

Persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran

1979-1986

**A 7-Year Campaign to Eliminate
A Religious Minority**

Second Edition

Published by
Bahá'í International Community
Office of Public Information
866 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
(212) 838-1866

December 1986

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
BACKGROUND TO THE PERSECUTION	5
PHYSICAL INTIMIDATION	
Executions, mass arrests and torture	8
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTIMIDATION	
Deprivation of education, deprivation of employment and confiscation of homes and personal savings	11
CONFISCATION AND DESTRUCTION OF BAHÁÍ COMMUNITY ASSETS	14
“JUSTIFICATIONS” FOR THE PERSECUTION	16
RESPONSE OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁÍ, 1980–1986	18
SUMMARY NOTE ON THE HISTORY, ORGANISATION AND BELIEFS OF THE BAHÁÍ FAITH	21

INTRODUCTION

Since 1979 the Iranian Government has conducted a systematic campaign of persecution against the Bahá'í community, designed to eliminate the Bahá'ís as a religious minority in Iran.

This campaign has been based on physical, economic and social intimidation. The persecution has taken many forms, including summary executions, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, denial of education and employment, and arbitrary seizure of homes and possessions. All Bahá'í community assets have been confiscated. All Bahá'í holy places have been seized and desecrated, the most important of them being demolished.

In almost every case the authorities have told persecuted Bahá'ís that their persecution would cease if only they would abandon their religion. This demonstrates that religion is the only basis for their persecution.

Since 1980 United Nations organs have repeatedly expressed their concern about this persecution. In 1985, the General Assembly for the first time adopted a resolution about the human rights situation in Iran, including the persecution of the Bahá'ís. A similar resolution was adopted in 1986, when the General Assembly again debated the issue.

The Bahá'í International Community is convinced that international concern about the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran has played a vital role in moderating the actions of the Iranian authorities and in providing some measure of security to the Bahá'í community in Iran. But the continuation of physical, economic and social intimidation demonstrates that there has been no change in the basic objectives of the Iranian authorities, namely the elimination of the Bahá'ís as a religious minority in Iran.

BACKGROUND TO THE PERSECUTION

The Bahá'í Faith poses no threat to anyone or to any institution. Bahá'ís respect the divine origin of all the major world religions, including Islam. They are required by their faith to abstain from imposing their beliefs on others, from the acceptance of political posts, from partisan politics, and from all forms of subversive activity and violence, and to demonstrate obedience to the government of the country in which they live.

Nevertheless the Bahá'í community in Iran has consistently suffered persecution ever since the Bahá'í Faith was founded there in the middle of the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, over 20,000 Bahá'ís in Iran were killed because of their faith. The persecutions continued intermittently under the Pahlavi regime (1925–1979), and became so serious in 1955 that the United Nations intervened.

Following the change of government in 1979, the persecutions were intensified and systematised.

Bahá'ís are non-persons under the current constitution and laws of Iran. Although this point was carefully drawn to the attention of those drafting the constitution, only the Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian minorities were recognized and their rights protected in it. The Bahá'í community, the largest religious minority in Iran with over 300,000 believers, was not included in the constitution's provisions.

This means that the Bahá'ís enjoy no rights of any sort, and that they can be attacked and persecuted with impunity. The Iranian courts have ruled that Bahá'ís enjoy no right of redress or protection against assault, killings and other forms of persecution – and that

PHYSICAL INTIMIDATION – EXECUTIONS, MASS ARRESTS AND TORTURE

The objective of the campaign of persecution has been and remains the elimination of the Bahá'ís as a religious minority in Iran.

The persecution has touched all strata of the Bahá'í community in Iran – peasants, industrial workers, teachers, civil servants, businessmen and children. Thousands of Bahá'ís, including elderly people and young children, have suffered physical intimidation. They have been terrorised, beaten, tortured, executed, stoned, beaten to death, burnt alive or arrested and imprisoned without charges solely because of their religion. All these acts of violence have been either perpetrated or condoned by the Iranian authorities.

