

**NO TRADE WITH IRAN UNTIL
PERSECUTION OF BAHAIS
CEASES**

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OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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● **Mr. STARK.** Mr. Speaker, just 3 weeks ago the Iranian Government took yet another step in their attempted "genocide" of the Bahai people—16 Bahais in Shiraz, Iran, 10 of which were female including 3 teenagers, were executed because they would not recant their religious faith.

In February, Ayatollah Khomeini sentenced another 22 Shiraz prisoners to death. President Reagan wrote a plea of clemency for the prisoners, but his appeal was ignored. The Iranian Government carried out its inhumane slaughter of 16 Shiraz prisoners of the Bahai faith.

This Bahai bloodbath was not an unusual event for the Iranians. The

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Bahais of Iran have been persecuted for over 100 years, but this terrorization was intensified after the revolution in 1978-79. Hundreds of Bahais have been jailed unjustly, dismissed from public and private employment, have had their schools closed, homes, businesses, crops and animals destroyed, and their bank accounts confiscated.

Some 150 Bahais have been executed since 1979, because they would not recant their religious faith. Numerous secret killings have taken place along with many mob beatings. An article in the September 19, 1982, Los Angeles Times described how two of these incidents were carried out.

In the first:

Fifteen masked men attacked a couple in their home at night, poured kerosene on the husband and set him on fire before forcing him to run a few yards. Finally, they heaped wood upon him, burning him to death. His wife, subjected to similar treatment, died a few days later.

The second event was just as barbaric as the first:

A mob after destroying the local Bahai center, fell upon a man and his son, dragged their bodies through the street and chopped them up into little pieces that were finally consigned to flames.

The Iranian Government not only terrorizes the living, but also tortures the dead Bahais. Many Bahai cemeteries have been destroyed, graves disinterred, and bodies defecated upon. Ayatollah Khomeini has cast aside all human rights and decency when dealing with the Bahai people.

In contrast to the violent actions of the Iranian Shiite Muslims, the Bahai followers abide by a very peaceful religion. It teaches and strives for the unity of mankind, the equality of races, the equality of sexes, universal education, and the maintenance of world peace through collective security. Although they are enjoined to obey the laws of their respective countries, the Bahai religion does not allow its people to affiliate with any political party. However they may vote, but without regard for political affiliation. The Bahai people work to foster good characteristics among their people such as honesty, compassion, trustworthiness, and justice. A basic Bahai principle is the eradication of prejudices based on race, creed, class, nationality, and sex.

The Bahais believe that religious truth is not absolute, but relative. The divine revelation is therefore a continuous and progressive process. For that reason, the Bahai religion is able to adapt itself to modern times such as believing in the equality of males and females. Yet, the Bahais have standards which are not relative, but fixed. For instance, they still prohibit the consumption of alcohol and drugs, as well as premarital sex. The Bahai faith has 300,000 to 400,000 members in Iran, 100,000 members in the United

States, and followers in many other countries.

According to the Iranian Government, the Bahai people have committed a few major crimes for which they deserve to be treated more harshly than any other minority in Iran. The Islamic religion believes in the Old and New Testament, as well as the Koran, the writings of Muhammed. The Bahais also believe in these writings. Islam believes that the last and final prophet was Muhammed. Since the Bahai people believe in Baha'u'llah, a prophet subsequent to Muhammed, Islam considers the Bahais to be heretics. The Moslems accuse these heretics of "corruption on Earth and warring against God," because of their belief in Baha'u'llah.

The Shiite Islamic people also accuse the Bahais of being Zionists, because they send money to Israel. The Bahai world headquarters and one of its largest shrines, is located in Haifa, Israel. The Iranian Bahais used to send money to the shrine in Haifa to help support it. The Iranian Government accused the Bahais of being Zionist on account of these "contributions to Israel." The Government ignores the fact that the shrine was placed in the Holy Land almost 50 years before Israel ever became a state. Also, the Iranian Moslems themselves, as do many peoples around the world, contribute to their respective houses of worship in Israel.

Ayatollah Khomeini also accuses the Bahais of being spies for Israel, Russia, and the United States. This charge is ridiculous since the Bahai religion forbids political affiliation and repudiates rebellions against any duly constituted government such as the present Government of Iran.

Ayatollah Khomeini also considers the Bahai women to be prostitutes. There is no civil marriage in Iran, yet the Iranian Government does not recognize Bahai marriages. Therefore any Bahai woman that ever consummates her marriage is considered to be a prostitute. The Shiite interpretation of the Koran places women in a subservient position to men, but the Bahais believe in the equality of the sexes. Bahai women do not wear the head to toe veil, they sit together with their husbands in religious services, they hold administrative positions, and their opinions are considered just as important as those of the Bahai men. The Moslems consider these actions as proof of the Bahai women's immorality.

Since the Bahais are considered heretics, unlike the other minority religions, they are not protected under the Iranian Constitution. The Bahai people cannot complain to the clergy about the Government, because the clergy is the authority.

Many Bahai people have tried to leave Iran. The majority of those who

have escaped this persecution fled Iran illegally, because those who attempt to do so legally, usually fall in their endeavor. On the emigration form, there is a space left for the applicant to fill in his religion. If the Bahai member writes any religion other than Bahai, he has recanted his religion. It is written in the Bahai scriptures that it is better for one to die than to deny his membership to the Bahai faith, even for a fleeting moment.

The Bahais believe that the present life is preparation for the more important afterlife. Therefore few Bahais would fill in the name of another religion causing them to jeopardize their afterlives. If the Bahai member leaves the space blank, or draws a line through it, then the applicant's religion is open for questioning. Once the Government knows that the applicant is a Bahai, the Bahai member is charged with belonging to an obscene violent group that wars against God, corrupts Earth, and wishes to overthrow the Iranian Government. Permission to leave is denied and the applicants are often punished. The Bahai people are left in a catch-22 situation.

The Iranian Government continuously preys upon these trapped people; 20,000 Bahais have been executed in the last 100 years. Hundreds of other Bahai followers have been imprisoned by their oppressors. This ferocity and persecution forces the Bahai people to live a life full of fear and sorrow.

As fellow human beings, it is our duty to help answer the cry for help of this oppressed people.

The Iranian Government must know that the United States will not tolerate terrorist governments that deprive people of their basic human rights. Ayatollah Khomeini has ignored Congress' resolution calling for an end to the Bahai bloodbath. Although letter writing and public statements deploring this terrorization need to continue, we must resort to more forceful actions in our condemnation of Khomeini's genocide of the Bahai people.

I have introduced a bill, H.R. 2778, which will show our serious commitment to this cause. The bill states that no article which is the growth or product of Iran may be imported into the United States until the President determines, and certifies to the Congress, that the Government of Iran has ceased its persecution of the Bahais in Iran.

Of our imports from Iran, oil accounts for approximately 97 percent. The United States buys only 1 percent of its oil from Iran. And, oil of the same or higher grade can be purchased from several other countries at comparable prices with no time delays.

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From their point of view, Iran sells 2 to 3 percent of its oil to the United States. Losing our business now would have an impact on the Iranian economy. Iran would have less money to fund its present war with Iraq and would have to look for a new buyer during an oil glut. That could be difficult.

The United States should go on record as a country who condemns the pogrom of the Bahai people. I therefore urge all Members to join in working for early passage of this bill. The faster we act, the more Bahai lives we may be able to save.●