

Iranian Bahai group called mob victims

United Press International

LONDON — At least 130 women and children belonging to the Bahai faith banned by Iran's Islamic regime were attacked and forced to hide in a north Iran forest last week for refusing to change their religion, the Bahai assembly of Britain said Monday.

"The mob which drove the group into the forest consisted of all kinds of people, not just government forces," said Mary Hardy, general secretary of the Bahai community's organization.

"She said the organization had no news of the group's whereabouts after it escaped into the forest. Nor did it know how many of the group were children, she added.

"The Bahais were inhabitants of the Ival village, near the north Iranian town of Sari, before they "were herded into a walled field without food and water on June 28," Hardy said in a prepared statement.

"They were told they were to be held there until they recanted their faith and embraced Islam.

"At the end of three days none of the captives had recanted," the statement said.

They were released July 1 "to return home" but before they could do so they were attacked by a "village mob and forced to hide in the nearby forest."

"Horribly enough, the only crime they committed was that they were Bahais," Hardy said.

Sixteen Bahais, including 10 women, were executed in Iran between June 16 and 18 despite an appeal by President Reagan to spare their lives.

The executions brought to 151 the number of Bahais who have been put to death because they refused to recant their faith, Hardy said.

"As far as prisoners go we have no idea about their numbers," she said.

"The entire Bahai international community has been appalled at this new cruelty being inflicted on its Iranian brothers. Appeals are being made to the government and all humanitarian agencies," the statement said.

The statement also said two Bahais, Jehangir Hedayati and Ahmad Bashiri, were kidnapped while walking in a street in Tehran on June 29.



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