The campaign has been conducted with particular ferocity against the leadership of the Bahá'í community in Iran, the nine-member national and local councils who are elected to administer the community's affairs, and other prominent Bahá'ís. Previous members of these institutions and their families continued to be targeted for special persecution even after the institutions themselves were disbanded in 1983 in accordance with the instructions of the Government.

Executions

Over 200 Bahá'ís have been killed in Iran because of their faith since the start of the Iranian revolution in the late 1970s. About 150 of these have been executed by the authorities. The rest have been beaten or burnt to death by mobs, assassinated, died under torture or in mysterious circumstances in prison, or disappeared in police custody.



Dr. Faramarz Samandarí, a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Shiraz, his wife Anita and children. Dr. Samandarí was executed on July 14, 1980 in Tabriz.



All save one of these prominent Bahá'ís have been executed or have disappeared following arrest and are presumed dead. They include the entire membership of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran (disappeared August 1980) and three members of the National Assembly that replaced them (eight of whose nine members were executed in December 1981).

Well over half the executed Bahá'ís were members of national and local councils of the Bahá'í community. On 21 August 1980, the nine members of the national Bahá'í council were arrested and disappeared without trace. It seems certain that they were secretly executed. The national council was reconstituted through the election of nine new members but was again ravaged by the execution of eight of these members on 27 December 1981. Again it was reconstituted through fresh elections, and again four of its new members were executed in 1984, although the council had by then been disbanded in accordance with the Government's instructions and they therefore held no official position within the Bahá'í community. Local Bahá'í councils have also suffered a terrible rate of decimation. Particularly distressing was the hanging in Shiraz, in June 1983, of ten Bahá'í women, two of whom were teen-age girls.

For some months in 1985 and early 1986 the executions stopped and the Bahá'í community in Iran dared to hope that they were at least no longer threatened with physical destruction.

But in May 1986 the executions started again. Mr. Sirru'llah Vahdat-Nizami, who had been imprisoned since February 1984, was summarily executed on 4 May 1986 – Mr. Fidrus Shabrukh, who had been imprisoned since September 1983, was summarily executed on 9 May 1986 – and Mr. Farid Bihmardi, who had been imprisoned since August 1984, was summarily executed on 10 June 1986. All three had been subjected to severe and prolonged torture in prison.

In most cases the victims were offered their lives and freedom if only they would recant their faith. This compellingly demonstrates that their religious faith was the sole reason for their detention and execution.

Mob actions, stimulated and supported by the religious authorities, have also claimed the lives of a number of Bahá'ís. The most recent victim was Bijan Talibi, a boy of sixteen, who was beaten to death in October 1986. His body was hanged by his attackers in an attempt to suggest that he had committed suicide.

Mass Arrests

Over 700 Bahá'ís are currently being held in prison without trial in Iran because of their religious beliefs. Many hundreds more have been imprisoned for their beliefs for many months and even years at a time during the past seven years. In many cases they have been subjected to torture in the course of their imprisonment.

The members of Bahá'í councils and their families have been specifically targeted for arrest, even since the disbanding of all these councils in 1983. In one short period in late 1983 and early 1984 over 500 Bahá'í men, women and children were arrested without charges — most of them being previously members of Bahá'í councils or their families.

Almost all of the many hundreds of Bahá'ís arrested in Iran have been offered their freedom if only they would recant their religion.

Torture

The torture of Bahá'ís in Iranian prisons — and particularly of Bahá'ís who were previously members of Bahá'í councils — is routine and systematic.

The purpose of the torture is invariably to get the Bahá'ís to recant their religion or to confess to some treasonous activity which might be used by the Iranian authorities to justify their persecution of the Bahá'í community as a whole. Thirteen Bahá'ís have died mysteriously in prison in circumstances that suggest they were tortured to death. In these cases the bodies were buried by the authorities before the families could view them. In addition, in many cases where the bodies of those who were executed were delivered to the families, the condition of the remains showed that the victims had been severely tortured before execution.

