

Spring 1982

# World Order

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The Persecution  
of Iran's Bahá'ís  
A Congressional Hearing  
Congressman Don Bonker  
Congressman Edward J. Derwinski  
Congressman Fortney H. Stark, Jr.  
Judge James F. Nelson  
Professor Firuz Kazemzadeh  
Glenford E. Mitchell  
Ramna Mahmoudi Nourani

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# World Order

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WORLD ORDER IS INTENDED TO STIMULATE, INSPIRE AND SERVE THINKING PEOPLE IN THEIR SEARCH TO FIND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY LIFE AND CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS AND PHILOSOPHY

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# The Threat of Genocide

## EDITORIAL

**T**HE MURDERS continue. Men and women are arrested and put on trial on trumped-up charges, or disappear without leaving a trace. Month after month, open and secret executions take place. The bodies of the victims, unceremoniously dumped in morgues and cemeteries, often bear marks of torture. Children are ridiculed, insulted, and ostracized in schools. Some have been kidnapped and placed with Muslim families to be raised as Muslims. Houses are set on fire; property is looted; the old and the sick are deprived of care; the young and vigorous are denied work. Thousands wander homeless, strangers in their native land.

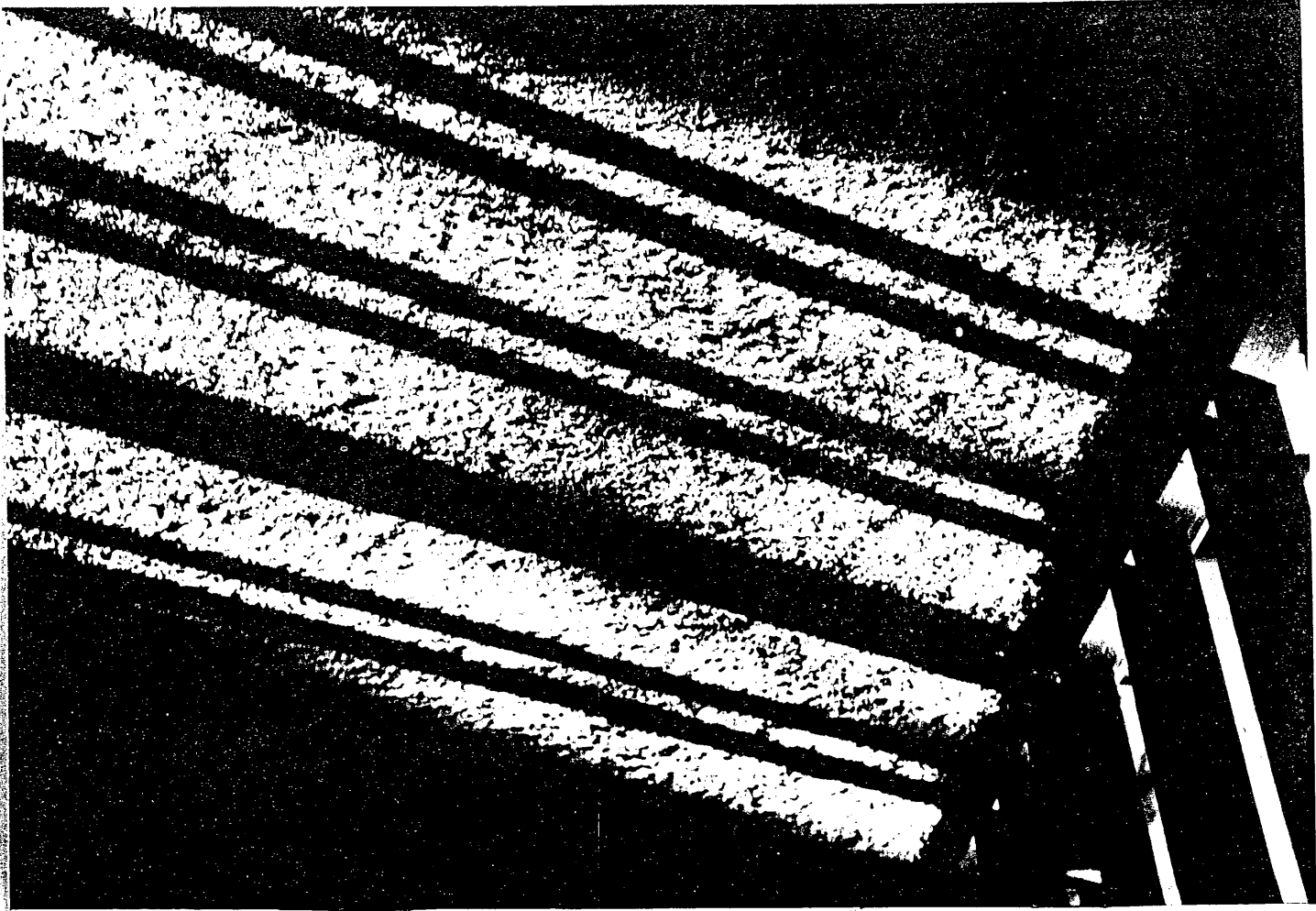
Through the green forests of Mazandaran, on the barren shores of the sea of Uman, by the snow-capped Alburz, in the shadeless heat of the Lut, in cities and towns, villages, and hamlets, is heard the blood-curdling cry: Recant! Recant!

Recant and live.

Recant and save yourself from torture and rape.

Recant and join those who have killed your family, your friends.

In the ancient and long-suffering land of Iran no other voices can be heard. But what of the world? Will it again remain silent in the face of such inhumanity? Will it not be stirred by the threat of genocide?



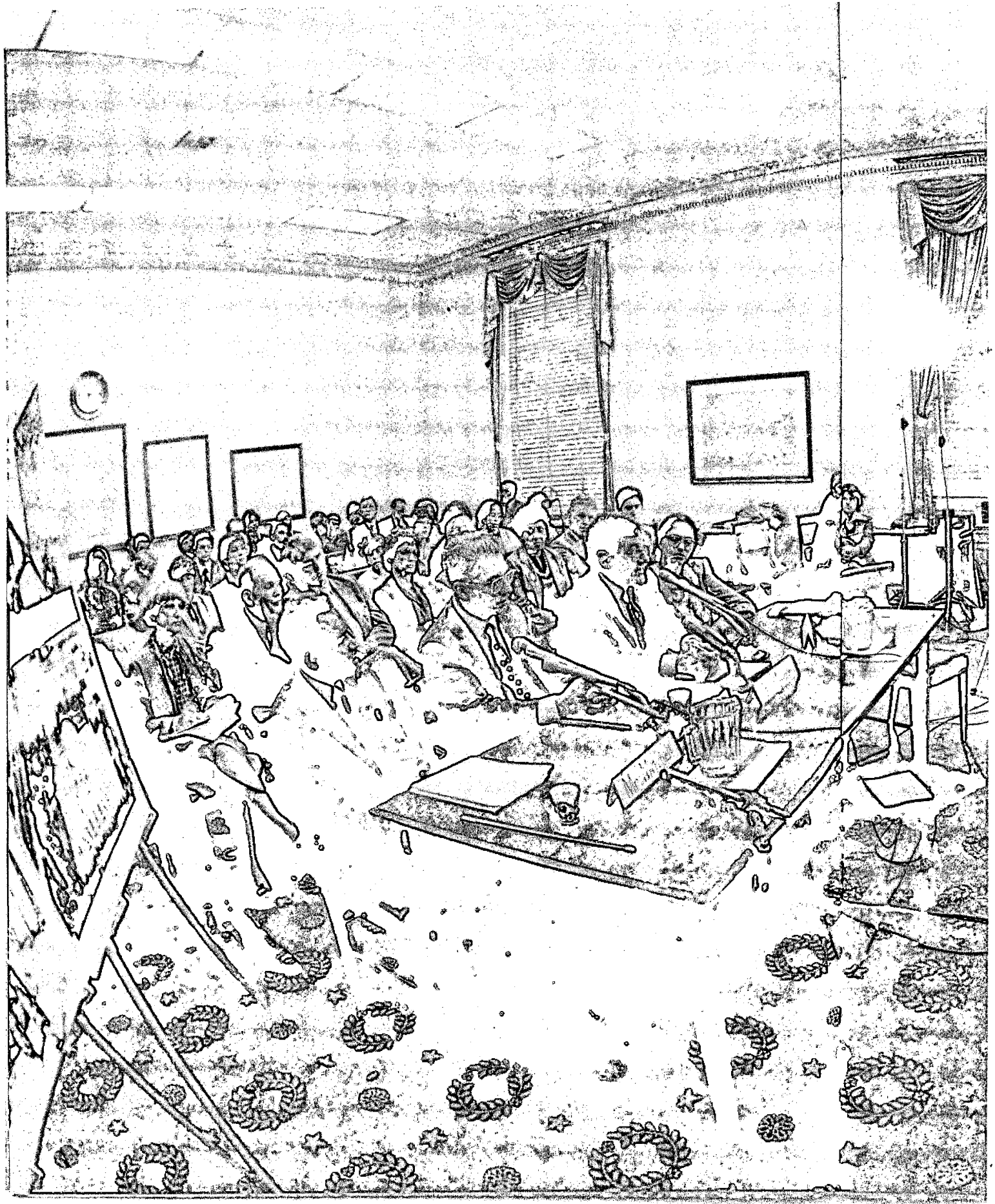


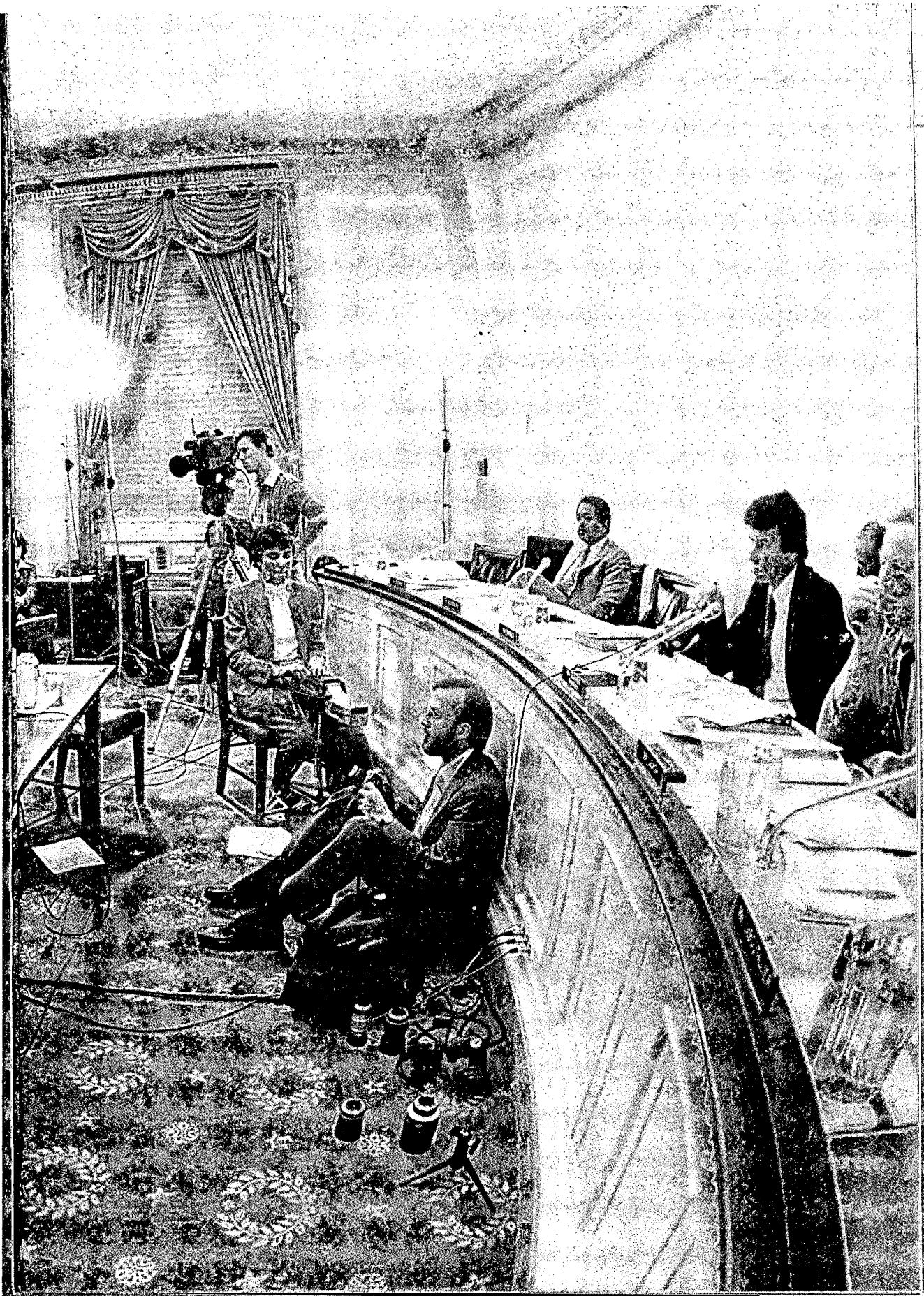
## About This Issue

ON MAY 25, 1982, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the United States House of Representatives heard the testimony of six witnesses concerning the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran. The hearing indicated the growing awareness of the American people and its elected representatives of the tragic events that have already cost well over a hundred lives, made thousands homeless, and caused untold suffering to a peaceful religious community of some 400,000 members.

The significance of the testimony and of the forum in which it was presented have prompted us to publish the entire prepared testimony in the form in which it was submitted to the Subcommittee (without following the style of transliteration of Persian and Arabic words ordinarily used by *World Order*). The abbreviated oral statements, as well as the exchange of questions and answers that occurred in the session and was recorded stenographically, are not yet available but will be published by the Congress before the end of the year. Because of the extraordinary nature of the material published in this issue, we have dispensed with our usual practice of including an Interchange.

THE EDITORS





COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

OPENING STATEMENT

HONORABLE DON BONKER

“Religious Persecution as a Violation of Human Rights”  
Part III—The Baha’is

*May 25, 1982*

**W**E HAVE STARTED a series of hearings on Religious Persecution as a Violation of Human Rights. The first two hearings have been general in nature, laying the framework as to the scope of the problem, how widespread it is, and what constitutes religious persecution.

