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NSA COSTA RICA

VOICE OF AMERICA EDITORIAL

Transcription of recording from news program "Report to the Americas", 14 July 1983, 7:50 P.M. Costa Rican Time

The execution several weeks ago of 16 members of the Baha'i Faith in Iran was a blow to one of the most fundamental of human rights: Freedom of Religion. It was a particular tragedy for one Baha'i who now lives in the United States. Said Eshrali, now a resident of Texas, learned that one of those hanged by the Iranian authorities was his father who had steadfastly refused to renounce his religious beliefs. Just one day later Mr. Eshrali learned by phone that his mother and 21 year old sister had also been hanged for clinging to their religious faith. Since the Iranian revolution in 1979 more than 150 Baha'is are known to have been executed. Their crime is their religion, which the Shi'ite Moslem clergy who rule Iran consider heretical. The persecution of the Baha'is has been condemned by various agencies of the United Nations and by a number of world leaders including President Reagan, but the executions still go on. The leader of the Iranian religious hierarchy, Ayatollah Khomeini, has reportedly tried to lay the blame for the latest wave of killings on the United States. His argument, if you can call it that, is that Mr. Reagan's appeal in May for Iran to spare the lives of the Baha'i adherents is proof that they are spies. In today's Iran that may pass for logic. Elsewhere it is readily identifiable either as evidence of irrationality or as the tendency of oppressors everywhere to blame their actions on someone else. Baha'is in the United States held memorial services last Saturday for their co-religionists in Iran who have been executed. For Said Eshrali whose parents and sister were killed recently it was a special day of grief. But this Memorial Day should have meaning for the rest of us as well. It should serve as a reminder that mankind is still capable of the ugly passions that lead some men to murder others simply because of their religious beliefs.

That was a VOA editorial reflecting the views of the United States Government.

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Transcript of recording from VOICE OF AMERICA, May 25, 1983, 7:50 pm

.....spare these lives. As President Reagan pointed out the condemned men have not plotted the overthrow of Iran's government and are not responsible for the deaths of anyone. In fact they have committed no offense other than to follow in their private lives the Faith of their God. They are not by any means the only loyal Iranians whom Iran's rulers have persecuted on the grounds of their beliefs. Members of minority Islamic sects, Christians and Jews have all been the subjects of the Ayatollah's erratic violence. But the 19 men facing execution represent a Faith that has been singled out with special vengeance. They are Bahá'ís. More than 300,000 Bahá'ís live in Iran. They eschew politics and are bound by their religion and their loyalty to obey peaceably their countries laws. But the Khomeini government has attacked the Bahá'ís none the less, perhaps because it represents a commitment to individual conscience that is intolerable to a totalitarian regime. The current rulers of Iran have forced Bahá'ís out of their jobs and excluded their children from school; their property is destroyed and confiscated. But the regimes real tactic to exterminate the Bahá'í faith is to attack its religious leaders. After Khomeini assumed power his government arrested the members of the Bahá'í's National Religious Assembly. They have not been seen since. The members of the next Bahá'í Assembly were also arrested. This time their executions were announced in public. Other Bahá'ís who were active in their Faith have fallen victim to the regime. All told at least 150 Bahá'ís have been killed and the regime is very clear about why. The Iranian judge Hojatolla-Islam Khazai who sentenced the condemned men said in an interview, we quote, "Any activities on the part of the Bahá'ís are against the constitution and election of their assemblies, their committees, fiests, etc. are all crimes, Before it is to late", he continued, "the Bahá'ís should recant Bahá'ism." But it is not to late to stop the persecution and killing of more blameless men. Iran joined a consensus of the UN General Assembly in 1981 that condemned religious intolerance and discrimination. We hope that Iran's fulers will honor the spirit of that resolution today.

That was a VOI editorial reflecting the views of the United States Government.

Transcript of recording from VOICE OF AMERICA, May 28, 1983, 9:55 PM

Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini says the Bahá'í sect in Iran is an American backed political party and not a religious group. Tehran radio says the Ayatollah told a group of Iranian officials that American support for the Bahá'ís is proof that they are spies for the United States. President Reagan recently appealed for the lives of 22 members of the sect sentenced to death in Iran.