The methods of physical torture used are vicious and varied, including sustained beating and flogging, bastinado (repeatedly whipping the soles of the feet), the extraction of fingernails and teeth and deprivation of food and water for many days at a time.

Bahá'ís also frequently suffer psychological torture, including being subjected to mock executions and being forced to witness the physical torture of friends and family members.

One example may serve as an indication of the sufferings of many: an elderly Bahá'í woman, who had been a member of a local Bahá'í council and was imprisoned in Evin prison because of her faith, was tortured in front of a dozen other Bahá'ís who had also been subjected to torture in an effort to persuade her and them to deny their faith.

The woman's jailers took her by her hair and continually banged her head against the wall. They then made her stand against the wall, put a slab of wood against her throat, pushed her throat hard against the wood and the wall, and beat her about the head for a long time until the whole of her body was covered in blood. They then sent her back to her cell without any medical treatment, and brought her out again the following day for another prolonged session of torture. After two years of imprisonment she was summarily released without recourse against the abuse she had received.

In all cases in which Bahá'ís have survived their torture, they have reported that they were promised that their torture and imprisonment would cease immediately if they would only recant their faith.

(Lists of Bahá'ís executed and imprisoned in Iran and details of the tortures inflicted on Bahá'í prisoners are available on request from the Bahá'í International Community).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTIMIDATION

The authorities have conducted a campaign of economic and social, as well as physical, intimidation against the Bahá'í community. Their objective is to deprive Bahá'ís of their rights to education, to a job and to a home of their own — and thus to force them to recant simply in order to survive.

Deprivation of Education

Since the 1930s the Bahá'ís in Iran have been forbidden from running their own educational establishments and have therefore educated their children at state-run Moslem schools and universities where they often suffered discrimination and persecution.

The level of discrimination and persecution rose sharply following the change of government in 1979.

In 1981 the authorities stepped up and systematised this form of social intimidation by introducing new measures to bar Bahá'ís officially, systematically and permanently from access to any form of education.

An official decree was issued barring Bahá'í students and professors from admission to or employment at any university in Iran. Colleges of higher education published new prospectuses requiring that applicants for enrolment must belong to one of the four religions formally recognised in the constitution, namely the Moslem, Jewish, Christian or Zoroastrian religions. In the same year, primary and secondary schools introduced new registration forms requiring that the applicant's religion be stated, and refused admission to those identifying themselves as Bahá'ís.

As a result of these measures, hundreds of Bahá'í children were expelled from primary and secondary schools, from medical schools and from universities because they refused to recant their faith. Those who had finished their courses were denied the opportunity to take their final examinations, and those who had passed their examinations were denied their degrees or diplomas. Many of these students were also required to repay the costs of their training, although they were being denied the degrees or diplomas they had earned.

At present, Bahá'í children are obliged to leave blank the section of the school registration form which shows religious affiliation. The decision as to whether or not to expel them is left in each case to the discretion of the individual school authorities.

Deprivation of Employment

Ever since 1979, the Iranian Government has been trying to intimidate Bahá'í adults into recanting their faith by making it impossible for them to earn a living in either the private or the public sector.

In 1979 the Government started dismissing all Bahá'í public servants without compensation. By July 1982 all Bahá'í public servants had been dismissed and the pensions of all retired Bahá'í civil servants had been terminated.

In addition, in late 1984 the Iranian Attorney-General started issuing summonses demanding that all those Bahá'í public servants who had been dismissed because of their religion should repay to the Government all the salaries they had received during their period of employment and threatening them with imprisonment if they did not comply. Repayment of a lifetime's wages was clearly beyond the means of the victims and many of them have been imprisoned because of their inability to meet the Government's demands.