Today we start looking at specific examples of religious persecutions around the world. The first case to be considered is that of the Baha’is in Iran.

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which recognizes and protects the Jewish, Christian, and Zorastrian minorities in that country, nevertheless denies recognition to Iran’s largest religious minority, the Baha’is. As a result, Iran’s 300,000 Baha’is are deprived of any form of protection under the law.

From the time of its birth in 1844 and at no stage in its history has the Baha’i faith been granted recognition as an independent religion by the Iranian Government or under the Iranian Constitution. The Baha’is have been considered heretics within Islam since their religion was founded 138 years ago in Iran.

Since the inception of the Baha’i faith, they have lived in a climate of constant repression characterized by frequent outbreaks of violence and bloodshed. In the early days, over 20,000 Baha’is were killed. Under subsequent regimes including the former Pahlavi’s (Shah), the religious persecution of the Baha’is continued.

Now once again in post-revolutionary Iran, differences in religious ideology are being used by fanatical elements to justify violent attacks on the Baha’i community. In March of 1980, two Baha’is were executed for teaching the Baha’i faith. Fourteen more were executed in June of 1980 for practicing their religion. In August of the same year, 14 members of the Baha’i administrative body disappeared. Last December 8, members of the Baha’i national assembly were executed and in January, six members of the local governing body of Tehran were executed. Baha’i shrines and cemeteries have been desecrated, administrative centers and savings confiscated. A systematic effort appears under way to eliminate the Baha’i religion from Iran.

The Baha’is are gentle and peace-loving. In accordance with the tenets of their faith, they uphold the divine origin of all the major world religions, rather than being narrow in scope.

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Baha’is

Since the United States has no leverage with the Iranian government, we must do all we can through other countries that have influence in Iran to bring an end to the persecution of the Baha'is. Through private channels and public exposure we must continue to pressure the Reagan Administration to do more and the Iranian government to put a stop to this genocide.

In the last two years the Subcommittee has made every effort to make sure that Baha'is are granted asylum in the United States. Every effort must also be made to call to the attention of world public opinion the plight of the Baha'is. This hearing will promote that process.





## A Chronology of Concern

STATEMENT OF HON. EDWARD J. DERWINSKI BEFORE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AT HEARING ON MAY 25, 1982, ON RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AS A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS—THE BAHÁ'IS

MR. CHAIRMAN, I am pleased that you are holding hearings and concentrating on the issue of the Baha'is. I believe that this ongoing tragedy which the Baha'i community is suffering in Iran is a story that has not been told vigorously and often enough and is, in fact, one of the great tragedies of our times.

The Baha'i community called my attention to their fears in Iran shortly after the radical regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini took control in that country. At this point, I would like to have inserted in the record the letter I received on February 15, 1979, from Glenford E. Mitchell, Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

I have been concerned with the plight of Iranian members of the Baha'i faith for some time. On June 26, 1981, I appealed to Kurt Waldheim, then Secretary General of the United Nations, for his help in alleviating their suffering. May I insert a copy of that

letter in the record at this point. The U.N. Subcommission for Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities voted 15 to 0 in condemnation of the Iranian persecution of the Baha'is.

On July 24, 1981, I addressed the House, denouncing the cruelty and excesses of the Iranian regime and calling for particular attention to the continued persecution of the Baha'is. On September 15, 1981, I placed in the *Congressional Record* a column by Professor Firuz Kazemzadeh entitled "For Baha'is in Iran, a Threat of Extinction." I ask that these items be included in the record at this point. I also asked you as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations to hold hearings on the situation of the Iranian Baha'is, and I am very pleased this is now being done.

There are relatively few Baha'is in the United States. The attention of the media is now riveted on the situation in the Falkland Islands and other world trouble spots, and the internal tragedy the Baha'is and other victims of the Ayatollah's regime face is all but forgotten. Again, Mr. Chairman, I commend you for holding these hearings and helping to present this story on behalf of a truly innocent and suffering people, the Baha'is.



## Expressing the Sense of Congress

TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE FORTNEY H. STARK, JR., BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, MAY 25, 1982

MR. CHAIRMAN, Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before your subcommittee today, to express my concern about the religious persecution of the 300,000 Iranian Baha'is by the Khomeini regime. I know that many of our colleagues in Congress also believe that we must condemn and oppose the harsh repression and possible genocide of the Baha'is in Iran. It is quite sad and ironic that a people who for over one hundred years have striven to bring about the unity of mankind, world peace, and world order, should be the target of flagrant violations of human rights.

I first learned about the plight of the Baha'is in Iran through constituents of mine, who are either themselves members of the Baha'i Community or who are friends of members. The shocking and disturbing letters and newspaper clippings which I received from people in the 9th District of California, prompted me to investigate this matter further, and then to speak out against the genocidal actions of the Khomeini regime. I found that many of our colleagues were also very concerned about the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran, evidenced by the number of speeches in the *Congressional Record* about the Baha'is.

On March 9, 1982, I introduced a concurrent resolution, which expresses the sense of Congress that the President and other official representatives of the United States should at every opportunity before international forums reiterate and emphasize the extent to which we deplore and condemn the religious persecution of people of the Baha'i faith by the Government of Iran. There are presently 7 cosponsors to my resolution, and at least half a dozen other mem-

bers have expressed an interest in signing it. I hope that the Subcommittee will consider my resolution in the very near future.

The same day on which I introduced the concurrent resolution, I also introduced a bill to prohibit imports from Iran until it ceases the persecution of the Baha'is. I feel that if the message in the Resolution is not heeded, we must move forward with more concrete actions, such as an embargo. Although United States imports from Iran have been reduced drastically, totaling only \$63.8 million for all of 1981, \$3.4 million for January 1982, \$2.3 million for February 1982, and \$3.8 million for March 1982, imposing an embargo on even a small quantity of imports would certainly be a clear, tough signal to the Iranian Government. My bill has been referred to the Trade Subcommittee.

I WOULD LIKE to share with the Subcommittee, some excerpts from *A Cry from the Heart*, by an eminent Western Baha'i, William Sears. This book is an impassioned account of the horrors perpetrated against the Iranian Baha'is, a refutation of the false and contradictory charges levelled against them, and an exposé of the genocidal purpose of the present outbreak. The following excerpt describes the atrocities taking place against the Baha'is in Iran:

The atrocities taking place against Bahá'ís today throughout Iran are no longer matters of suspicion or opinion. They are matters of fact. The proof can be found in the records of libraries, newsrooms, United Nations Agencies, human rights organizations, telex and cable files in every part of the world.

The spotlight of world publicity has now been turned directly upon Iran. It is no longer a secret that the killings, burnings, lootings, and torture of Bahá'ís are still continuing, even as these pages are being written. It is no longer possible for

the persecutors to suppress or minimize the enormity of their crimes, or to hide anonymously behind the fiction of "uncontrollable mobs."

Those days are over!

Confiscation of property, of bank accounts, burning and looting of homes, officially sanctioned executions of innocent victims—all these things take place everywhere, in the streets, in the market-place, and in the homes.

The Bahá'ís are harassed, beaten, abused, killed. Sometimes husband and wife together. Or an entire family. Or a group of close friends, or neighbours, or business associates. Chosen at random. At the whim of the killers.

Stabbed, stoned, hanged, burned alive, hacked to pieces with knives, stood before firing-squads.

Men, women, children. No one is spared. Their crime?

They are Bahá'ís.

These attacks have been going on for nearly one hundred and fifty years.

The first onslaught of the current persecutions began in 1978. It is now in its fourth year. The severity and spread of the outrages increase each day and become ever more sinister. There is no end in sight, and no sign of a let-up.

What is most alarming and threatening about the present avalanche is not its violence; that has always occurred. It is the devilish ingenuity of the assault designed to eliminate an entire community of nearly half a million souls. The terror has now spread into every level of Bahá'í life, to city dweller, villager and farmer.

At first the Bahá'í business houses, the repository of the savings of rich and poor Bahá'ís alike, were confiscated, with no recompense. Then the great Bahá'í hospital in Teheran, built, operated and fully supported by Bahá'ís, where patients of all religions and backgrounds were treated with the same loving care, was taken over. Next, Bahá'í holy places throughout the country were occupied and put to whatever

use, often personal, the revolutionary authorities, equally often the man with a gun, might decide. The meeting-places of the local communities were next to be taken. Then, having deprived this helpless community, which has no rights in law, of its funds, hospital, holy places and religious properties, attention was turned to the leaders of the community. All nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly were kidnapped . . . and have not been heard of, except by rumour, to this day. Outstanding Bahá'ís in the provincial communities were next and many of those have been executed. The obvious aim is to get rid of the capable, trusted, elected leaders before launching the attack on the rank and file.

The Bahá'í community they are trying to destroy is the largest religious minority in Iran. It has more members than the Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian communities combined. In spite of this, the Bahá'í Faith is not recognized and Bahá'ís are deprived of their basic human rights. There is no one and no place in the entire country they can approach for protection. They cannot appeal to the clergy, to the courts, or to the authorities. The clergy and their religious courts *are* the authorities.

They are engaged in a process which the entire civilized world has always been against.

It is called: *Genocide!*

The alleged reasons for the genocide are listed below in the major accusations currently made against the Baha'is in Iran. The absurdity of these accusations is explained in a later section of the book—I feel, however, that the absurdity of these accusations will be apparent to all who have been following the persecution of the Baha'is, without going into the well-documented refutation.

#### *Accusations*

1. The Bahá'í Faith, far from being a religion, is a subversive and heretical sect which plans to establish its own regime in Iran.
2. The Bahá'í Faith is a political party



which supported the regime of Muhammad Reza Shah, and received favours from him.

3. The Bahá'ís are agents of foreign powers, such as the United States and Russia, and of British imperialism.
4. The Bahá'ís are "spies" for Israel, and secretly collaborate with international Zionism. They contribute financially to the support of Israel which aids that country against its Arab and Muslim neighbours.
5. The Bahá'ís have their World Centre in Israel, and therefore must be hostile to Iran and to the current Islamic Revolution.
6. The Bahá'ís travel frequently to and from Israel, carrying and receiving information against Iran and other Arab nations.
7. The Bahá'ís are against Islam and Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, and insult His holy Book, the Koran.
8. There have been Bahá'ís in high places in the political life of Iran, although they claim they do not become involved in politics. A Bahá'í was once Prime Minister. Others served in lesser ministerial capacities.

9. The Bahá'ís of Iran are quite different from those in other lands. In Iran they are politically oriented.

10. One of the heads of the dreaded secret police, Savak, and others of its high-ranking officers, have been members of the Bahá'í Faith.

11. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

I would like to commend the Subcommittee for holding this hearing to focus attention on the plight of the Baha'is in Iran. I hope that the Subcommittee will continue its work in this area, and favorably consider my resolution, H. Con. Res. 283.

97TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION  
H. CON. RES. 283

Expressing the sense of Congress that the President and other official representatives of the United States should at every opportunity before international forums reiterate and emphasize the extent to which we deplore and condemn the religious persecution of peoples of the Baha'i faith by the Government of Iran.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
MARCH 9, 1982

Mr. STARK submitted the following concurrent

resolution; which was referred to the  
Committee on Foreign Affairs

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that the President and other official representatives of the United States should at every opportunity before international forums reiterate and emphasize the extent to which we deplore and condemn the religious persecution of peoples of the Baha'i faith by the Government of Iran.

Whereas the Government of Iran has persecuted peoples of the Baha'i faith, has killed more than one hundred individuals of the Baha'i faith since 1978, has jailed Baha'is unjustly, has confiscated and shut down Baha'i holy places and other community property, has banned Baha'i meetings, has dismissed Baha'is from public and

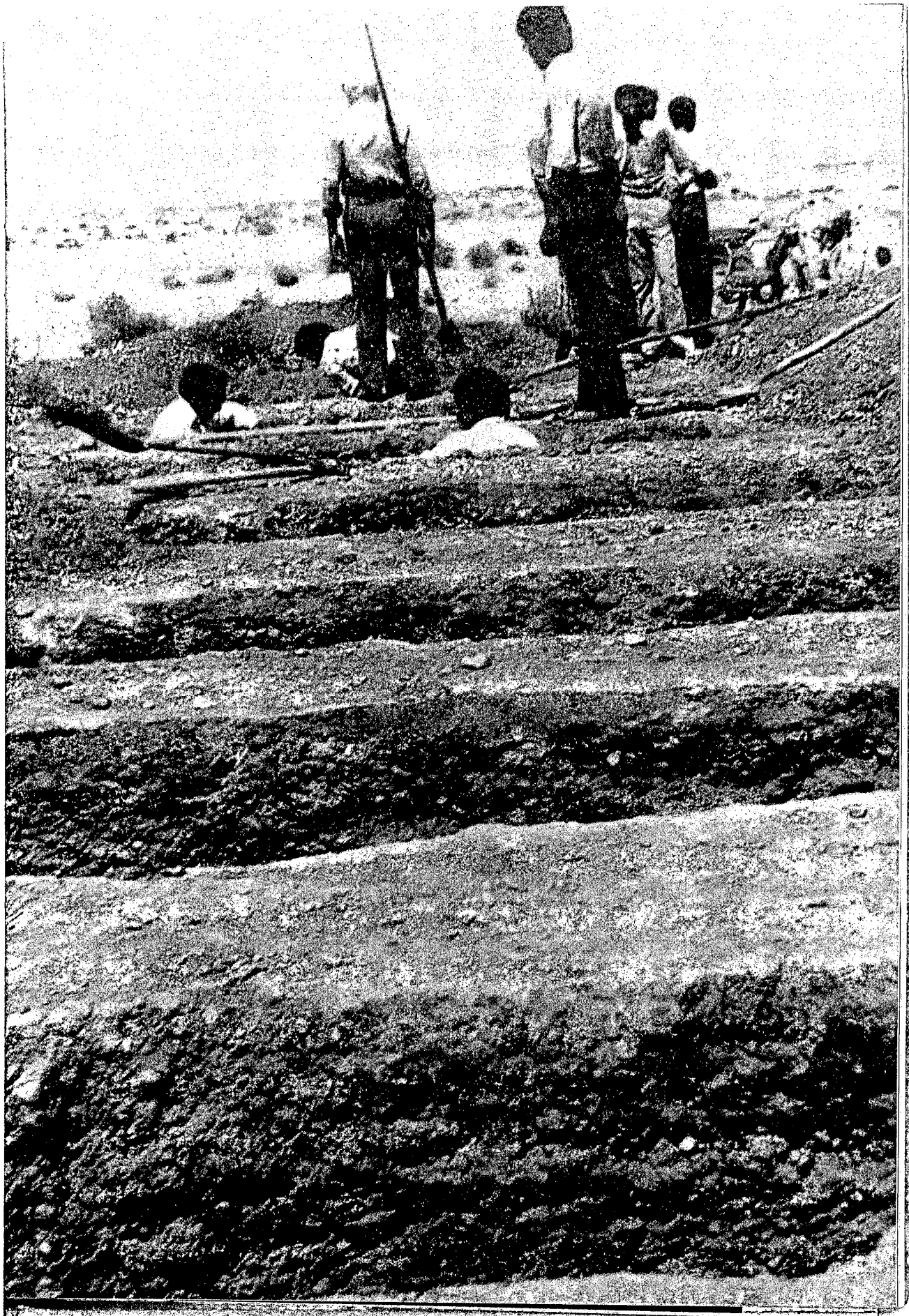
private employment, has destroyed Baha'i homes and businesses, and has harassed or assaulted Baha'is in outlying villages trying to force them to recant their faith: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),* That it is the sense of Congress that (a) in accordance with our own history and national traditions of opposition to religious persecution, as well as in full respect for international law and custom, the United States condemns and opposes the religious persecution of peoples of the Baha'i faith by the Government of Iran.

