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INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNITY

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STATEMENT OF  
BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY  
ON THE VISIT OF  
IRANIAN PRESIDENT ALI KHAMENEI

22 SEPTEMBER 1987

The Bahá'ís have faced intense persecution in Iran for the last nine years. Since the Government that President Ali Khamenei represents came to power, more than 200 have been killed, hundreds more imprisoned, tens of thousands deprived of their jobs, sources of income and education, and virtually all civil rights.

As Bahá'ís, we deplore all wars. We lament the continuing conflict between Iran and Iraq, two sister nations professing the same Faith. Nevertheless, Iranian Bahá'ís, who have striven to be obedient to the Government, have served loyally when called upon by that Government.

Yet the Government continues to oppress the Bahá'ís, depriving them of all civil rights. The Iranian Government is asking the world for justice, yet it refuses to treat the Bahá'ís of Iran - loyal citizens obedient to it - with justice. The Iranian Government claims to be a victim of aggression, yet it is victimizing its own citizens.

Today, Mr. Khamenei has come to the United Nations to show, as one Iranian official told the New York Times, the "human face of Iran".

We wish to remind the world that the regime of which Mr. Khamenei is a member has been treating the Bahá'ís of Iran inhumanly, and is persistent in waging a campaign of systematic oppression against the approximately 300,000 adherents of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran.

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**Persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran**

**An Update**

**September 1987**

Since 1979, members of the Bahá'í Faith have faced systematic and severe persecution in Iran. More than 200 Bahá'ís have been executed, killed or have disappeared. Hundreds more have spent time in prison, often undergoing mental and physical torture. And tens of thousands have been deprived of jobs, property, education and other sources of livelihood. Bahá'í holy places have been confiscated and destroyed.

This government-sponsored campaign against the Bahá'í Faith has continued this year, despite repeated calls by the international community for an end to human rights violations against the Bahá'ís in Iran.

At least three Bahá'ís were executed in 1987 and more than 200 are currently in prison. Tens of thousands continue to be deprived of jobs, sources of income and education, and virtually all civil rights. Wholesale seizures of Bahá'í-owned businesses and properties are relentless. As with persecutions in previous years, Bahá'ís continue to be persecuted solely for their religious beliefs.

It seems clear, however, that international condemnation of such actions by the United Nations and others has had a beneficial effect. The pace of persecutions has slowed during 1987 and some prisoners have been released.

Yet there are numerous indications that the Iranian government still intends to eradicate the Bahá'í Faith in Iran. Muslims who attack Bahá'ís go unpunished, the courts having declared that Bahá'ís are essentially "non-persons" and deserving of no protection under the law. Governmental agencies appear to have stepped-up efforts to revoke or refuse business licenses to Bahá'ís, and numerous Bahá'í-owned shops have recently been confiscated.

Hence, the Bahá'í International Community remains convinced that continued United Nations pressure on the Iranian government will restrain the persistent effort to exterminate the Baha'i community in Iran.

Because the Bahá'ís of Iran have no protection under the Iranian constitution or national legislation, the security and survival of the Bahá'í community is wholly dependent on the pressure of international public opinion and the legal and moral support of the international community.

#### Executions in 1987

So far this year, three Bahá'ís have been executed by the government in Iran. As with the majority of executions in Iran in the last nine years, few details are available and it is uncertain to what extent trials or legal proceedings were held. This much is known:

- On January 26, Mr. Ahmad Káviḥ was executed in Isfahan. A merchant in his mid-fifties, Mr. Kavih had had spent two years in prison, much of that time in solitary confinement. He was often tortured.

- On March 3, Mr. Surúsh Jabbárí and Mr. Abu-l-Qásim Shá'iq were executed in Teheran. Their bodies were buried without the knowledge of their relatives and friends. Mr. Jabbárí, a 42-year-old engineer, had been in prison since September 15, 1984. Mr. Shá'iq, 47 years old, had worked for the government until he was dismissed for being a Bahá'í.

At least seven Bahá'ís were killed in 1986. They included three cases where the deaths occurred when Bahá'ís, lacking any sort of protection or civil rights by the government, were killed or beaten to death by mobs.

In one such incident, a 16-year-old boy, Bábak Tálibí, was stoned to death in early October 1986 in the village of Vardavard near Teheran by a group of fanatics who had previously harassed Bahá'ís. Bábak's body was hanged to suggest suicide, but local police certified that his death was caused by injuries sustained in the stoning. After Bábak's mother brought the murder to the attention of the authorities, they, instead of charging the culprits, arrested her, a son, and a cousin -- clear evidence that the government sanctions violence against Bahá'ís.