The Government has also been driving many hundreds of Bahá'ís in the private sector to economic ruin. The trading licenses of most Bahá'í businessmen have been revoked; the assets of businesses run by Bahá'ís have been confiscated; and the bank accounts of

شماره ۱۰۰۰
تاریخ ۳۰/۱/۸۰
یوست



جمهوری اسلامی ایران

وزارت بهداشت
دفسلحه

بناب

اداره کل کارگرفتنی اسان بهرام
سازمان

باتوجه باینکه پس از تصویب قانون اساسی جمهوری اسلامی ایران در رتخانه خاربه ریاست
دولتی بر پایه نظام اسلامی و ضوابط جمهوری اسلامی ایران اداره میشوند شایسته نیست حضور هم در
واحدهای تابعه این وزارتخانه انفرادی باشند که در صورتی که خود را منتسب بفرقه غایبه بنائیت میدانند
لذا با استنباط امرتاد ماده ۱۴ قانون استخدام کسری و ماده ۱۰ آئین نامه استخدامی تابعین اجتماعی
و نیز سایر آئین نامه های استخدامی که در آن مصادم در زمینه فساد عقیده رایجی از نواخه استخدام
محسوب دانسته باین امر از ابتدا استخدام اجتناب فرمائید چرا که قانونی نداشته است دستور فرمائید
سربا " بدین نواخه که منجم بدانند عقیده بنائیت میباشد رسیدگی وقتها " در سازمان
استلام و چنانچه برای عقیده اسوار و ابرام می ویزیت حکم استخدام اولو آسان و نیز چاره باشد ادانسون
استخدام کسری رجه باشد آئین نامه استخدامی تابعین اجتماعی و سایر مقررات استخدامی صادر شده
باشد (اربدواستخدام لغو از تاریخ ۱۹/۱۱/۸۰ بحدت آمان حانه داده شود نسبت به اسرار خدمت هر یک
سز بر اهر مؤرخین قانون کار اقدام نمایند.

دکتر ناصر ستانی
رئیس هیئت مدیره
معاونت

۱۳۵۹/۱/۱۵

۶۸۹۲۵۵

تحت امر و اقدام از به مدت کارت گزینش سازمان ارسال میگردد .
مدرکات آن امور مانی و بندهای سازمان ارسال میگردد .
مدرکات بهداشتی و درمانی ارسال میگردد .
مدرکات اسامی سیدان
انجمن اسلامی بهداشتی سازمان تهران ارسال میگردد .

Official directive dated 3 January 1980 from the Ministry of Health to the Personnel Department of the Ministry of Health in the Province of Teheran.

The directive instructs the Personnel Department to disallow any of its own employees who are Bahá'ís, and also to search its files for the names of all Ministry of Health employees in the province who belong to the "detested Bahá'í sect" so that they, too, can be dismissed.

تاریخ: ۳۰/۹/۸۳

رای هیئت بدوی بازسازی نیروی انسانی

وزارت آموزش و پرورش اداره کل آموزش و پرورش استان همدان شماره مستند ۱۱۷۰۱۲.....

نام شمسی نام خانوادگی اصفیائی نسبی نام پدر حسنعلی

شماره شناسنامه ۱۰۶۴ محل صدور تهران محل تولد تهران

تاریخ تولد ۲۶/۳/۱۵ بالاترین مدرک لیسانس رشته روانشناسی (۱۹۶۶ میلادی ۲۱)

نوع آخرین حکم آماده خدمت مجوز پیشنهاد هیئت تاریخ اجرا ۳۰/۴/۸۱

محل خدمت همدان عنوان پست ثابت سازمانی دبیر گروه

تاریخ استخدام ۲/۱۲/۱۲ چون به مزایا ۳۶۸۰۰ ریال

جلسه دسیت جهت رسیدگی به پرونده نامبرده فون در تاریخ با حضور

نفران اعضا اصلی و حاضره: نفران اعضا علی البدل تشکیل گردید ۲۲/۶/۸۳

گسردش کلاس نامبرده باستناد نامه شماره ۴۳۲۱/ف/۶۲-۶۲/۶/۶۲ داد سران استان اسلامی همدان بانضمام دوبرگ فتوکی احکام صادره علیه مشارالیه با ابتداء بر مبنای تشکیلات بهائیت مستحق اعدام شناخته شده اما از آنجا که محاربه ایشان با نظم و انضباط اسلامی به اثبات نرسیده به ده سال حبس و زندان محکوم شده است

