

DESPATCH FROM=GENEVA =
BY=ALAN MCGREGOR =
F.N.TEL. CALL 1950

TAPE NO.34 237

=THE BAHIAS OF IRAN =

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CUE: In Geneva the twenty-six member UN Human Rights Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities has taken up the subject of what is now happening to the estimated three-hundred-thousand Bahai religious minority in Iran. Alan McGregor reports:

On the basis of details put before the sub-commission by Mr. Gerald Knight, representing the Bahai international community, the Bahais of Iran are being subject to persecution reminiscent in some ways of what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany just before the second world war. They were facing execution, he said, dismissal from employment and exclusion from commerce. The only consistent alternative offered them being recantation of their faith, regarded as heretical by Iran's Muslim fundamentalists. They were being publicly denounced, he went on, during Friday sermons in the Mosques. They had no protection against looting, arson, beatings, murder, torture, freezing of bank accounts or confiscation of property. He cited as typical of what was happening the village of Dowlatabad near Teheran, where the Bahai inhabitants had been given an ultimatum either to embrace Islam, or leave the village. As a result of such pressures in many areas, at least ten-thousand Bahais were now homeless. In education, he said, rampant discrimination was being practised. Some schools now had special forms on which pupils religion had to be inscribed, admission being refused if the word Bahai were inserted. He spoke of a systematic programme in schools to brainwash and harass young Bahais, even at elementary levels. In

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expressing thanks for representations made to Iran during the past year by governments in several countries, he emphasised that so far these had had no effect.

ALAN MCGREGOR, BBC, GENEVA

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