(b) The President and other official representatives of the United States should at every opportunity before international forums reiterate and emphasize the extent to which we deplore and condemn the religious persecution of peoples of the Baha'i faith by the Government of Iran.







## Three Years of Horrors

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES F. NELSON

I am a judge of the Municipal Court of Los Angeles and the chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States—the governing board of trustees elected by the 100,000 members of the American Baha'i community. With me is Firuz Kazemzadeh, professor of history and chairman of the Committee on Middle-Eastern Studies at Yale University, and vice-chairman of our National Assembly. Also with me is Glenford E. Mitchell, secretary and chief executive officer of our National Assembly. My colleagues and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today before the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations concerning the horrible acts of discrimination against the members of the Baha'i Faith in Iran.

FOR the last three-and-one-half years the Baha'i community of Iran has suffered relentless persecution. The horrors that are being inflicted upon it stagger the imagination. They constitute without any doubt a gross violation of all fundamental human rights.

- In Miandoab, a mob, after destroying the local Baha'i center, fell upon a man and his son, dragged their bodies through the street, and chopped them up into small pieces that were finally consigned to flames.
- In Nuk, a farming village near Birjand, 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 for a few yards; finally they heaped wood upon him, burning him to death. His wife, subjected to similar treatment, died a few days later.
- In Shiraz, 300 Baha'i homes were burned.
- In Tehran, the dead bodies of executed

Baha'is were written upon in large script. These ghoulish markings included the epithet "enemy of Islam."

- In Yazd, following the execution of seven Baha'is, including an 85-year-old man, the authorities presented their widows with bills to cover the cost of the bullets used to execute them.
- In Musa-Abad Village, two teenage girl students were abducted from school by their religion teachers. The parents have been unable to determine their fate. The teachers claimed that the girls had converted to Islam and refused to meet their Baha'i parents, a most unlikely story.
- In Kashan, a teenage girl was abducted and forced to marry a Muslim despite her being under age.
- In Shiraz, a high-ranking authority decreed that a Baha'i widow had no right to the pension due from her husband's insurance and could not retain custody of her children.
- In Tehran, the High Court of Justice upheld a verdict of the Shiraz Revolutionary Court that cited membership in Baha'i Assemblies as a crime punishable by death. Since this verdict more than sixty Baha'i leaders have been executed.

The Iranian Baha'is have no recourse for redress of grievances. The constitution of the Islamic Republic does not recognize the Baha'i Faith, although similar religious minorities are recognized. Thus the patient and repeated appeals of the Baha'is to the authorities fall on deaf ears.

The Baha'i Faith originated in 1844. Ever since then its history has been marked with bloody periods of persecution. However, the new attacks began with the Islamic revolution in the autumn of 1978. Between September 25 and December 14 of that year

the community recorded 112 instances of assault upon its members. There were lootings, burnings, beatings, murders, the desecration of cemeteries, the disruption of meetings—all intended to force Baha'is to deny their faith. The attacks spread rapidly to every province in Iran.

IN THE SPRING of 1979, when the Islamic Revolutionary Government of Ayatollah Khomeini was already firmly established, the campaign against the Baha'is assumed an official form and increased in magnitude:

- 2,000 men, women and children were driven from their homes and sought refuge in the deserts and mountains.
- The House of the Bab, the holiest shrine in Iran for Baha'is and a place of pilgrimage for the Baha'is of the world, was seized on the pretext that it was being held by the authorities as a protection against mob attack. It was ultimately razed, the site obliterated by a hastily constructed road.
- Nawnahalan company, which served as a savings and loan association primarily for the benefit of Baha'i children, was confiscated.
- Omana company, which held in trust Baha'i community properties, including holy places and historic sites that had been in the possession of Baha'is for more than a century, was similarly confiscated. As national and local properties were seized, so too were the sacred literature and records of the community.
- The Ministry of Education issued a circular that those Baha'is who did not deny their faith should immediately be discharged from their jobs as teachers.
- Baha'is were arrested without charge in various localities.

Soon it became apparent that the campaign directed against the Baha'i community was systematic and centrally directed. The Human Rights Commission of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland issued a report in Zurich on September 12, 1979 in which it described the methods and ends of the persecution as "administrative strangulation," "financial strangulation," "social and personal strangulation." Other reports, including the published dispatches of the correspondents for Reuters, The Associated Press, *Le Monde*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, signified the deepening crisis for the Baha'is of Iran. These reports combined to portend the imminence of genocide.

The final blow was to be the elimination of the leadership of the community. The primitive logic was clear: a body without a head could not survive. Beginning in 1980, shortly after the taking of American hostages, a rash of disappearances, arrests, and executions of members of Baha'i local and national governing bodies shocked the community. The abduction of all nine members of the National Assembly on August 21 confirmed the rumor of a plot to wipe out the Baha'i leadership. The National Assembly members were meeting in a private home, when revolutionary guards forcibly took them away, along with two other officers of the Faith with whom they were conferring. No trace of them has been found, and they must be presumed dead. Eight members of the subsequent National Assembly were similarly abducted and then secretly executed in Tehran last December. Six of the nine members of the Tehran Assembly met the same fate in January 1982. Scores of other local Assembly members have been executed in different parts of the country, some after tor-

ture. Scores more languish in jail, their fate unknown.

How do Iranian authorities justify the persecution of the Baha'is? The Baha'i Faith is not recognized in the constitution of the Islamic Republic. Therefore, Baha'is are not entitled to protection under the law and have no opportunity to defend themselves against false accusations. Baha'i marriages are not sanctioned by law. Therefore, their issue are not recognized as legitimate. Since Baha'i marriages are not recognized, Baha'i women are proclaimed prostitutes.

The Shiite clergy and the Government persistently accuse the Baha'i Faith of being a political conspiracy that serves the interests of foreign powers, including the United States. This, in spite of the fact that Baha'is strictly avoid disloyal and subversive activities.

The clergy and the Government claim that the Baha'is were favored by the regime of the Shah and ran his secret police, the SAVAK, when in fact the Baha'is were persecuted under Pahlavi rule and were frequently the SAVAK's victims.

The clergy and the Government accuse the Baha'is of serving the interests of Zionism and Israel. As proof they point to the fact that the Baha'i world center is located in Haifa, Israel, and that Baha'is send money to that country. Indeed, the Baha'i world center is in Israel. This occurred because 114 years ago the government of the Ottoman Empire forcibly brought the founder of the Baha'i Faith and His disciples to Akka, which was then in the province of Syria. Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, died in Akka and ever since then the twin cities of Akka and Haifa have been the spiritual center of the Baha'i Faith long predating the State of Israel.

The allegations that the Baha'is transfer funds to Israel are made out of sheer mischief. Baha'i pilgrims from all parts of the world regularly travel to Israel to visit the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, and other sites closely associated with their religion. Thousands of

Iranian Baha'is made this pilgrimage during the time when they were permitted by law to visit Israel. In accordance with the clear requirements of the Baha'i Faith, its world spiritual and administrative centers must always be united in one locality. Accordingly, the world administrative center of the Baha'i Faith has always been and must continue to be in the Holy Land. It cannot be relocated for the sake of temporary political expediency. Contributions sent by Baha'is to their world center in Israel are solely and exclusively for the upkeep of their holy shrines and historic sites, and for the administration of their Faith. Almost all Baha'is in Iran have made such contributions, and this innocent action is used to support charges of their collusion with Israel.

These allegations are a sham. They are a smokescreen for religious fanaticism. Time and again the persecutors have confirmed by their own acts that their charges are groundless. The fake trials of the Baha'is never deal with the substance of any of these accusations; rather, the prosecutors attempt to learn about the operations of the Baha'i community and to force the defendants to recant their faith. In November 1981, a couple in whose home the members of the Tehran Baha'i Assembly met when they were arrested, were put on trial. The wife refused to recant, was sentenced to death for espionage and executed. Her husband recanted and was set free, fully absolved of the charge of spying.

In former and simpler times, the Shiite clergy did not need to invent justifications for their hatred of the Baha'i Faith. Back then they persecuted "heretics" and did not have to bother with notions of religious tolerance. Today, the clergy are as determined as ever to eradicate the Baha'i Faith, but feel they need elaborate justifications for their murderous acts.

The Shiite clergy's hatred of the Baha'is is at its root purely religious. The Muslim clergy hold that Muhammad was the last of a series of prophets going all the way back to Adam. The Baha'is, however, believe that

the dialogue between God and man can never stop, that Baha'u'llah was a prophet of God equal to Muhammad, and that in the future there will be others who will continue to bring divine revelation to humanity. Moreover, Baha'u'llah abrogated particular Islamic laws such as holy war, polygamy, certain dietary laws, and regulations concerning ritual purity.

Equally offensive to the Shiites is the Baha'i principle of the equality of men and women. Perhaps even more upsetting is the fact that the Baha'i Faith does not have a clergy but is, instead, governed by democratically elected bodies. Moreover, by promoting the unity of mankind as its pivotal principle and by envisioning a federation of nations under a world government, the Baha'i Faith shatters Shiite notions of exclusiveness and monopolistic possession of power.

Thus the Baha'is are frequently accused of being "enemies of Islam," which in an Islamic Republic also means enemies of the state. Yet it must be recognized that wherever the Baha'is have spread their religion, they have succeeded in spreading reverence for Islam and its prophet. Moreover, they have taught their fellow-believers in more than 100,000 localities around the globe to love Iran as the birthplace of their religion.

The situation in Iran also affects Baha'i communities in other countries. The anti-Baha'i propaganda spouted by the Iranian Islamic Republic spreads misunderstanding and suspicion of the Baha'i community far and wide. Even in the United States, American Baha'is had to battle against the power of mass communications as Iran's spokesmen have taken to the airwaves with half-truths and outright lies. There have been instances in which fanatical Islamic Iranians have made attempts to disrupt Baha'i activities in our own country. For example, on March 27 this year, the Baha'is of Morgantown, West Virginia, were prevented from holding a prayer meeting when a group believed to be Iranian students threatened the management

of the hotel in which the event was to have taken place. Similar incidents have occurred in Reno, Nevada, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. It seems that some Iranian Muslims residing in the United States are attempting to intimidate the American Baha'i community and to create for it the same oppressive conditions existing in their own country.

WE have cited in this brief statement the most telling evidences of the persecution of the Iranian Baha'i community, namely: the wholesale seizure of Baha'i sacred literature, the confiscation of national and local records, the expropriation of the community's properties and other assets, and the execution of its leaders. No extensive analysis is needed to determine the precise intention behind these acts. A community deprived of its inspiration, of its memory, of its material means, and of its leadership becomes extinct. That these deadly afflictions have not succeeded in breaking the spirit of the Baha'i community is a clear indication of its deep rootedness, its resilience, and its determination to survive. But there are limits to human endurance, and it is our hope that before it is too late the governments and peoples of the nations will join in the effort to ensure the security of this innocent minority.

It is the task of the Baha'is of other lands to help their Iranian co-religionists by calling the attention of the world to the horrors that are being perpetrated in the name of religion. On many occasions in this century, the world averted its eyes when fanatics, demagogues, and dictators of various stripes massacred national, racial, and religious minorities, or filled concentration camps with "class enemies," deprived of their most fundamental rights all those who dared to differ from their brutal orthodoxies even in thought. Decency, respect for human rights, and love of one's neighbor, be he ever so distant geographically, are as indivisible as peace. Humanity cannot afford to remain silent and by its silence to condone evil.

We, the Baha'is of the United States, feel no animosity toward the government of Iran.



We feel genuine sympathy for the long-suffering Iranian people and wish for them a peaceful and happy future. However, we cannot remain indifferent to the sufferings of our Iranian brothers and sisters at the hands of bigots, who have no compunctions about shedding innocent blood. We call upon our fellow citizens and our elected representatives to proclaim that America will not acquiesce

in oppression and that its perpetrators will have to answer for their deeds in the court of world opinion.

Mr. Chairman: Again I thank you for giving time to the Baha'i community to present to your Subcommittee information about one of the most compelling cases of religious persecution in modern history.

# The Roots of the Hatred

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FIRUZ KAZEMZADEH

I am professor of history and chairman of the Committee on Middle-Eastern Studies at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. I am also vice-chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

JUDGE James Nelson has outlined the story of the large-scale persecution that has befallen the Baha'is of Iran. I do not intend further to dwell on the horrors that are daily being perpetrated against men, women, and children who belong to an innocent and defenseless religious community. Rather I shall attempt to provide some historical information that would help place the recent events in perspective and explain the intense hatred the fundamentalists among Iran's Shiite clergy feel for the Baha'is.

