

Following is Associated Press story from Tel Aviv AP Bureau transcribed from telephone dictation

The Bahá'í International Community fearing a campaign to eliminate the Faith in the land where it was born has appealed to Iran's Islamic Government to stop executing Iranian Bahá'ís. A spokesman for the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa Monday released the text cable sent by the Bahá'í office in New York last weekend to Ayatollah Khomeini, Prime Minister Mir Husayn Musavi, and Ayatollah Musavi Ardibili the Supreme Court President

The cable issued in the name of Bahá'í communities in 164 independent countries of the world "appeals to the Iranian leadership to stop summary arrests and executions of Bahá'ís to publish any evidence used against Bahá'ís and grant to members of the minority faith their inalienable right to publicly defend themselves and disprove malicious accusations and false charges". The Bahá'ís World Centre became publicly involved in the protests against suppression of the faith in Iran for the first time following the revelation of 14 executions in late December and early January. Earlier protests have been issued by Bahá'í communities in other countries because leaders of the Faith sought to play down the connection to Israel where Bahá'í shrines are located and where the elected international leadership lives in Haifa. The Iranian authorities have branded Bahá'ís as "Zionist spies" stating a connection to the Bahá'í World Centre. The Bahá'ís says the charge is spurious since the World Centre was established in Haifa in 1868 more than 70 years before the Jewish state was founded. Bahá'ism grew up in Iran in the mid 19th century and but its Founder called the Bahá'u'lláh was exiled to Haifa and died there in what was then part of the Turkish Ottoman empire. Iranian Bahá'ís number some 300,000 making them the second largest religion after Shi'ite Islam but the Bahá'ís, who are regarded as heretics by Shi'ite Islam, complain that the new Iranian constitution denies them status as a minority religion, even though Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians are recognised as religious minorities. The Bahá'ís say more than 100 adherents of the Faith have been executed in the 3 years since the Islamic Republic took power. The latest executions reported by relatives in Iran took the lives of 8 members of the National Spiritual Assembly, the elected Iranian leadership and 6 members of the Tehran Local Spiritual Assembly. A woman who was hosting a meeting of the Tehran Assembly also reported arrested and executed.

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"These are actions of an organised campaign to eliminate the Bahá'í leadership in Iran" said a World Centre spokesman who released the text of the protest cable on condition that his name not be used. The spokesman said Bahá'ís hope that world governments and human rights movements would express "shock and abhorrence" at the executions and support the Bahá'í appeal for fair treatment in Iran. The 14 executions caused the Bahá'ís to fear for the fate of 14 others who have disappeared. The spokesman said "Among those who have disappeared are 10 members of the National Spiritual Assembly who were replaced by other Bahá'ís. Eight of the replacements were reported executed on December 27 and they in turn have been replaced by new members. The spokesman said expressing "loving admiration" for their willingness to take a dangerous position. According to a Bahá'í "white paper" issued in New York the Iranian authorities also have confiscated all Bahá'í communal properties, destroying shrines and cemeteries and they have dismissed Bahá'ís from government jobs and expelled their children from school. Bahá'ís have been put on trial and offered the chance to save themselves after they recant their faith and accept Islam. The white papers says but few have recanted. Iranian Bahá'ís living abroad are unable to get their passports renewed and thus are in danger of becoming stateless persons. The white paper said Bahá'í doctrine stresses the unity of divine revelations through the Biblical prophets, Khrishna, Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad as well as the teachings of Bahá'í prophets reflecting a long history of persecutions. In Iran Bahá'ís are taught to obey their government and avoid politics and faithfully believe that a just world government will evolve.