There were similar attacks on Bahá'ís last summer, although they did not result in deaths. In July, it was learned that a number of Bahá'ís were beaten in the village of Ílkhchí near Tabríz. In addition, their farms and possessions were burned and most of the Bahá'ís in that village were forced to abandon their homes and seek shelter elsewhere.

The Bahá'í International Community feels that the primary reason for the reduced pace of executions has been publicity and consequent international pressure. Executions hit a high in 1981, when at least 38 Bahá'ís were killed. The killings continued without abatement through 1983. That year, a widely-publicized mass execution of 10 Bahá'í women and girls occurred in June. Several of the victims were apparently condemned because they conducted classes for Bahá'í children who had been refused admittance to school. Outrage at that execution was felt worldwide.

The killings began to slow as the international community, especially through United Nations resolutions and increasing media coverage, began to make the Iranian regime understand that it could not act in isolation from world

opinion. Action by the U.N. General Assembly correlates, in particular, with a reduced rate of executions. The U.N. General Assembly expressed "deep concern" about the situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran in 1985 and 1986. In both years, the number of deaths dropped from double- to single-digit numbers. (See Appendix.)

### Arrests, Imprisonment and Torture

The number of Bahá'ís held in prison reached 700 in 1985. Apparently in response to international pressure, however, about 500 Bahá'ís were released in mid-1986. Many of those, detained in mass arrests in mid-1983, had simply served their terms. Others were released arbitrarily after languishing in jail for long periods without trial.

Yet, more than 200 Bahá'ís remain in Iranian jails at present. Each month, the Bahá'í International Community learns of more new arrests, and as often as not, of new releases. Since January, 48 Bahá'ís have been released from prison; another 43 were arrested and jailed. This new "revolving door" method of arbitrary arrest and release, coupled with the use of torture, seems calculated to keep the pressure on the Bahá'ís.

In the past, Bahá'í prisoners have been beaten, tortured, and held incommunicado. In virtually every case, the authorities made clear that if the Bahá'ís agreed to recant their faith, they would be released.

Calls for an end to such oppression have been rebuffed. In May, Amnesty International released a major report on the human rights situation in Iran. Numerous examples of summary arrest, detention without trial, and torture were documented. The situation of the Bahá'ís was prominently mentioned.

### Economic and Social Intimidation

While executions and physical torture get the most attention from governments and the media, a systematic and calculated campaign of economic and social intimidation has had perhaps greatest impact on the 300,000 Bahá'ís in Iran in the last nine years.

Almost immediately after the revolution, the Iranian government began to fire Bahá'ís from jobs in education and government. More than 10,000 Bahá'ís in government have lost their jobs since 1979. Government pensions were also cancelled.

In a campaign that seems aimed squarely at destroying sources of income for all Bahá'ís, the government has increasingly targeted Bahá'ís working in the private sector of late for such economic persecution. In numerous incidents this year, the business licenses of Bahá'í shopkeepers have been revoked or their shops have been confiscated. Bahá'í farmers have also been denied membership in cooperatives.

In a letter dated July 5, 1987, for example, the Islamic Revolutionary Committee of `Abbás-Ábád, Tunukábun, told a Bahá'í tailor that "because of your membership in the misguided Bahá'í sect, your business license is hereby revoked and declared null and void."

Bahá'í youth continue to be systematically denied free access to education, apparently as part of the same strategy for eliminating the means by which Bahá'ís can hope to support themselves.

Admission to universities and other institutions of higher education is still totally forbidden to Bahá'ís. Bahá'í children at the primary and secondary school levels are gradually being readmitted to school; however, they are subjected to constant pressure and indoctrination, and are threatened with being prevented from taking their examinations if they fail to "conform" (i.e., renounce their religion.)

Numerous properties owned by Bahá'í communities, including land and buildings that were considered holy, have also been confiscated in the nine years since the Iranian revolution. This official campaign against Bahá'í-owned properties has continued. Early this month, for example, it was announced in newspapers that the government was planning to build 3,000 houses on a large tract of land that had been set aside by the Bahá'ís for the building of their national temple.

In some rural areas, Bahá'ís have been driven out of their homes, farms and orchards, which have been forcibly occupied and then sold.

The desecration and closure of Bahá'í cemeteries have also continued. In many cities, it has been made difficult for Bahá'ís to find land for burials.