The Shiite sect of Islam became Iran's state religion in relatively modern times. It was only in the sixteenth century, under the patronage of the Safavid dynasty, that Shiism assumed a dominant position. Some two hundred years later the state underwent catastrophic decline. An Afghan invasion, followed by anarchy, extensive military adventures, protracted dynastic and tribal rivalries, and the resultant economic decline led to the diminution of secular authority and to an inordinate increase in the influence of the clergy.

In the early nineteenth century, the clergy was truly the first estate of the realm. The new rulers, members of the semi-nomadic Qajar Turkoman tribe, had no legitimate claim to the throne and felt the need for the goodwill of the mullahs who wielded enormous economic and political power. So great had their influence become that they controlled the streets of the principal cities, were able to precipitate the massacre of the entire

staff of a foreign legation and to provoke a disastrous war. In a culture that did not separate religion from politics, the clergy participated in the governance of society, exercising virtual monopoly over the judiciary, and involving itself heavily, and at times decisively, in every significant national issue.

The clergy's spiritual and secular authority rested largely on its claim to represent the Hidden Imam, a descendant and successor of the prophet Muhammad, who, according to ancient tradition, had disappeared in the year 260 A.H. and whose return the Shiites anxiously awaited.

In May 1844, in the southern city of Shiraz, a young merchant, Seyyed Ali Muhammad, proclaimed himself the Bab, or Gate, through which believers could gain access to the Hidden Imam. As his mission evolved, the Bab revealed to a rapidly growing circle of dedicated disciples that he was the Hidden Imam himself, a new prophet and a herald of a still greater divine messenger who would soon come to fulfill millennial prophecies and bring about righteousness on earth.

The Bab's teachings were a direct challenge to the Islamic fundamentalists. The Shiite clergy held that Muhammad was "the seal of the prophets," that with him revelation had come to an end. Those who believed otherwise were declared renegades deserving death. Moreover, the Bab gave allegorical interpretations to such traditional beliefs as bodily resurrection and abrogated a number of Islamic laws and ceremonies dealing with prayer, fasting, marriage, divorce, inheritance, and the status of women. Last but not least, the Bab and his disciples eloquently denounced the corruption of the clergy and the laity, the iniquities heaped upon the people

by greedy and arbitrary rulers, the selfishness of the rich and the misery of the poor.

Angered and frightened by the spread of the Babi movement, the clergy and the government determined to crush it by force. Vigorous attacks were launched against the Babis. Faced with the threat of mass murder, they resisted and were defeated in an unequal struggle against the military forces of the state. Thousands perished in the resistance; other thousands including unarmed women, children, the sick, and the aged were systematically put to death by an enraged enemy. The Bab himself was executed in July 1850 by a firing squad. Two years later a few of his disciples made an attempt on the life of the Shah but succeeded only in unleashing another massacre in which died most of the prominent leaders of the movement.

The government and the clergy now felt that the danger had passed. A majority of the Babis were dead; the rest were dispirited and inactive. Few of their outstanding leaders survived and most of these were in exile. The masses had been inoculated with a passionate hatred of the accursed renegades. The very word Babi assumed pejorative connotations and was used as a mortal insult.

A decade later the situation changed radically. One of the few prominent Babi survivors, Mirza Husayn Ali, known as Baha'u'llah, assumed the leadership of the community, unified it, and gave it a new vitality. In 1863 he proclaimed himself to be the great messenger whose advent the Bab had so insistently foretold. Most of the Babis accepted his claim and became Baha'is, followers of Baha'u'llah.

THE REVIVAL of the Babi Faith surprised and alarmed the Iranian authorities. They regretted that they had exiled Baha'u'llah to Baghdad where he was in constant contact with Iranian pilgrims who visited the Shiite holy places in Iraq and who spread his fame all over Iran. In 1863, at the request of the Iranian Government, the Turkish Sultan transferred Baha'u'llah and a number of his

adherents first to Constantinople and then to Adrianople. In 1868 Baha'u'llah was taken to Akka, a fortified town then in the province of Syria, now in Israel. In Akka and its vicinity Baha'u'llah spent the rest of his life as a prisoner of the Ottoman state.

Over the span of some forty years Baha'u'llah produced a vast body of work which today constitutes the sacred scriptures of the Baha'i Faith and is the source of its principles and teachings. Baha'u'llah taught that God, unknowable in His essence, periodically revealed His will to humanity through a succession of messengers among whom were Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster, Muhammad, and the Bab. Each was a link in a never-ending chain of progressive revelation that provided the spiritual impetus for the development of humanity. It was the task of humanity innerly to seek divine qualities, while actively participating in the advancement of civilization.

Like the Bab before him, Baha'u'llah affirmed the validity of Islam and the divine character of Muhammad's mission. However, he gave his followers laws and prescribed for them practices that differed radically from the laws and practices of Islam. This, indeed, was no Islamic sect but an entirely independent religion with its own scripture and its own law. Baha'u'llah's teachings on the unity of mankind, the equality of races, the equality of sexes, universal education, the harmony of religion and science, the establishment of a world federation, and the maintenance of world peace through collective security, his advocacy of a universal auxiliary language, and of other measures designed to bring about a peaceful and inter-dependent world society were far too advanced to be understood by his contemporaries. These teachings ignited in the Shiite clergy the same passionate hatred it had earlier felt for the Bab, his teachings, and his followers.

As the Baha'i community grew by attracting a significant proportion of enlightened and forward looking Iranians, so grew the hostility of the reactionary elements within the clergy. It is these fanatical opponents of

all progress and reform who succeeded in conveying their own fears and dislikes to the rest of the population. The Baha'is were placed in a difficult position.

Their enemies accused them of subverting Islam, of preaching that Baha'u'llah was God, of betraying their country, of committing all sorts of abominations. The Baha'is were denied the right to reply. At no time in their history were they permitted to debate their accusers, refute the allegations in the press, publish books or magazines, or use radio and television. For more than 100 years the people of Iran have listened to a monologue, a single voice spouting hate.

Modernization brought certain changes in the situation of the Shiite clergy. Its position was somewhat weakened by the spread of education, a general decline of religion among the elite, and the growth of nationalism that idealized Zoroastrian Iran and took a dim view of the Islamic conquest and the consequent adoption by the Iranians of a foreign religion. In the atmosphere of nationalism, skepticism, and religious indifference, there began to grow the notion of tolerance that extended even to the Baha'is. The clergy mobilized all its resources to resist this trend.

By the late 1930s the mullahs had created a whole new arsenal of anti-Baha'i weapons. It was suddenly discovered that the Baha'is were unpatriotic. Proof of this was found in Baha'u'llah's proclamation of the unity of mankind, in his advocacy of an international auxiliary language, and in the emphasis he placed on universal peace. Since the then reigning shah, Reza Pahlavi, was strongly anti-Soviet, clerical propagandists tried to link the Baha'is with Russia.

ABOUT 1939, a clerical society in the holy city of Mashhad, produced what purported to be a translation of the non-existent memoirs of Prince Dalqurki (their rendition of the name Dolgorukii, or, more exactly Dolgorukov). In his invented memoirs, "Dalqurki" tells of being sent in 1844 by Tsar

Alexander II to Iran to weaken that country by creating a schism within Islam. In pursuit of his mission, "Dalqurki" supposedly created the Babi movement which was, therefore, not a religion but only an instrument of foreign penetration. Unfortunately for the authors of this fraudulent document, they did not know Russian history. Thus they missed the fact that in 1844 Russia was ruled by Nicholas I and that Alexander II did not ascend the throne until 1855. They did not know that Dolgorukov had served in Iran briefly in 1831, when the Bab was only 12 years old and did not become minister until 1846, when the Babi movement had already been well launched.

Regardless of their illiteracy and absurdity, the fake memoirs of Prince "Dalqurki" have entered the mainstream of Iranian thought. They are known and believed by a vast majority of educated and otherwise intelligent Iranians. Only a few Iranian scholars, among them the anti-clerical and anti-Baha'i historian Ahmad Kasravi and the literary scholar Mojtaba Minovi, were not deceived by this clerical fabrication.

When anti-British sentiments swept Iran after World War II, the Baha'is were accused of serving the British. During World War I, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'u'llah's eldest son and successor as leader of the Baha'i community, had organized famine relief in the towns of Haifa and Akka, where he had lived as an exile since 1868. In recognition of his philanthropic acts, the British authorities that governed Palestine after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, knighted 'Abdu'l-Baha. This minor event became the basis of the legend that the Baha'is have been the agents of the British—a legend that has found a bizarre expression in an outlandish book recently published in America by a certain Robert Dreyfuss, who had made the Baha'is into the allies of Ayatollah Khomeini in the service of the British.

With the spread of anti-Americanism in the last ten to fifteen years, it became fashionable to link the Iranian Baha'is to the United States where there exists a relatively

large and active Baha'i community. The very fact that the first Baha'i House of Worship in the western world stands on the shores of Lake Michigan, just north of Chicago, has been cited as evidence of the connection. Since 1979 a new accusation has been added: cooperation with Zionism. The basis of this latest invention is the location of Baha'i holy places and of the Baha'i international administrative center in Israel. It is conveniently forgotten that Baha'u'llah did not choose the place of his exile and that he was brought to Akka as a prisoner 80 years before the creation of the state of Israel.

I HAVE MENTIONED the various allegations made about the Baha'is to show the unprincipled nature of such allegations. They are all only a cover for religious bigotry. Yet they demonstrate the depth of clerical hostility toward the Baha'is and the success the mullahs have had in poisoning the minds of many decent and well-meaning Iranians. Religious prejudice, like racism, sprouts deep roots.

In 1925, frightened by the spread of republican ideas from neighboring Turkey, a nation that was undergoing complete secularization, the Shiite clergy helped the military dictator Reza Khan become shah. However, Reza Shah pushed the mullahs to the periphery of national life. He secularized the courts and the schools, and crushed all clerical protests by brute force. Not until his removal in 1941 did the clergy get a new lease on political life and begin to organize clubs and auxiliary societies dedicated to the reestablishment of their former influence.

In the early 1950s, one of the leading mujtahids, Ayatollah Kashani, first lent support to Dr. Mosaddeq, then abandoned him at the last moment facilitating the restoration of Mohammad Reza Shah after his three days' exile abroad. Of course, the Shah was expected to pay for the help he had received. The extremists among the clergy led by Mullah Taqi Falsafi, were granted the right

to conduct an anti-Baha'i campaign using government radio and the press. The clergy was also permitted to organize societies such as Tablighat-e Eslami whose aim was the eradication of the Baha'i Faith from Iran. A number of individuals later prominent in the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for instance its second president Mohammad Ali Rajai, had participated in the anti-Baha'i activities of the 1950s. These consisted of the disruption of Baha'i study classes, prayer meetings, weddings, and funerals; physical attacks on individual Baha'is; the intimidation of employers who hired Baha'i workers; the harassment of Baha'i children in schools; the publication and dissemination of scurrilous anti-Baha'i literature, and the promotion of outright anti-Baha'i pogroms.

In 1955 the Iranian government fully cooperated with the Islamic extremist societies. The army occupied the national Baha'i headquarters in Tehran, the chief of the imperial staff himself dealing the first blow, with a pickaxe, to the dome over the large meeting hall. World public opinion loudly condemned the persecution of the Baha'i community, forcing the Iranian government to relent and to abandon the campaign.

In the next decade, the Shiite clergy again lost much of the influence it had regained in the 1950s. A substantial segment of the clerical establishment assumed a firmly negative attitude toward land reform, the extension of the franchise to women, and toward the ever-accelerating process of modernization. This negativism turned to the mullahs' advantage in the 1970s.

Rapid urbanization with the concomitant dislocation of the agricultural sector, the rise of modern industry, the arrival of traffic problems and air pollution, the visible increase in foreign influence, drastic changes in the lifestyle of urbanized Iranians, widespread corruption in government and business, the conflict between the traditional bazaar bourgeoisie and the modern entrepreneurial class, the oppressive policies of a



government that seemed insensitive to the nonmaterial needs of the population, the rise of a large class of educated technocrats—these were only some of the factors that suddenly made the negativism and fundamentalism of the mullahs seem attractive to much of the population.

Elements among the reactionary clergy, particularly those that clustered around the specifically anti-Baha'i organizations, such as the Tabliqhat-e Eslami and the Anjoman-e-Hojjatiyyeh, played a double game. Founded with the blessings of the government and working in close cooperation with the SAVAK—the political secret police—these organizations used their resources and membership against both the government and the Baha'is, creating the impression that the Baha'is dominated the Pahlavi regime.

Clerical propaganda constantly repeated that Mohammad Reza Shah was surrounded by Baha'is and was, perhaps, one himself; that his long-term prime minister Amir Abbas Hoveida, and a number of other cabinet ministers, as well as several high officials of the SAVAK, were Baha'is. These carefully planted and widely circulated rumors gradually became part of the received ideas shared by much of the urban population. The facts, of course, were rather different. The Shah was a professed Shiite with mystic tendencies that he openly discussed in person and in his autobiography. He did not hide his aversion for the Baha'i Faith but did not see it as a threat. For him the Baha'i community was a source of reliable, technical personnel and a convenient scapegoat. He did use the services of a Baha'i doctor and occasionally appointed Baha'is to government

offices that demanded a high degree of specialized competence. However, no Baha'i served in the cabinet, because acceptance of a cabinet post by a Baha'i would have led to the expulsion of such an individual from the Baha'i community.

Prime Minister Hoveida was never a Baha'i. His father had been one years ago but was expelled from the Baha'i community. Hoveida always insisted he was a Muslim and frequently stressed his negative view of the Baha'i Faith. The same was true of the SAVAK official Parviz Sabeti, whose parents had been Baha'is but drifted out of the Baha'i community. Parviz Sabeti has never been a member.