رای هیئت هیئت بدوی بازسازی آموزش و پرورش استان همدان جرم وی را که در دادگاه به اثبات رسیده است منطبق بر بند یک ماده ۱۹ دانسته و باستناد بند ۸ ماده ۹ و ۲۰ ریاست آراء و برابر بند ۱۱ ماده ۲۰ به انفصال دائم از خدمات دولتی محکوم مینماید

ضمناً طبق تصویب نهیمن جلسه مشترک عالی نظارت فعالاً هیچگونه وجهی بابت گسردش بازنشستگی بایشان تعلق نمیگیرد تا مجلس شورای اسلامی نظر خود را در این خصوص اعلام فرماید.

Verdict of the Human Resources Board of the Department of Education in the Province of Hamadan, dated 21 September 1983, noting that a Bahá'í woman "was recognized as deserving execution originally, based on the crime of membership in the Bahá'í administration" but that "since her fight with the system of the Islamic Revolution has not been proven, she has been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment". The Court "unanimously condemns her to permanent dismissal from Government service" and rules that "she is not entitled to receive a pension until the Islamic Parliament announces its view in this regard."

Bahá'í businessmen have been frozen. In addition the authorities have intimidated non-Bahá'í employers into dismissing their Bahá'í employees.

Almost every dismissal notice served on a Bahá'í employee, both in the public and private sectors, stated that the reason for dismissal was membership in the Bahá'í Faith and that the individual's job would be restored if only he would recant his faith.

Confiscation of Homes and Personal Savings

In addition to depriving Bahá'ís of the means of employment in the public or private sectors, the Government has also sought to deprive arrested Bahá'ís of whatever possessions they may have accumulated, including their own homes.

Through its takeover of the major Bahá'í savings company, Nawnahalan, the Government in one move swept away the life savings of its 15,000 Bahá'í shareholders and investors. In addition thousands of Bahá'ís, rich and poor alike, have had their homes and personal possessions confiscated by the Government, and thousands more have had their homes destroyed by arson and looting. In rural areas the authorities have encouraged the plunder and destruction of the livestock and crops of Bahá'í peasants and farmers.

CONFISCATION AND DESTRUCTION OF BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY ASSETS

The Bahá'í community in Iran has never been allowed to hold community property in its own name and therefore held all community property in the name of a non-profit company created for this purpose. This body, the Umana Company, was allowed to administer these properties without undue interference until the change of government in 1979.

One of the first acts of the new Government was to confiscate this company and all its holdings. This meant that at one stroke all Bahá'í community properties were arbitrarily transferred to the State without consultation or compensation.

The Government's next steps were to desecrate and in many cases destroy Bahá'í holy places throughout Iran. The properties desecrated and destroyed included the holiest Bahá'í site in Iran, the House of the Báb in Shiraz.

The House of the Báb was the birthplace of the Bahá'í Faith and a place of pilgrimage for Bahá'ís throughout the world. The Government had given written assurances to the Bahá'í community that this property was being confiscated solely for its protection. But after confiscation they razed it and initiated roadworks designed to obliterate all signs and memories of the site. The House of Bahá'u'lláh in Takur, where the founder of the Bahá'í Faith spent his childhood, met a similar fate — it was demolished and the site was offered for sale to the public.

In Teheran and many other centres throughout Iran, Bahá'í community buildings were looted and burned, Bahá'í cemeteries were bulldozed and Bahá'í graves were broken open. In the Teheran area Bahá'ís are now forced to bury their dead in a barren stretch of land reserved by the authorities for "infidels", following the seizure and closure of the Bahá'í Cemetery by order of the Central Revolutionary Court.

The Government has also confiscated the assets of all Bahá'í welfare agencies, which provided services to people of all religions on an equal basis.

“JUSTIFICATIONS” FOR THE PERSECUTION

Despite the overwhelming proof that the Bahá'í community in Iran is being persecuted solely because of its religious beliefs, the Iranian Government continues to seek to justify this persecution by charging the Bahá'í community with a variety of offences. All of these charges demonstrate an ignorance of the basic principles and history of the Bahá'í Faith. No evidence has ever been adduced to support any of these accusations.