The right to leave Iran legally is still largely denied to Bahá'ís. In the past, it has been amply demonstrated that they would have to recant their faith in order to obtain a passport.

Above all else, Bahá'ís are denied the right to openly practice their Faith. They may not meet as a community, they are not allowed places of worship, they may not teach their Faith to others or disseminate Bahá'í literature. All Bahá'í administrative institutions were disbanded in 1983, following an edict of the Attorney-General which declared such institutions illegal and made membership in them a criminal offense. All Bahá'í holy places and religious sites in Iran have been confiscated. The holiest Bahá'í shrine in Iran has been destroyed.

#### **Iranian Charges and Refutation**

Despite such incidents, the Iranian government has continued to deny that Bahá'ís are persecuted for their religious beliefs. It has claimed that they enjoy the same rights and protections that Iranian citizens of other religions receive. Any arrests of Bahá'ís, the Iranian government has asserted, have been based on charges that the Bahá'ís are agents of Israel and the United States, engaged in espionage and terrorism.

Such claims and charges are patently false.

Numerous documents that have filtered out of Iran make it manifestly clear that Bahá'ís are being persecuted solely because of their religious beliefs. In virtually every instance of persecution, whether threat of death, torture, prison or deprivation of livelihood, the Bahá'í concerned has been told that the persecution will immediately cease if he or she will renounce the Bahá'í Faith and convert to Islam.

The teachings of the Bahá'í Faith pose no threat to the religious or secular leaders of Iran. Bahá'ís are required by the teachings of their Faith to be obedient to the government and to avoid partisan political involvement. The Bahá'í Faith is an independent world religion; it does not align itself with any outside movement, ideology or government. It is non-violent in its operation and seeks only to unite all men and women in a spirit of universal peace.

Yet, because of religious fanaticism and intolerance, the Shi'ih clergy of Iran have branded the Bahá'í Faith a heresy, and proclaimed that Bahá'ís are "misguided" and "infidels." The Muslim clergy appear unable to suffer the existence of the minority Faith, despite the humanitarian and peaceful principles espoused in its teachings.

Last year, for example, documents surfaced regarding the court case of a Muslim who was accused of delivering a "premeditated blow" to a Bahá'í in Shiraz. Because the dead man was a Bahá'í, the court ruled, the Muslim could not be punished or fined in that such "infidels" are not protected under Islamic law. Through that ruling, by indicating that Muslims who kill Bahá'ís will face little or no prosecution, the government has in effect declared "open season" on Bahá'ís.

Such rulings make it clear that the security and survival of 300,000 Bahá'ís in Iran remain under constant threat. It is the hope of the Bahá'í International Community that the voice of international public opinion will continue to make itself heard in protest.

## Appendix

## Correlation of Bahá'í killings and United Nations Action

As the accompanying chart shows, the killings began to slow as the international community, particularly through United Nations resolutions and increasing media coverage, began to make the Iranian regime understand that it could not act in isolation of world opinion. Action by the General Assembly seems to correlate with the greatest reduction in the rate of killings.

Year	Bahá'ís Killed	International Response
1978	7	none
1979	7	none
1980	24	UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities expresses concern for Bahá'ís.
1981	48	UN Commission on Human Rights requests the Secretary-General to report on situation of Bahá'ís.
1982	32	UN Commission on Human Rights asks Secretary-General to continue effort to protect Bahá'ís. Concern expressed by Human Rights Committee.
1983	28	UN Commission on Human Rights expresses profound concern on situation of Bahá'ís; asks SG to continue contacts. Sub-Commission...on Minorities asks special rapporteur to study situation of Bahá'ís.
1984	30	UN Commission on Human Rights requests appointment of Special Representative to study situation; expresses great concern. Economic and Social Council endorses Commission's

action. Sub-Commission on Minorities expresses alarm at continuing human rights violations in Iran.

1985

7

UN General Assembly expresses "deep concern" over human rights in Iran, including situation of Bahá'ís. Commission on Human Rights, its Special Representative, Sub-Commission on Minorities and ECOSOC all express continued concern.

1986

7

UN General Assembly expresses "deep concern" over Iran human rights situation, again singling out the Bahá'ís. Comm. on Human Rights and ECOSOC express continued concern.

Total of Bahá'ís  
killed or executed: 193\*

Additional Bahá'ís  
who have "disappeared": 15

Total number of  
Bahá'ís presumed  
dead: 208

\* includes 3 in 1987.

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