It should be pointed out, however, that the misdeeds of an individual cannot be held against an entire religion. Were one to accept the contrary principle, a criminal born in a protestant family would make all protestants parties to the crime. Is it necessary to point out that Ivan the Terrible was a practicing member of the Orthodox Church, Tamerlane a Muslim, and Hitler a Catholic?

When the Iranian revolution broke out in 1978, the most radically conservative fundamentalist elements within the Shiite clergy were determined to purge Iran of everything they disliked: modernism, emancipation of women, the rights of minorities, academic freedom, nonconformist thought, opera and the theatre, most forms of music; but their strongest yearning was for the destruction of the Baha'is. Having achieved power, the old enemies of the Baha'i Faith could not but use that power to crush a religion and a community for whose eradication they have striven for 138 years.





## An Eyewitness Account

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RAMNA MAHMOUDI NOURANI

I am an Iranian Baha'i who came to the United States eleven years ago to study. I have a B.A. degree in mathematics from Wellesley College, an M.A. degree in mathematics from Boston University, and three years of graduate work towards a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of California at Los Angeles. My studies were disrupted due to family circumstances, particularly because of the persecution of my family. I am married and have a two-year-old son.

**I** WOULD LIKE to make the plight of the Baha'is of Iran known on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of Baha'i men, women, and children whose legal rights are being denied and who are living under the threat of extinction: those who have lost their jobs, their properties, their means of livelihood; those who may even lose the custody of their children; and those who have been imprisoned, tortured, burned to death, or executed for being Baha'is.

The story of the persecution of the Baha'is of Iran is an intensely personal one for me. With the blessings of the Islamic government I have lost my father and my mother to the fanaticism and hatred of the Moslem clergy. This story is even more tragic because all the atrocities committed against the Baha'is are done with pride, in the name of religion.

Gone are the days when I was only humiliated at school by my teachers in front of other students for being a Baha'i. Gone are the days when my parents feared only a few years of imprisonment for "living in sin" since their Baha'i marriage was not recognized by the government. And gone are the days when the only thing you could fear during Baha'i meetings was the disruption by

a few bearded young men from the "Society for the Propagation of Islam"—a society whose only goal and purpose is the destruction of the Baha'i Faith in Iran. These days one pays even more dearly, sometimes with one's life, for being a Baha'i.

My father, Houshang Mahmoudi, fifty-three, was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran. He, along with the eight other National Assembly members and two prominent Baha'is, was handcuffed and blindfolded and taken away at gunpoint by revolutionary guards from a private residence in Tehran on August 21, 1980. They simply "disappeared." We never heard from my father, and all the appeals made by the Baha'i community of Iran to the Islamic government produced no result. We can only fear the worst. My only hope is that he was not tortured.

My mother, Ginous Mahmoudi, fifty-two, was elected to the next National Spiritual Assembly of Iran and served as its chairman. She and her colleagues on the Assembly were arrested on December 13, 1981 and executed on December 27, 1981. Their death was discovered accidentally. The authorities at first denied any knowledge of their execution. Their desecrated bodies were found half buried in the "infidel" section of the Moslem cemetery in Tehran. Some of them were thrown into mass graves. No family members were notified, no trials took place, and no charges were made against them. Their bodies could not be claimed until the authorities were paid one thousand tumans for each bullet used to kill them. The Prosecutor General of Iran, Ayatollah Musavi-Ardibili, later claimed that these eight Baha'is were executed because they were "foreign spies."

On January 4, 1982, Mrs. Shiva Mah-

moudi, thirty-five, my cousin and a mother of two young children, was executed in Tehran along with five other Baha'is after four months of imprisonment. They were all members of the Baha'i Assembly of Tehran. They were all kept in solitary confinement—each ignorant of the fate of the others. As the date of their execution drew near, each one was given two pieces of paper to sign. One paper promised their release and return of all their worldly possessions, if only they would recant their faith. All they had to do to buy their lives was to sign this paper. And if they signed the other paper, they would be sent to the firing squad. The treacherous authorities went even so far as to tell each one that all the others had recanted and had been released. All stood steadfast in their faith and were subsequently executed.

In August 1981, a cousin of my husband, Mr. Habib Tahqiqi, a senior petroleum engineer, was executed in Tabriz along with eight other members of the Baha'i Assembly there. The first line of his will, which he wrote in prison and of which I have a copy, reads: "In an hour I, along with eight other Baha'i friends will be executed. My only guilt is that I am a Baha'i. I believe in all the Prophets of God including Muhammad. . . ." And then most recently, on May 8, 1982, Mr. and Mrs. Foroohar, neighbors and close friends of my parents, were tortured and executed in Karaj (a suburb of Tehran) after ten months of imprisonment.

All of the above-mentioned Baha'is were among the "cream of the crop" of their society. They were among the most educated; they were professionals who served their country and its people with honesty and sincerity.

MY FATHER was the most respected and loved television personality in Iran for over fifteen years. He pioneered the children and youth programs on television. He was also an educator and an author. He had a tremendous love and affection for children and founded a well-known secondary school in Tehran from which thousands of Iranian children graduated. Many of them were admitted free of charge while my father paid for their education. Generations of Iranian children came to love and respect him. He was a father figure for them.

My mother was a well-known scientist, foremost among the women of Iran. She was the assistant director of the Department of Meteorology of Iran, supervising the research and training for the atmospheric studies, and later became its director. The Department of Meteorology was built by her honest, ceaseless, and dedicated effort of twenty-five years. She was also the president of the Iranian School of Meteorology.

After the revolution, my mother was fired and taken off the payroll. She was even asked to give back all salary she had received for the past twenty-five years of her service because, they said, it was illegal for a Baha'i to be hired by the government.

My father's office was looted by the revolutionary guards and everything in it either destroyed or confiscated. Even his birth certificate was taken away from him (perhaps this was to enable them to deny later that he had even existed). My parents' bank accounts were also closed. Our home at this point had become a shelter for many Baha'i families who were driven out of their homes and had lost all their possessions. In many cases the dispossessed were not allowed even to take their coats with them or put on their

shoes. These families came mainly from other provinces of Iran. Subsequently, only one Baha'i family comprising an eighty-year-old man, his old wife, and their daughter remained in our house—all the others were placed elsewhere. This old couple were farmers from the province of Khuzistan. Their farm, house, and livestock were all set on fire by their fanatical Moslem neighbors and by revolutionary guards at the instigation of the clergy; and they themselves were badly beaten up. My brother who visited Tehran three years ago related that this old man could never hold back his tears when recounting this brutality. In October 1981, a similar fate befell our own house. Our Moslem neighbors watched as the revolutionary guards, under the supervision of Moslem clergy, looted our house, destroyed our property, and took the old couple to prison. Some of our neighbors took part in the looting and some helped themselves with our belongings. These were the same neighbors who for over ten years were the recipients of my parents' love, kindness, and generosity.

After my father's disappearance, I telephoned my mother weekly. We could not talk openly on the phone but did communicate our emotions. Every week there was news of fresh outbursts of atrocities heaped upon the Baha'is. The last conversation I had with her was on the day before her arrest. She expressed her profound sadness at the confiscation of the Baha'i cemetery in Tehran. She remarked: "They have even taken away the right of burial from the Baha'is." We also received letters from her in which she talked about her horror and dismay at the official manner the Islamic government was taking away all the legal rights and the God-given rights from the Baha'is. In one of her letters written shortly after the revolution, she says: ". . . Everyday you can see mountains of books on the streets of Tehran—all kinds of books representing all kinds of ideologies. In the midst of this freedom, the Baha'is have no rights. They come and take away Baha'i books from our homes.

They come and confiscate the Baha'i Publishing Center and spend months in destroying our books with shredders. One looks desperately for a Baha'i book but cannot find any. . . ."

But this was only the beginning. In her later letters she writes of the destruction of the Baha'is themselves.

MY MOTHER travelled extensively throughout Iran, visiting Baha'i prisoners and their families and those who had lost their all. I would like to quote a part of one of her letters written while visiting Hamadan. She told us about seven Baha'is who had been tortured and executed on June 14, 1981. My mother knew them all very well and visited them several times during their year-long incarceration in Hamadan. She wrote: ". . . News came at 9 o'clock in the morning that there are seven bodies in the morgue. Everyone went to the morgue to see if the news was true. It was. There were seven bloody bodies thrown on the floor. It was obvious how much disrespect and contempt had been shown even to their lifeless bodies. But more heinous was that their bodies were torn apart and tortured. One had his chest-cage smashed and a piece of it cut with a sharp object. Another had his fingers smashed and a piece of his stomach cut and thrown away. Another had his arm smashed and yet another had his leg completely torn. We asked the authorities for an ambulance to deliver the bodies to the Baha'i cemetery—it was refused. But when the Baha'is told the officials that they would take the bodies with their own hands to be buried, they finally agreed to provide an ambulance afraid of inhabitants of the town finding out about the crimes their rulers had committed. But the ambulance that was given to us was an old one with all its windows broken and no doors. Thus, one more time, they wanted to humiliate the Baha'is. But the result was the thousands of inhabitants of Hamadan who came to the funeral procession, became witness to the cruelties heaped upon these



seven Baha'is whom they knew and respected. During their stay in prison, their knowledge, behavior, and innocence overwhelmed all the prisoners and all who came in contact with them. There were three medical doctors among them who took care of the sick in the prison and even the revolutionary guards would take their families to be examined by them. Another one of the Baha'is would help the prisoners prepare defense material. They were the friends and refuge of the prisoners. . . ."

The incredible thing my mother always talked about was the contrast between the actions of the perpetrators of such shameless and savage acts and their victims. The families of these martyred Baha'is showed such dignity and magnanimity. They even took candies and flowers to the prison distributing them among the prisoners and the guards, thanking them for having kept their loved ones company for so many long months.

In a telephone conversation I had with my mother about a year ago, she told me that not even Baha'i children are immune from persecution. Later, she wrote in a letter: ". . . It is unbelievable that human beings could even think of pressuring innocent children of such tender age in the way the people in the schools of Iran are doing at this time. Thousands of Baha'i children are facing such inhuman afflictions. Most of them are very studious, are more knowledgeable than other children of their age. Many people, including their teachers look at them with awe. The enemies of the Baha'i Faith do not deny that the Baha'i children are generally much more advanced than their fellow classmates, but they are not pleased with this fact. Sometimes it happens that when government authorities complain about the Baha'is, they cite as examples the actions of our little ones and how they stand up to the insults from their Muslim teachers and fellow pupils.

"What do these children do that make them deserve these pressures? Most Baha'i children know their Islamic religious lessons

better than all their fellow students. They can read the Quran and interpret it better than their Muslim counterparts, sometimes even better than their teachers. The highest marks in Islamic religious study are given to the Baha'i children. Their teachers are frequently surprised, but at the same time they are extremely resentful.

"Baha'i children with such intelligence, understanding, and knowledge are not favored by the ideologues in the Ministry of Education. According to them, such children should be 'guided to the right path.' It is certain that this ministry has adopted a detailed and menacing plan to brainwash the Baha'i children. We have so much evidence of such a plan. It is surprising to note that the authorities of the present regime are spending so much time, energy, and money to prepare themselves on ways to confront our young children. It is not uncommon for two or three instructors of religious classes or trained ideologists of the Ministry of Education as well as a number of students, to join forces and suddenly attack a Baha'i child of ten or eleven years. With all their power they try to shatter the very foundations of his beliefs. They will argue with him for hours and even use unfair methods to 'guide' him.

"The other day, I went to visit a Baha'i child, eleven years old, whom I had heard had developed severe headaches. I asked him to relate his experience. He told me that his teacher had begun a barrage of insults and calumnies against the Faith—he did not passively accept these insults—he gave impressive responses—the teacher became speechless—this delighted the other children, who applauded and cried 'hurrah!' for him. The teacher became angrier and left the classroom and consulted with two other teachers, who came to rescue. They argued and threatened and abused him and took him to a room, gave him a booklet which was written against the Faith, and compelled him to write repeatedly from this booklet certain sentences which attacked the Faith in offensive lan-

guage. This punishment became so great that he developed severe headaches which the doctor said were caused by nervous pressure.

"What an ugly confrontation! On one side three mature and 'educated' teachers with the support and blessing of the people and the government and on the other side an eleven-year-old-Bahai youth!"

In another letter my mother wrote that in Yazd, over one hundred Baha'i children have been expelled from their schools because they are Baha'is and since they attain highest marks and are known for their exemplary conduct, the people of Yazd are asking: "Why should the best be expelled?"

These were only a few instances of the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran that have affected my life personally. Our 138-year

history is filled with unspeakable cruelties and atrocities against the Baha'i community. But, there is a difference. This time, we have a well-planned case of genocide, whereas previously the Moslem clergy and the government authorities ordered the slaughter of the Baha'is and the pillage of their property with pride. They did not hide the fact that we were being persecuted because of our beliefs. Those who carried out these orders did so to "buy" themselves a "favor" in the sight of God and, for the most part, left the families and the properties of their victims alone. Today, they kill and persecute us for the same reason, but officially charge us with outrageously false misdeeds that even the non-Baha'is do not believe.

# Reactions of American Bahá'ís

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GLENFORD E. MITCHELL

I am secretary and chief executive officer of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'ís of the United States, the supreme administrative body of the Baha'ís in this country.

**T**HE United States Baha'i Community has been in existence for more than 80 years. Its beginnings date back to the Columbian Exposition of 1893 at which event in Chicago the name and essential teachings of Baha'u'llah, the prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith, were first brought to public notice in the United States. Although the Baha'i Faith originated in Iran, this Community was established through the initiative of Americans and not through Iranian missionary activity.

The vast majority of the Community's 100,000 members are native Americans drawn from every state of the Union, from every walk of life, and from a wide spectrum of ethnic backgrounds. For example, blacks constitute some 30 to 35 per cent of the American Baha'i population, and more than 50 Indian tribes are represented in the Community. Iranians make up no more than eight per cent of the membership, and the majority of them arrived here in the last three years as the persecution of the Baha'ís intensified in their homeland.

The Baha'i national community spreads through 7,400 localities. The 1,600 locally organized communities are administered by elected bodies called Assemblies. The activities of the assemblies are unified and coordinated by the National Assembly.

