

STATEMENT CONCERNING RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN IRAN  
by Representatives of  
Non-Governmental Religious Organizations  
at United Nations Headquarters

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To respect the right of freedom of religious thought, association and practice is an essential measure of the development and maturity of peoples and nations. For the 154 countries of the United Nations there are standards approved in the UN Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as delineated in the International Covenant on Civil Rights and Political Rights.

On behalf of a number of Religious Non-Governmental Organizations at United Nations Headquarters, we are deeply concerned over all violations of religious freedom wherever they occur. We feel it a solemn duty to call to the attention of United Nations agencies, governments and private organizations, as well as to our widespread constituency, the urgent need to be alert to the protection of religious freedoms. This urgency is of the highest priority when the very life and safety of individuals of a religious community are at stake.

While most regrettably violations occur in several countries, at this time we are particularly concerned with the grave position of the Bahai Community of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We urge the Islamic Republic of Iran and all responsible agencies and persons promptly to grant the Bahai Community, as well as all religious minorities, full protection of life, property, association and religious freedom. We ask that religious freedom, whether specifically mentioned or not in a Constitution of the country, be extended to include the release of any prisoners

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primarily held because of their religious preference and we ask for the return of or compensation for any confiscated or destroyed properties.

As representatives of Religious Non-Governmental Organizations at United Nations Headquarters, we shall always plead the cause of religious freedom and seek affirmative support of such freedom not only in the Islamic Republic of Iran but also in all states where it is in jeopardy. We deplore the suffering and inhumane tribulation caused innocent people by the persecution of religious minorities.

For the Religious Non-Governmental  
Organizations at UN Headquarters -

Norma U. Levitt, Chairman

RELIGIOUS NGOS

AT THE

UNITED NATIONS

We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and

To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, ....

From the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations.

If further information is desired, please contact one of the Officers.

## INTRODUCTION

The Religious NGOs at the United Nations are representatives of national and international organizations accredited to the U.N. This ad hoc committee first began to meet in 1972.

Religious NGOs meet regularly at the Church Center for the U.N. in New York to share information and insights about the complex and sometimes confusing events at the United Nations. We try to look in two directions. We discuss ways better to inform and educate our constituencies about the global crises of our time, and the role of the U.N. Also we discuss how we can put some of our ideas, and especially our religious and ethical values, into the world organization.

One of the characteristics of the members of the Religious NGOs is the ability to listen carefully to varying viewpoints and to engage in dialogue with respect for each other's opinions. There is an intangible quality of openness and trust and the impact of this climate has been felt by all of us who participate. Through the Religious NGOs members continue to grow together as a group, as well as individually.

## MEMBERSHIP

Participation in the Religious NGOs is open to the representative and alternate representatives of any U.N. accredited organization defining its work as religious in nature.

In recent years representatives from several Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish and Moslem organizations have participated.

A donation of \$10.00 per organization is invited to defray the costs of mailings.

### OFFICERS, 1980-81

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## ACTIVITIES

Each year the Religious NGOs sponsor a prayer service at the beginning of the regular session of the General Assembly in September.

The members collaborate on an annual assessment of the General Assembly session. This assessment is circulated throughout the member groups and is delivered to the United Nations Secretariat and member-state delegations. The members also prepare statements at times on specific issues and concerns when appropriate to events at the U.N., such as on:

1. Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.
2. The New International Economic Order.
3. Harassment of Diplomats.
4. The Issue of Zionism.
5. Elimination of All Forms of Intolerances and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

The Religious NGOs meet on a monthly basis between September and May.