSTITUTION AND ARE REGARDED BY MUSLIMS AS HERETICS. ACCORDING TO THE BAHAI'I OFFICE HERE, AT LEAST 18 HAVE BEEN KILLED IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS BECAUSE OF THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND 14 OTHERS HAVE DISAPPEARED WITHOUT TRACE.

REUTER AG

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