The spiritual heart of the community is the world-famous, architecturally unique Baha'i House of Worship situated on the

shores of Lake Michigan north of Chicago. This outstanding Illinois landmark was entered in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

Our Community has always been dedicated to the principle of the unity of mankind, to international peace, to respect for all religions and for all peoples, to the co-relative value of science and religion, and to the solution of human problems through consultation rather than through the use of force. Commitment to these ends has actuated our cooperation with the United Nations through the programs of ECOSOC and UNICEF, as well as our work to spread the Baha'i teachings of unity throughout the world. Moreover, this commitment prompted our National Assembly to designate special days on the calendar—Race Unity Day, World Religion Day, World Peace Day—to emphasize the need for spiritual solutions to critical human problems.

Those of us imbued with Baha'i principles of world unity are ever conscious of the Iranian origins of our religion. Baha'i scripture assigns to Americans a distinctive role toward the establishment of world peace. Because the United States Baha'i Community is connected historically and spiritually with Iran, we have a grave concern for the fate of our long-suffering Iranian brothers and sisters, who for 138 years have made incalculable sacrifices of comfort and of life itself for beliefs we hold dear.

Over the last three years, our National Assembly has been under constant pressure from the members of the Community, who have urged the Assembly to protest the horrible treatment meted out to their Iranian brethren. It should be noted that the

Iranian Baha'i Community has not requested us to do anything on its behalf. It is in response to the letters, telegrams, telephone calls, and personal appeals of the American Baha'is, and in response to its own sense of grief, that the National Assembly has attempted to bring the heartbreaking story of the persecutions to the press and to our Government. At times our Assembly has been so pressured by the acute distress of the American Baha'is that it has advised them to write to Congress. Moreover, our Community addressed a number of appeals through letters and cablegrams to Iranian Government officials here and in Iran, including the head of the Islamic Republic, but to no avail.

It is not our practice to demonstrate in public. Rather, we make appeals to the conscience of our fellow citizens and to those in authority. But the gruesome and unending lengths of the attacks upon the Iranian Baha'is push us toward making a public issue of their suffering.

The takeover of the United States Embassy in Tehran in 1979 reduced at that time our possibilities to act on behalf of the Iranian Baha'is. Not wishing to exacerbate the problems for the United States Government, we refrained from making public statements. Yet it was precisely during the period of the hostage crisis that the persecution of the Iranian Baha'is entered a new and ominous stage. A move to eliminate the Baha'i leadership was launched and has continued unabated. Since the return of the American hostages, we have redoubled our efforts to inform the public and our Government concerning the worsening situation.

WE openly state that many helpful responses came from the members of both Houses of Congress. We thank Congressmen and Senators for their efforts to relieve the grief of the hardpressed Iranian Baha'is through their outspoken and recorded statements, their letters to the Iranian Government, their con-

ferences with Iranian officials, and through their proposed resolutions. And we are also grateful for the assistance of various agencies of the Department of State and the Department of Justice. We recognize the importance of the actions of the United States representatives to international agencies like the United Nations Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

While we feel they could do more, the mass media have given significant publicity to the crisis facing the Baha'is in Iran.

Nonetheless, a sense of helplessness frustrates our Community. Nothing lifts the oppression of the Iranian Baha'is. The resolutions of national governments and international organizations go unheeded. Yet the Iranian leaders do pay attention to outside opinion. A recent *New York Times* editorial about the execution of 111 Baha'i leaders evoked an angry published reaction from a government spokesman in Tehran. Our frustrations notwithstanding, Americans cannot relent in exposing the horrors in Iran.

The heartrending situation in that country has produced other direct concerns for the American Baha'i Community:

- (1) The spread of anti-Baha'i propaganda in the United States by representatives of the Iranian Government and fanatical Islamic Iranians residing or studying here.
- (2) The attempts by these fanatics to disrupt the activities of American Baha'is on American soil, as has occurred in Morgantown, West Virginia; Reno, Nevada; Minneapolis, Minnesota, and elsewhere.
- (3) The sudden influx into the United States of thousands of Iranian Baha'is seeking refuge from persecution.
- (4) The cut-off of funds to Iranian Baha'is studying in United States colleges and universities.
- (5) The decision of the Iranian Government to instruct its consular offices

worldwide not to renew the passports of Iranian Baha'is living abroad.

- (6) The uncertain fate of Iranian Baha'is stranded in countries to which they have fled and having difficulty getting into the United States.

We cite these concerns in the hope that the actions of our Government and of our fellow citizens will have the following outcome:

- (1) Keep the Iranian Government and peo-

ple constantly reminded through frequent public statements that the world is watching what they do to the Baha'is and will not tolerate it.

- (2) Prevent Islamic Iranian fanatics in this country from curtailing the freedom which American Baha'is share with their fellow citizens to meet in peace in the United States.
- (3) Assist those Iranian Baha'is who seek refuge in the United States.





# The Assault Upon Iran's Bahá'ís

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

## I. The Official Assault

SINCE the revolution in 1978-79, a systematic, government-backed campaign to eradicate the Baha'i Faith as an independent religion in Iran has gathered momentum. The genocidal campaign has been characterized by the execution, arrest, abduction, and torture of the community's leaders; attacks upon its holy places, centers, and cemeteries; the confiscation and destruction of its properties; the expropriation of the assets of the community and individuals; the seizure of its sacred literature and records; and by a general denial of fundamental human rights to its members.

The assault on Baha'i leadership began with the abduction, disappearance, and execution of Baha'i assembly members throughout Iran. The Baha'i community has no clergy. Its affairs are directed by national and local boards of trustees (called "assemblies") elected annually by the membership. Since the revolution, more than 100 national and local assembly members have been arbitrarily arrested and executed; and another 200 are missing. One hundred and fifty (150) more are known to be languishing in prison, some for more than a year. The fate of the nine-member National Assembly of Iran elected for 1980-81 can only be surmised: all nine members were abducted and disappeared on August 21, 1980, and must be presumed dead.

Their elected replacements immediately demanded that the government present charges or explain their disappearance. No explanation was ever offered. Instead, action was taken against the new National Assembly: while meeting in a private home last December (1981), eight Assembly members were arrested and secretly executed without

charges, trial, public statement, or notice to their families. There was no appropriate burial. After their bodies were accidentally discovered by Baha'is, the government at first denied the executions, to the utter disbelief of the international press and of the U.S. Department of State, but finally conceded the executions. Similar fates—summary arrests, torture, and execution—have befallen Baha'is serving on local assemblies in various cities: two in Tabriz; seven in Yazd; two in Abadeh; three in Shiraz; seven in Hamadan; seven in Tehran; seven again in Tabriz; this January, six more in Tehran. The list goes on.

*Item:* Yazd, Iran—September 1980.

Seven members of the Spiritual Assembly were summarily arrested and executed. Their bodies were branded "Enemies of Islam."

*Item:* Hamadan, Iran—June 15, 1981.

After four hours of continuous torture—broken bones, cuts, burning of parts of the body—seven of the nine members of the Hamadan Baha'i Assembly were executed.

As leaders and rank-and-file Baha'is faced executions, tortures, and arrests, the government activated a systematic plan to confiscate, dismantle, destroy, or desecrate every significant Baha'i holy place and center in Iran. In July of 1979, the national administrative center in Tehran was confiscated and converted into an Islamic university. Elsewhere, local administrative centers were destroyed.

*Item:* Gurgan, Iran—25 October 1978.

The local Baha'i center was set afire, the trees uprooted, and the furnishings burned. The 63-year-old caretaker and his family were stripped of all posses-

sions and left homeless.

In March of 1979 the House of the Bab—one of the two nineteenth-century prophet-founders of the Baha'i Faith—was occupied by armed men on instruction from the Central Revolutionary Committee. Iran's U.S. representative Shahriar Rouhani and subsequently, the charge d'affaires, Ali Asghar Agah responded to our expressions of grave concern with repeated, written assurances that occupation was for protection of the property, that the Provisional Revolutionary Islamic Government had no intention to damage or destroy it, and that reports to the contrary were purely inflammatory hostile propaganda. Six months later the shrine was destroyed by a government-led mob, the remains thoroughly demolished, and the site paved over. The importance of this holy place for Baha'is is equivalent to the importance of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem for Christians or of the Kaaba in Mecca for Muslims. In Takur, the House of Baha'u'llah—the other prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith—was occupied in February 1979 by armed men claiming to be from the Revolutionary Council, then totally demolished last December. The lands and gardens have been offered for public auction. Similarly, the grave of Qaddus, a revered saint and hero of the Faith, was confiscated by the Islamic Committee. Hundreds of other historic sites are now being demolished in a fresh campaign.

So it has been with the assets of the Baha'i Faith in Iran. Although the Iranian Baha'i community has never been allowed to hold community property in its own name, it has vested community properties accumulated over the last 138 years of its existence in special holding companies. Privately owned Baha'i institutions (such as the renowned Misagiyeh hospital in Tehran) have been able to offer valued public services to Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike. In May of 1979, the Omana company was confiscated by the government, along with the one thousand Baha'i properties, including the holy places, religious sites, cemeteries, local centers, and welfare institutions it held. A government official

took over the company and purged it of all Baha'i employees. The same happened to Nawnahalan, a savings and loan association primarily for the benefit of Baha'i children, when it was occupied by armed men in February 1979 and its Baha'i employees dismissed. Only a few months later, the Misagiyeh hospital was confiscated and closed to Baha'is.

*Item:* Tehran, Iran—May 1979.

The Misagiyeh hospital, the only Baha'i hospital in the country, was confiscated and its elderly charges evicted. Many of them lost their assets with the seizure of the Baha'i investment company. Some months later Revolutionary Guards questioned Prof. Manuchihr Hakim, a medical scientist renowned for his discoveries in anatomy, and co-founder of Misagiyeh whose humanitarian services won him the French Legion of Honor in 1976. Refusing to provide them information on other Baha'i physicians and the administration of Misagiyeh, he was murdered in his private clinic in January 1981 and his home was confiscated immediately thereafter.

The government began concurrently to cut off the jobs and incomes of Baha'is. When the education ministry was under Mohammed Ali Rajai in 1979, *Etela'at* announced that Baha'is would be dismissed from the education department unless they denied their faith and became Muslims. The dismissal notices also threatened rescission of salaries paid in the past. Pensions were denied to those discharged. After Mr. Rajai became the Prime Minister, a circular letter was issued to all government branches instructing the dismissal of all Baha'is. Pensions of retired Baha'is were cut off by the Ministry of Defense. This past February, an insurance company was instructed to deny a Baha'i widow her husband's pension. Banks were ordered, last August, to submit lists of all Baha'i accounts, while provincial governments began the following month to deny licenses to Baha'i shopkeepers and businessmen.

*Item:* Yazd, Iran—8 August 1981.

The government froze all assets of 117 Baha'is, while local radio announced the summons that the heads of 150 prominent Baha'i families should report to revolutionary authorities or risk trial in absentia.

The assault on the adult community was coupled with attacks on the education of young Baha'is. Although the Baha'is had established the best primary and secondary schools in Iran, open to children of all religions, the government in 1934 closed all Baha'i schools. After the revolution, the government began systematically to refuse to register Baha'i students for public primary and secondary schools, to expel Baha'i students from advanced programs, to force them to repay scholarships, to deny diplomas to Baha'is graduating from professional schools, and to discharge Baha'i professors from university faculties. Iran even exported this discrimination to the United States: in August of 1981, the education ministry denied permission to send foreign exchange to Iranian Baha'i students overseas (including a number in the United States), effectively cutting off funds to study abroad.

*Item:* Isfahan, Iran—July 26, 1981.

A Baha'i student in her sixth and final year in medical school, was expelled for being a Baha'i.

*Item:* Washington, D.C.—November 1981.

Iranian Baha'i students at George Washington University, in their final year of engineering studies, were cut off from money by new Iranian rules denying foreign exchange to Baha'i students abroad.

For a religion which considers education a religious duty and which is dedicated to establishing universal compulsory education, the loss of access to academic training is particularly painful.

Along with attacks on formal education came assaults on Baha'i publications. In January 1979, private papers, libraries, and copy-

ing machines of individual Baha'is were seized throughout Iran. The next month the books and papers of the National Center were seized, and the Publishing Trust was closed and sealed. The grave harm of this action can be assessed only by appreciating the obligation imposed by the founders of the religion upon individual Baha'is to read their sacred literature daily and to recite prescribed prayers. The damage is aggravated by the fact that Iranian history books have been purged of Baha'i references.

Even the dead Baha'is have not escaped the attention of the government. Baha'i cemeteries throughout the nation have been confiscated and ruined. Decrees in Chahbahar, for example, forbade the use of Baha'i cemeteries. The cemetery in Avak was demolished and the remains of the interred removed. Baha'i tombstones were levelled and smeared with human excrement in Shiraz. In a nation with only denominational burial grounds, the confiscation and destruction of cemeteries left Baha'is with nowhere to bury their growing numbers of dead.

*Item:* Tehran, Iran—5 December 1981.

By Revolutionary Court order, the Baha'i cemetery in Tehran was seized and closed. Eight workers were arrested and the graves desecrated. Tens of thousands of Tehran Baha'is were left without burial grounds. Consequently, Baha'is were buried in a corner of the Muslim cemetery reserved for infidels.

Through all of this the government has utterly refused redress to the Baha'is, has rendered them virtual aliens in their own land and stateless abroad. When, last September, Baha'is in Yazd were warned to report or suffer in absentia trials, and 10 Baha'i prisoners (one a 75-year-old woman) were transferred to revolutionary court prisons, high-ranking Tehran authorities refused audience to Baha'is. When, last July in Kashan, a Baha'i child was kidnapped from her parents by her Islamic teachers, local authorities refused to assist in her parents' search. The Constitution adopted in September 1979 accords rights to

other religious minorities (Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews) except the largest minority—the Baha'is, who number 300,000–400,000. In March of last year the High Court of Justice in Tehran upheld a lower court's decision to sentence Baha'i Assembly members to death. The confused verdict cited participation in Baha'i assemblies as criminal in and of itself, and punishable by death—a precedent for exterminating virtually every Baha'i leader in Iran. Indeed, the members of the National Assembly executed late last year were denied even a formal procedure: no charges were filed, trial held, or official publicity given. This erosion of civil rights has been extended abroad: last fall the government instructed its consular representatives everywhere to compile lists of Baha'is and either to confiscate their passports or to let them lapse.

