

# Sunnyvale engineer's sister and brother-in-law are slain in Iranian purge of Bahais

By Grant Harden  
Religion Writer

On June 18, Islamic fundamentalists in the southern Iran city of Shiraz hanged Tahirih Siyavashi, the sister of Sunnyvale industrial engineer Farrokh Arjomandi.

Nine other Bahai women also were hanged in the town that day.

Two days before, her husband, Jamsheed, and five other Bahai men had been marched before firing squads and shot to death.

The 16 were executed late at night without warning, without trial.

The executions have generated anxiety among the Bay Area's community of about 2,000 Bahais who have watched the purge escalate from killings of top Bahai leaders to members charged simply with teaching the faith to their children.

About 500 Bahais live in Santa Clara County.

"I am not grieving," said Arjomandi, who said that he first learned of his sister's fate June 20. "She could have saved her life easily by recanting her faith, by embracing Islam.

"She knew what she was doing. She made the ultimate sacrifice ... for the love of Baha Ullah," the prophet of the Bahai faith, he said. That is "not unlike the decisions early Christians martyrs

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had to make, to accept Caesar as Lord or die."

A memorial service will be held for the two and for other Bahais executed in Iran at 1 p.m. July 9 at the San Jose Main Library, 180 W. San Carlos St.

Bahais have been persecuted in Iran since their sect began there during the 19th century, but never worse than now.

Shiite Moslems, Iran's dominant religious sect, always have looked upon Bahais as dangerous heretics.

"All of the victims of the latest executions were well-known Bahais imprisoned solely because of their Bahai activities," said Arjomandi, the only Santa Clara Valley Bahai known to have lost a close relative in the Iranian pogrom.

The government in Iran denies the religious persecution of Bahais. But the United Nations and President Reagan have condemned Iran because of reports from various groups that Bahais have been killed, tortured, kidnapped and raped, and their property destroyed or taken from them.

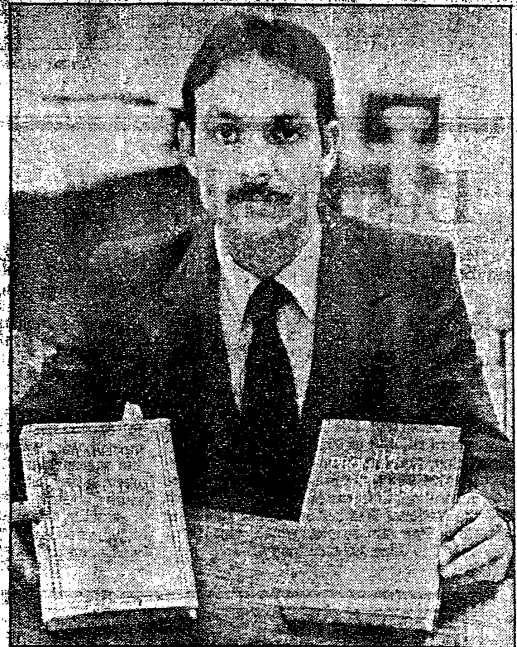
Tahirih and her husband were arrested four months ago. Four times following their arrests, they were taken to a local mosque in Shiraz and ordered to curse Baha Ullah and recant their faith," Arjomandi said.

Their crime: teaching Bahai children about the Bahai faith.

"She loved her country," Arjomandi said of his sister, a nurse. "She had a chance to come to the United States but refused. She was very serious about her religion. Had been since she was a young girl. Unlike the rest of us, she did not waste her time on movies or on other frivolous things but spent her spare time memorizing Baha Ullah."

The Bahais are followers of a religion whose philosophy leaves no room for mullahs, Iranian religious leaders who reportedly have conducted the current war against Bahaism. Bahai doctrine includes a number of controversial doctrines that mullahs deem too radical.

Bahais have no clergy, eschew



Cap Carpenter — Mercury

Farrokh Arjomandi holds books of Bahai faith

sacred rituals and seek intellectual freedom and equality for women. For more than a century, they also have called for establishment of an international court of justice and extension of education to all on a universal, compulsory basis.

Bahaism springs from the Babi movement in Persia that began in 1844 when Mirza Ali Mohammed — known as The Bab — proclaimed that a new messenger of God soon would appear and

supersede the prophet Muhammad.

The attack on the 300,000-member religious minority appears to be a campaign to eliminate the Bahai faith from Iran. Since the start of the revolution in 1979, 141 Bahai are known to have been killed, and 200 Bahai leaders are believed to be in Iranian jails.

Staff writer Connie Skiptares contributed to this article.

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