

## If Iran Is Really Listening

So they aren't deaf, after all. One of Iran's mullahs — Ayatollah Musavi Ardebeli — recently called a news conference to deny Western reports about the slaughter of adherents of the Bahai religion. It was not true, he said, that eight Bahai leaders were secretly executed on Dec. 27. And if "one or two Bahais" have been killed recently, the murders "were not carried out by official bodies."

Yet there is testimony from Bahais outside Iran — including names, dates, places — that at least 111 members of the faith have been executed over the past two years. These wholesale killings are the revenge of mean-minded zealots against a stigmatized religion that originated in Iran a century ago. The Bahais apparently cannot be forgiven their devotion to peace and tolerance, their belief in opportunities

for women and, not least, their prominence in the professions.

The first victim reported shot on Dec. 27 was said to be Jinus Mahmoud, a physicist who headed Iran's Meteorology Department. Her son, in Los Angeles, plausibly insists that his mother was killed because her scientific eminence "stuck in the throat of the current rulers of Iran."

Ayatollah Musavi Ardebeli, the President of Iran's Supreme Court, could easily disprove the charges about a new wave of terror. Let him produce Mrs. Mahmoud and the other named victims. The impression spreads that in the new Iran, there is little tolerance and no mercy for either religious or political dissenters. It is an impression that the world is eager to lose.