## II. *The Mobs Unleashed*

THE MAGNITUDE of the governmental assault on the Baha'i community cannot be overstated. At stake is the survival of an independent religion. But the conditions imposed on the community as a whole have also produced individual private horrors which might be forgotten in the scope and figures of overviews. Individual Baha'is have watched their homes, businesses, and families cruelly destroyed while suffering relentless intimidation and humiliation. The tolerant and peaceful nature of the Baha'is has spared their assailants the fear of violent retaliation. To make matters worse, the Baha'is have no recourse for redress of grievances.

The rise of anti-Baha'i organizations and self-proclaimed enemies of the Faith to circles of influence in the government emboldened mobs of fanatics and malicious individuals to attack Baha'is with impunity.

Shaykh Mohammad Taghi Falsafi, an anti-Baha'i preacher who spawned a surge of persecution in the 1950s, is currently one of Ayatollah Khomeini's favored mullahs. The government is heavily influenced by Anjoman-e-Hojjatiyeh, which originated as an

anti-Baha'i organization in that era, and by members of *Tablighat-e Eslami*, an anti-Baha'i squad formed by the clergy with the cooperation of the SAVAK. In perfect reflection of official policy, mobs have seized and killed individual Baha'is: one was tortured and hanged in Tehran; a 70-year-old person beaten to death in Shiraz; one was stoned to death in Andrun; two were burnt alive in Shahmirzad; two others were burnt to death by a masked gang in Nuk. Mobs have looted and burned private homes throughout the country. At Ayatollah Sadduqi's urging, Baha'i homes were attacked in Yazd. Preachers instigated a mob attack on Baha'is in Milan using loud speakers from the mosque. In Mashhad Baha'is were driven from their homes, their doors burned, their orchards and sheds set afire, the grave of a child plowed under, the survivors forbidden drinking water. In Shishvan, a Baha'i returned from out of town to find his home looted and barred, his orchard destroyed. Outside Isfahan, Baha'is fled to tent-cities in the desert after their homes were confiscated. The list is long: 31 homes burned and looted in Marvdasht; the Baha'i center razed; the Baha'i center and cemetery destroyed in Arabkhayl; shop windows broken in Babulsar; farm products burned with homes in Baghestan.

*Item:* Manshad, Iran—11 August 1981.

Government official from Yazd ordered revolutionary guards to seize furniture, crops, and livestock of local Baha'is.

*Item:* Imamzadilh Quasin Sangsar, Iran—12 December 1978.

People entered Mr. Laqui's house, drenched him and the furnishings in gasoline and blocked his exit. He lost all belongings and suffered serious burns.

Businesses were burned, a clinic dynamited. Pressure was put on private employers to discharge Baha'i employees, and most concurred.

At the same time, the families were im-

periled. There developed a practice of confiscating the property of executed Baha'is, without judgment of confiscation and without consideration for widows and children left homeless and harassed. In Khurmaw a home was plundered, and a family severely injured while protecting their daughter from rape. In Kashan an underage Baha'i girl was abducted and forced into marriage with a Muslim. In Khunih seven-year-old and four-year-old children were assaulted and beaten senseless with nail-tipped sticks; the beatings were resumed when they showed remaining signs of life.

The dead were also attacked. Wanton disinterment of bodies occurred in various places, such as Hamadan and Yazd.

Through it all, the Baha'is have been subjected to ceaseless harassment, intimidation, and humiliation.

*Item:* Ten villages around Hamadan, Iran —2 December 1978.

Mobs attacked and looted the houses of all Baha'is, set them ablaze, and tortured Baha'is in an effort to force them to recant their faith. Some escaped and fled.

In Ahwaz, the radio broadcast a blanket threat to all Baha'is, who were met at their homes, searched, and told to recant. School children were subjected to constant harassment to try to get them to recant. In Nayshabur a mob destroyed a Baha'i cemetery and local authorities billed the Baha'is two million rials for the damage. In Yazd, local authorities submitted bills to Baha'i widows for the bullets used to execute their husbands.

The mob action against the Baha'is in Iran has been extended somewhat to other countries including the United States. For example, on March 27 this year, the Baha'is of Morgantown, West Virginia, were prevented from holding a prayer meeting when a group believed to be Iranian students threatened the management of the hotel in which the event was to have taken place. Similar incidents have occurred in Reno, Nevada, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

### III. *The Spurious Charges*

THE GOVERNMENT and clergy of Iran have attempted to justify the atrocities perpetrated upon the Baha'is by reciting spurious charges. In their attempts totally to discredit the Baha'i Faith and give some historical pretext to their allegations, they have promoted fabricated accounts of the origin and purpose of the Baha'i religion, to which they frequently impute political motives. For example, a letter from the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, dated 26 September 1979, and replying to inquiries about the persecution of the Baha'is, stated that the Baha'i Faith "was originally established by Russian Tsars and British imperialism, and that it is being backed by Israeli and American imperialism." Anti-Baha'i propaganda published by Iranians inside and outside Iran has echoed this fabrication. A recent example was the circulation in the United States of the article "Question of Baha'is," published in the April 1, 1982, issue of *Islamic Unity*, a newspaper published by Iranians in Ottawa, Canada.

The misrepresentation of Baha'i origins is based on a fake document created in 1938 by a group of mullahs in Mashhad, a holy city in eastern Iran. The document purported to be the Persian translation of the memoirs of a "Prince Dalqurki," presumably Prince Dolgorukov, who had spent time in Iran in the service of his country. According to this invention, "Dalqurki" was sent to Iran in 1844 by the Tsar Alexander II to weaken the country by undermining Islam. "Dalqurki" pursued this task by creating a religion, the Babi movement. In their ignorance the authors of this fiction were unaware that Nicholas I, not Alexander II, was Tsar in 1844. Moreover, they did not know that Prince Dolgorukov had served in Iran in 1831, which predated their story by 13 years.

Even though Iranian scholars, including the anti-Baha'i historian Ahmad Kasravi and the literary scholar Mojtaba Minovi, saw through the deception, the "Dalqurki" mem-

oirs continued to influence Iranian thought. As recently as a month ago this influence was reflected in a statement attributed to a prominent clergyman in the northern city of Tabriz. The 21 April 1982 issue of *Kayhan*, a nationally circulated newspaper, quoted Ayatollah Malakooti as saying: "In recent times the imperialist superpowers, in order to prevent the progress of Islam and to create discord between Shi'is and other sects, began spreading different sects. For instance, in Hijaz and in India the British, and in Iran the superpower of the East, went into action and created this sect of Bab and Baha. Then when they saw that people will soon discover this sect to be without foundation they eliminated the founder of this sect, the British themselves placed him in front of a cannon and in this very city of Tabriz."

In 1844, in the southern city of Shiraz, a young merchant, Seyyed Ali Muhammad, proclaimed himself the Bab, or Gate. He said he was a new prophet and the herald of a still greater divine messenger who would soon come to establish righteousness and peace on earth. The Bab's claim stirred much opposition by the clergy, and he was executed in 1850. Thirteen years later, Mirza Husayn Ali, who had been exiled from Tehran to Baghdad because of his prominence in the Babi community, proclaimed himself to be the one promised by the Bab. He became known as Baha'u'llah and his followers, who at first were drawn from the majority of the Babis, were called Baha'is.

Because the clergy forbade Muslims to read Baha'i literature and there was no way open to Baha'is through mass communications to explain their origins or beliefs, even the most educated and well-meaning members of Iranian society remained ignorant of the true nature of the Baha'i Faith.

The Shiite clergy and the Government accuse the Baha'i Faith of being a political conspiracy serving the interests of foreign powers, including the United States; yet it is a fact that Baha'is everywhere strictly avoid dis-

loyal and subversive activities. The Baha'is are taught in their sacred scripture to make themselves useful members of society, to serve humanity, to be loyal to established authority, and to avoid partisanship.

The clergy and Government accuse the Baha'is of having been supporters of the Shah and of having run the SAVAK, the political secret police, when in fact the Baha'is were persecuted under Pahlavi rule and became victims of the SAVAK. While the Baha'i community was not as severely oppressed under the previous regime as under the present one, its members nevertheless were deprived of fundamental human rights. The Baha'i Faith was not recognized as a religion having the same rights as those accorded to other minority religions in Iran. The Baha'i community could not own property in its own name. Marriage according to Baha'i rites was denied official sanction. Baha'i schools everywhere in the country were closed.

In 1955 the Government and clergy collaborated in a large-scale attack on the Baha'i community. At one of Tehran's mosques, Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Falsafi, a fanatical mullah, daily urged his flock to rise up against the "false religion." He was permitted to preach incendiary sermons over the government radio. The effect of the broadcasts was immediate. On May 2 the police locked the gates of the Baha'i National Center in Tehran; five days later the building was taken over by the army. On May 17 the Minister of the Interior proclaimed in the parliament that the "Baha'i sect" had been banned. A contemporary report described what ensued:

This was followed by an orgy of senseless murder, rape, pillage, and destruction the like of which has not been recorded in modern times. The dome of the Haziratu'l-Quds (National Center) in Tihran was demolished; the House of the Bab was twice desecrated and severely damaged; Baha'u'llah's ancestral home in Takur was occupied; the house of the Bab's uncle was razed to the ground; shops and farms

were plundered; crops burned; livestock destroyed; bodies of Baha'is disinterred in the cemeteries and mutilated; private homes broken into, damaged and looted; adults execrated and beaten; young women abducted and forced to marry Muslims; children mocked, reviled, beaten and expelled from schools; boycott by butchers and bakers was imposed on hapless villagers; young girls were raped; families murdered; government employees dismissed and all manner of pressure brought upon the believers to recant their faith.

Only the outcry of world opinion abated the fury of the assaults upon the Baha'i community.

The same Mullah Falsafi who aided and abetted the participation of the chiefs of the imperial army in the destruction of Baha'i property in 1955 moves in the inner circles of the present regime.

It is true that Baha'is occupied important administrative posts in the Pahlavi government requiring specialized competence; however, they did not hold political office, because they would have been expelled from Baha'i membership. The Baha'is were not favored by the Pahlavi regime. On the contrary, they were exploited because, aside from having needed competencies, they could be trusted not to engage in anti-government activities. When the Shah insisted in 1975 that all Iranians join his Rastakhiz party, the Baha'is refused, preferring to risk the consequences than to become involved in partisanship. This fact clearly demonstrates their innocence of the charge that Baha'is were supporters of the Shah.

The Baha'i community was never associated with the operations of the SAVAK. The Government's repeated assertion that the SAVAK officials General Nasiri and Parviz Sabeti were Baha'is is entirely false. Equally untrue is their claim that former Prime Minister Amir Hoveida was a Baha'i. Nasiri had no connection with the Baha'i Faith. Sabeti's father had been a Baha'i for some time but drifted out of the Faith; his son never be-

came a Baha'i. Prime Minister Hoveida was never a Baha'i; his father had been one but was expelled from Baha'i membership. Hoveida always insisted that he was a Muslim and showed open hostility toward the Baha'is. It is relevant to state here the basic Baha'i principle that belief in a religion springs from the free choice of individuals and cannot automatically be inherited from an earlier generation. Unless an individual—even the member of a Baha'i family—independently attests to belief in the Baha'i Faith, he or she cannot be regarded as a Baha'i. This principle is well established in Baha'i communities around the world.

The accusation that the Baha'is collaborate with Zionism and Israel stems from the fact that the international administrative center of the Baha'i Faith exists in Haifa, Israel. The Baha'i world center was established in Israel because 114 years ago the government of the Ottoman Empire forcibly brought the founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah, and His disciples to Akka, which was then in the province of Syria. Baha'u'llah died in Akka, and ever since then the twin cities of Akka and Haifa have been the spiritual center of the Baha'i Faith long predating the State of Israel. Baha'i pilgrims from all parts of the world regularly travel to Israel to visit the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, and other sites closely associated with their religion. Thousands of Iranian Baha'is made this pilgrimage during the time when they were permitted by law to visit Israel. In accordance with the clear requirements of the Baha'i Faith, its world spiritual and administrative centers must always be united in one locality. Accordingly, the world administrative center of the Baha'i Faith has always been and must continue to be in the Holy Land. It cannot be relocated for the sake of temporary political expediency. Contributions sent by Baha'is to their world center in Israel are solely and exclusively for the upkeep of their holy shrines and historic sites, and for the administration of their Faith. Almost all Baha'is in Iran have made such contributions, and this innocent action is used to support



charges of their collusion with Israel.

The clergy regularly accuse the Baha'is of promoting immorality and prostitution (a capital offense). Their reasons are spurious. A basic Baha'i principle is the equality of men and women. Unlike Muslims, Baha'i men and women are treated as equals, are not segregated at Baha'i gatherings, and serve together on Baha'i administrative bodies. These facts offend the clergy. Moreover, because the Baha'i Faith is not recognized in the constitution, Baha'i marriage is not sanctioned by law. The issue from such marriages are, therefore, not recognized as legitimate. Since Baha'i marriages are not recognized, Baha'i women are called prostitutes. Indeed, last February, it was decreed in Shiraz that a Baha'i widow had no right either to receive pension from her husband's insurance or to retain custody of her children. Contrary to Iranian practice, the United States Embassy in the 1970s properly recognized Baha'i marriages for visa purposes.

The root of the discrimination against the Baha'is is purely religious. The Muslim clergy hold that Muhammad was the "seal of the prophets," the last of a series of prophets going all the way back to Adam. The Baha'is, however, believe that the dialogue between God and man can never stop, that Baha'u'llah was a prophet of God equal to Muhammad, and that in the future there will be others who will continue to bring divine revelation to humanity. The belief in progressive revelation is basic for Baha'is, who, therefore, accept as fundamental truth the unity of purpose of the founders of the world's major religions, including Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Moreover, Baha'u'llah abrogated particular Islamic laws, such as holy war, polygamy, certain dietary laws, and regulations concerning ritual purity. The Shiite clergy are offended by the Baha'i principle of equality of men and women. Perhaps even more upsetting to them is the fact that the Baha'i Faith does not have a clergy but is, instead, governed by democratically elected bodies.

