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IRANIAN GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES NEW SCHEME TO TRY TO FORCE BAHÁ'IS TO SIGN THEIR OWN DEATH WARRANTS

Move follows statement at UN General Assembly that Iran
will not observe provisions of Universal Declaration
of Human Rights

United Nations, 3 January 1985

In a new move against the beleaguered Bahá'í religious minority, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is insisting that, as a condition of their release, Bahá'í detainees must sign a statement admitting that they are members of an espionage organization and agreeing that they will be guilty of a capital offence if any article relating to the Bahá'í Faith is found on their person or in their home.

The text of the statement is as follows:

"I, the undersigned, [details of personal status, including religion] undertake not to have in my possession any book, pamphlet, document, symbol or picture of the misguided, Zionist, espionage group of Bahá'ís. If any of the above-mentioned articles belonging to this hated underground movement is found on my person or in my home, this will be tantamount to my being of

those 'who war against God' and the Attorney-General would be free to decide against me in the manner he deems fit."

Bahá'í prisoners are refusing to sign this undertaking, which not only misrepresents the Bahá'í Faith but which would also leave them open to having Bahá'í materials (copious quantities of which have been confiscated by the authorities) planted on their persons or in their homes as evidence that they are persons who "war against God".

The significance of this terminology resides in the fact that it is used by the present régime in Iran to signify a crime deserving of death. Indeed, a number of Bahá'ís have already been executed in Iran on the charge of warring against God simply because of their membership in the Bahá'í community.

Iran's Ambassador to UN asserts Iran will not observe provisions of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

To sentence a person to death on a charge such as this is to ignore all the norms of international human rights law. This fact, however, does not deter the Government of Iran from pursuing its policies of religious oppression.

As recorded in the official Summary Records of the 65th meeting of the Third Committee of the 39th General Assembly on 7 December 1984, Said Rajaie-Khorassani, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, stated that "The Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, which represented secular understanding of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, could not be implemented by Muslims and did not accord with the system of values recognized by the Islamic Republic of Iran; his country would therefore not hesitate to violate its provisions, since it had to choose between violating the divine law of the country and violating secular conventions."

In pursuing its campaign of religious persecution against the 300,000 strong Bahá'í minority, the Iranian Government is flagrantly violating all the "secular conventions" accepted by the international community in the field of human rights.

Background to the situation of the Bahá'í minority in Iran

The persecution of Iran's 300,000-strong Bahá'í minority is motivated by fanatical religious prejudice. Although the Bahá'í Faith, which was founded in Iran in 1844, is often mistakenly described as a sect of Islam, it is in fact an independent world religion with its own Prophet-Founder, Scriptures and Teachings. Iran's fundamentalist religious leaders are unwilling to tolerate the existence of any religion that appeared after Islam and are conducting a ruthless campaign to eradicate the Bahá'í community and destroy all traces of the Bahá'í Faith in the land of its birth.

Since the start of the Islamic Revolution, 138 Bahá'ís have been summarily executed, 12 have died in prison, 5 have been assassinated, 22 have been beaten, stoned or burned to death by fanatical mobs and 14

have disappeared without trace and are presumed dead - a total of 191 Bahá'ís who have died solely because of their religious beliefs. Thousands of Bahá'ís have been deprived of their jobs, homes and possessions, and Bahá'í children are denied education unless they are willing to recant their faith. All Bahá'í holy places and community properties in Iran have been confiscated and, in many cases, destroyed and the financial assets of the community have been appropriated by the authorities.

Over 750 Bahá'ís, including women and children, are currently being held without charges in Iranian prisons. Many are being barbarically tortured to try to force them to confess to false charges of espionage - the very charges which Bahá'í prisoners would be tacitly admitting if they agreed to sign the government's new prison-release document.

UN Special Representative to investigate human rights violations in Iran

The treatment of Iran's Bahá'í minority is one of the matters that will come under the scrutiny of Mr. Andrés Aguilar of Venezuela, whose appointment as Special Representative on Iran was announced on 19 October 1984 by Peter H. Kooijmans, Chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Mr. Aguilar, a former Minister of Justice of Venezuela, is currently a member of the Human Rights Committee (an organ established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) and also a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Iranian government introduces new scheme to try to
force Bahá'ís to sign their own death warrants

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The mandate of the Special Representative is "to establish contacts with
the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to make a thorough
study of the human rights situation in that country ..."

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