

Islamic leader decries killings

SUFI Sheikh Fadhalla Shaeri, founder and spiritual leader of the American Institute of Qur'anic Studies near San Antonio, has called government executions in Iran "un-Islamic", in the wake of continued reports of persecution of religious minorities there.

Bahais, one of the country's most powerful minority groups, have been particularly harassed by Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Revolutionary Party, and recent reports from Iran told of the hanging of 10 Bahai women and others, for refusing to accept Islam, in the city of Shiraz.

When queried in an exclusive interview on the executions, Shaeri said unhesitatingly, "It is un-Islamic," insisting that "Islam is entirely voluntary. Its very name means acceptance, submission."

Stressing that "if the reports are true" the executions "are wrong." As for why responsible Muslims around the world do not speak out against continued reported injustices within the ranks of Khomeini's so-called Islamic Republic government, he replied, "We all have measures of hypocrisy."

"I look upon their silence as a good sign in that it is the syndrome of he who is sitting in a glass house, not throwing stones. They recognize their own shortcomings," and added, "The world we live in is far from upholding the true spiritual values of any of its religions."

The American Institute of Qur'anic Studies was established two years ago near Blanco as a retreat and a school for the instruction of the Qur'an and the Arabic language.

Sheikh Fadhalla is of the Jafari-Shazli and Chishtia Order, and his specialization is the teaching of the Qur'an. He spends a good deal of his time lecturing around the world and at the Institute on the interpretation of Qur'anic verse. He is generally inaccessible to the news media, infrequently granting interviews.



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