Furthermore, by promoting the oneness of mankind as its pivotal principle and by envisioning a federation of nations under a world government, the Baha'i Faith shatters Shiite notions of exclusiveness and monopolistic possession of power. Consequently, the Baha'is are frequently accused of being the enemies of Islam, which in an Islamic republic also means enemies of the State. Nonetheless, it is a fact that wherever the Baha'is have spread their religion, they have succeeded in spreading reverence for Islam and its prophet. They have also taught their fellow-believers in more than 100,000 localities around the globe to love Iran as the birthplace of their religion.

In former and simpler times, the Shiite clergy did not need to invent justifications for their hatred of the Baha'i Faith. Back then they persecuted "heretics" and did not have to bother with notions of religious tolerance. The Bab's announcement of a new religion in 1844 precipitated violent reactions from the clergy-controlled state. He was imprisoned and then executed. During the time of his ministry and shortly after his death in 1850, some 20,000 of his followers were slaughtered. Baha'u'llah, the prophet whose advent the Bab heralded, was exiled in 1853 from his native Tehran to Baghdad; subsequently, he was exiled to various parts of the Ottoman Empire; finally, he was taken to the fortified town of Akka, then in a province of Syria but now Israel, where, after 24 years as a prisoner, he died in 1892.

Since then the Baha'i Faith has spread to more than 300 countries and dependencies in which have been established 130 Baha'i national assemblies and more than 26,000 local assemblies. These facts seem to have made little impression on Iran. Today, the Muslim clergy are as determined as ever to eradicate the Baha'i Faith, but feel that they need elaborate justifications for their murderous acts.

Iran's denials of religious persecution ring hollow against the overwhelming evidence cited so far. The accusations of the govern-

ment and the clergy are an obvious smoke-screen for religious fanaticism. Time and again the persecutors have confirmed by their own acts that their charges are groundless. The fake trials of the Baha'is never deal with the substance of any of these accusations; rather, the prosecutors attempt to learn about the operations of the Baha'i community and to force the defendants to recant their faith.

The elaborate accusations and widespread attacks are aimed at two alternative objectives: recantation or death. The evidence is overwhelming.

—a couple in whose home the members of the Tehran Baha'i Assembly met when they were arrested in November 1981 were put on trial. The wife refused to recant, was sentenced to death for espionage and executed. Her husband recanted and was set free, fully absolved of the charge of spying.

—Azizullah Gulshani, of the northwestern city of Mashhad, was hanged on April 29, 1982, by order of the revolutionary court. *Kayhan*, the Tehran daily newspaper, reported that he was convicted of heresy, a crime punishable by death.

—An order demanding the purge of Baha'is from the education department made the promise that "if Baha'is convert to Islam, they will be reemployed."

—Dismissal notices by revolutionary courts said that jobs would continue "if the Baha'i workers and employees repent and adhere to the Islamic Ithna 'Ashari creed . . . and publish the same in the widely circulated newspapers with their photographs."

—Baha'is in the village of Vadiquan were herded into a stable into which smoke was funneled. On the point of suffocation, they were taken to a mosque and forced to recant.

—Baha'is in the village of Saysan, near Tabriz, were given a month to decide whether to convert to Islam or suffer the consequences. The April 26, 1982, issue of

*Kayhan*, the Tehran daily newspaper, reported that a number of Baha'is had recanted and the village was given a new name.

—Baha'is sentenced to death were inevitably offered life and freedom if only they would recant their faith.

For 138 years the Baha'is were turned into the scapegoats of Iranian society. As their numbers increased, they became an even more attractive target for demagogic attacks by those who wanted to distract the public or create turmoil. Since the Baha'is emphasized education and placed high value on work, they achieved a relatively high standard of living, which made them promising targets of pogroms. Last but not least, the tolerant and peaceful nature of the Baha'i community made it possible to attack Baha'is without fear of violent retaliation.

#### IV. International Law

THIS systematic pattern of gross violations of the rights of a defenseless religious minority violates every internationally recognized principle of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Iran is a signatory, guarantees individual rights to life (§3); marriage and family protection (§16); freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, or home (§12); right to security in widowhood and old age (§25); equal protection of the law, remedies for infringements, and access to public services (§§7, 8, 21); free expression (§19); free association (§20); freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention (§9); fair and public criminal hearings (§10); freedom from torture (§5); freedom to manifest one's religion in teaching, practice, worship, and observance (§18); freedom from compulsion to join another religion (§20); the right to work (§23); to own property individually and in association with others (§17); and to have that property protected from arbitrary deprivation (§17); not to be arbitrarily deprived of nationality (§15); and to be provided education which

promotes understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups (§26).

The Baha'is are being ruthlessly deprived of all of these fundamental human rights. And they have no recourse for redress of grievances. They are arbitrarily harassed, arrested, detained, tortured, forced to recant, executed, deprived of citizenship at home, and rendered stateless abroad. Their widows and elderly are left homeless and penniless; their leaders are exterminated, often secretly; their homes, crops, jobs, incomes, pensions, property, assets, centers, cemeteries, and shrines are confiscated, looted, desecrated, and destroyed; their worship is made a criminal act, and their literature is suppressed. Their children are deprived of education and kidnapped; their families derogated and destroyed—all constituting the pattern of a systematic, willful and officially sanctioned pogrom. The community is being subjected to murders and to conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction. It is by very definition genocide punishable under the United Nations Genocide Convention.\* The civilized world

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\*Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide provides that

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article IV provides that persons committing genocide shall be punished, "whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals."

cannot permit it to continue unpunished by word or deed.

#### V. Conclusion

IRAN'S action has been labeled international crimes by the United States Department of State, has been recognized as "well planned genocide" by Amnesty International, and has been roundly condemned by the international press, by the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches, by the parliaments of Australia, Canada, and West Germany, by the European Parliament, by members of the House of Lords in the United Kingdom, by many members of this Congress, and by the United Nations Human Rights Commission and by its Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Indeed, three Muslim countries joined in the unopposed resolution of the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities calling on Iran "to gran(t) full protection of fundamental rights and freedoms to the Baha'i religious community in Iran, and by protecting the life and liberty of (its) members."

Thus far, Iran has not relented. Yet we continue to believe that the Government of Iran, as a member of the community of nations, must in time respond to the collective voice of institutions committed to justice. The Baha'is in Iran cannot defend themselves, nor can they speak on their own behalf. It is our collective task in the West to call the attention of the world to the horrors being perpetrated in Iran. Many times in this century the world averted its eyes when fanatics, demagogues, and dictators of various stripes massacred national, racial, and religious minorities or filled concentration camps with "class enemies," depriving of their most fundamental rights all those who dared to differ from their brutal orthodoxies even in thought. Decency, respect for human rights, and love of one's neighbor, be he ever so distant geographically, are as indivisible as peace. Humanity cannot afford to remain silent and by its silence condone these horrors.

The Baha'is of the United States feel genuine sympathy for the long suffering Iranian people. We pray for their peaceful and happy future. Yet we cannot remain indifferent to the sufferings of our Iranian brethren at the hands of bigots who have no compunctions about shedding innocent blood. We call upon our fellow citizens and our elected representatives to proclaim that America will not acquiesce in oppression and that its perpetrators will have to answer for their deeds in the court of world opinion.

#### EXHIBITS

- Map of Iran, showing location of events cited
- List of Baha'is executed in Iran
- "The Baha'i Faith and Its World Community"
- Resolutions: Alaska; Illinois
- Statements in United States Congressional Records
- Resolutions by International Bodies
- Records of Parliamentary Debates and Resolutions: Canada; Australia; West Germany; United Kingdom—House of Lords
- Human Rights Commission of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland
- Report of Amnesty International
- Official Documentation Testifying to Discrimination Against the Baha'i Community Since the Creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- The Iranian Constitution
- Photographs of Executed Baha'is

# Appealing to the World's Conscience

A REVIEW OF WILLIAM SEARS' *A Cry From the Heart: The Bahá'is in Iran*  
(OXFORD: GEORGE RONALD, 1982) 211 PAGES + APPENDIX

BY FIRUZ KAZEMZADEH

BOOKS have many purposes. Some are written to delight, others to frighten; some are produced to make money; others are their author's gift to the readers; some laboriously explore elusive truths, others tell glib lies. *A Cry From the Heart* is a record of pain and anger born of love.

Mr. William Sears, a prominent American Bahá'í, is a man of strong feelings that he does not want to conceal. In his long career as a sports broadcaster, actor, writer, and producer of television plays, William Sears developed a quick eye, a sensitive ear, and a fast pen. Over the entire span of his full and adventurous life he has perfected the art of loving people and communicating with them not only in words but in emotions as well.

However, the price of love is often pain. When blows fall on those we love, when suffering afflicts them, we cannot escape, we cannot remain indifferent. Confronted with the enormity of the clerical assault on the Iranian Bahá'is, among whom Mr. Sears had many friends, he reacted with anger and wrote a book where everything is black and white, when it is not red with freshly spilled blood.

Bill Sears, as he is affectionately called by tens, if not hundreds of thousands, does not pretend to be a spokesman for the Bahá'í community or its various institutions. This is a deeply personal, even idiosyncratic book; and in that lies its principal value. No statistical compilations, no charts, no recitation of articles of treaties for the protection of human rights, could ever convey the horror

of the brutal murder of the simple village couple, Muḥammad and Shikkar-Nisá', as it is conveyed in these charged pages. No *Who's Who* listing of academic honors and accomplishments of Professor Manúchíhr Ḥakím could bring him so close to the reader as he is brought by Bill Sears, his friend and one-time patient. No official report on the execution of the members of the Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'is of Yazd and Hamadán could tell the story of their voluntary sacrifice, their heroism, their determination, and their lack of hatred for their torturers and executioners as graphically and simply as it is told here by their admirer and mourner Bill Sears.

Distance, the passage of time, and sober reflection are indispensable for the production of detached, balanced, and complete history. But how can a friend let time pass before crying out in pain and rage at the execution of those he loved? How can one balance right and wrong, adjudicate between the torturer and his victim, or strive for completeness, when houses are on fire, women are raped, children are beaten and taken from their parents?

The book begins dramatically with the Núk murder of the Ma'súmí couple, the only Bahá'is in the village. Their home was attacked by masked men in the night, and the Ma'súmís were burned to death. No one came to their rescue, no one offered help. The neighbors who witnessed the murder did not interfere with the killing of infidels. Of course, the killers were not punished.

Mr. Sears then lists specific acts of persecu-

tion of the Bahá'ís in Iran, among them illegal arrests, illegal trials, looting and confiscation of homes, arson, evictions, kidnappings, illegal confiscation of private property, attacks on Bahá'í children, burning of trees and crops, and slaughter of cattle. He establishes the sad fact that these crimes were and are being committed with the knowledge, approval, and outright participation of government authorities and high-ranking mullahs, the two frequently being one and the same. He then lists the standard accusations: the Bahá'í Faith is a subversive sect and a political party that supported Muḥammad Riḍá Sháh; the Bahá'ís are agents of foreign powers such as Russia, Britain, and the United States, as well as Zionist and Israeli spies; the Bahá'ís are opposed to Islam and its Prophet, and insult the Holy Qur'án; the Bahá'ís occupied the highest posts in the shah's government including that of Prime Minister and ran the dreaded secret police—SAVAK.

The author devotes an entire chapter to a systematic refutation of every one of the old charges. He demonstrates easily and conclusively that the Bahá'í Faith is an independent religion and cites in support of this rather obvious truth the opinions of Arnold Toynbee, Raymond Piper, Edward Benes, and Hugh van Rensselaer. He could have also cited the opinion of an Egyptian religious tribunal and of the scholars at the famous Islamic school, the Al-Azhar, who long ago decided that the Bahá'í Faith was not a sect of Islam. Mr. Sears easily disproves the allegation of favored status accorded to the Bahá'ís

by the shahs, drawing attention to the outbreaks of government sanctioned persecutions in 1925, 1930-32, 1934, 1939-40, 1943-50, and 1955. Opposite page 36 he reproduces a photograph that shows a high-ranking officer of the Imperial army wielding a pick-axe on the dome of the Bahá'í center in Tíhrán, while other officers look on and grin. And so down the list of trumped-up charges, every one of which is refuted with strong and verifiable evidence.

While refuting the charges, William Sears acquaints the reader with the basic tenets of the Bahá'í Faith and with the spirit that animates it followers. Again, he does not disguise his commitment. Sears is a believer, open about his convictions and proud of being a member of the Bahá'í community. His sincerity is obvious and winning. It will earn him the confidence of his readers.

The book ends with a number of documents that support the author's argument and provide first-hand evidence of the truth of his contentions. There is also a list compiled in December 1981, an honor roll of eighty-four Bahá'ís who have been killed in Iran since the summer of 1978. The list keeps growing. Some fifty names have been added to it between December 1981 and June 1982. More will be added in the future.

This is a story without a conclusion, a cry from the heart, one man's appeal to the conscience of the world.

ART CREDITS: Cover, design by John Solarz, photograph by Glenford E. Mitchell; p. 2, photograph by Glenford E. Mitchell; pp. 4-5, photograph of the scene of the Congressional hearing on the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'ís, courtesy of the Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs; p. 7, photograph of Congressman Don Bonker by David Ogron/*The American Bahá'í*; p. 8, photograph of Congressman Edward J. Derwinski of Illinois by David Ogron/*The American Bahá'í*; p. 11, photograph of Congressman Fortney H. Stark, Jr., by David Ogron/*The American Bahá'í*; p. 13, photograph of the Bahá'ís of Yazd preparing the graves for the seven executed there on September 8, 1980, courtesy of the Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs; pp. 24-25, photograph of Bahá'í witnesses (Mitchell, Kazemzadeh, Nelson, Nourani) at the Congressional hearing, by David Ogron/*The American Bahá'í*; p. 34, photograph of Mulla Falsafi attacking the Bahá'í National Center in Tehran in 1955, courtesy of the Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs.