The principal charges are the following:

- *Bahá'ís are charged with being supporters of the Pahlavi regime and the late Shah of Iran – with having collaborated with SAVAK, that regime's secret police – and with being a political organisation opposed to the present Iranian Government.*

Bahá'ís are required by the basic principles of their faith to show loyalty and obedience to the government of the country in which they live. The Bahá'í community in Iran thus did not oppose the Pahlavi regime, just as they have not opposed the present Government of Iran – indeed they have obeyed every law and instruction of the present Government, including the instructions directed against the Bahá'í Faith such as the instruction to disband all Bahá'í administrative institutions in Iran.

Bahá'ís are also required to avoid any form of involvement in partisan politics. Iranian Bahá'ís were precluded by membership in their faith from accepting cabinet posts or similar political positions under the Pahlavi regime. They did not collaborate with SAVAK. On the contrary, the Pahlavi regime consistently persecuted the Bahá'í Faith, and SAVAK was one of the main agencies of this persecution. Many Bahá'ís suffered ill treatment at the hands of this repressive force. For Bahá'ís in Iran, the idea of collaboration with SAVAK would have been unthinkable.

The present Iranian Government has alleged that certain SAVAK officials, such as Parviz Sabeti, were Bahá'ís. These allegations are completely untrue. None of these officials was a Bahá'í.

- *Bahá'ís are charged with being enemies of Islam.*

Bahá'ís recognise the founders of all the world's major religions – Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus Christ and Muhammad – as prophets of God and revere the messages they brought and the religions which they inspired.

Bahá'ís believe that these great prophets were followed in the nineteenth century by another great prophet, Bahá'u'lláh, who brought a message of particular relevance to the current era. This belief is the basis for the establishment of the Bahá'í Faith as an independent world religion, just as belief in the prophethood of Muhammad is the basis for the establishment of Islam as an independent world religion. As long ago as 1924, a Sunni appellate court in Egypt recognised that the Bahá'í Faith was an independent world religion in its judgment that: “The Bahá'í Faith is a new religion entirely independent . . . No Bahá'í therefore can be regarded as a Muslim or vice versa, even as no Buddhist, Brahmin or Christian can be regarded as a Muslim.”

- *Bahá'ís are accused of being agents of Zionism.*

This charge is based solely on the fact that the Bahá'í World Centre is in Israel. It was however established there in the last century, long before the State of Israel came into existence, in accordance with the explicit instructions of the founder of the Bahá'í Faith

who was exiled there from his native country of Persia. It thus has nothing to do with the State of Israel or with Zionism.

- *Bahá'ís are charged with prostitution, adultery and immorality.*

This charge, like the others, is utterly without foundation. Bahá'ís have a strict moral code and attach great importance to chastity and to the institution of marriage.

The charge of prostitution arises from the lack of any opportunity for Bahá'ís in Iran to marry according to their consciences and have that marriage recognised. The Bahá'í marriage ceremony is not recognised in Iran and no civil marriage ceremony exists. Consequently, Bahá'ís have been faced with the choice of denying their faith in order to be married according to the rites of one of the religions recognised in Iran, or of marrying in accordance with the rites of their own faith. They have consistently chosen to observe their faith and be married in accordance with Bahá'í rites. The Government does not recognise these marriages and denounces Bahá'í wives as prostitutes.

The other charges of adultery and immorality against Bahá'ís are based solely on the fact that, in accordance with the Bahá'í principle of the equality of men and women, there is no segregation of the sexes at Bahá'í gatherings.

RESPONSE OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS, 1980-1986

Since 1980, human rights organs of the United Nations have been expressing concern about the tragic situation of the Bahá'í religious minority in Iran. This demonstration of international concern has played a critical role in moderating the actions of the Iranian authorities and providing a measure of security to the Bahá'í community.

In 1985 the General Assembly had the issue on its agenda for the first time. It adopted a resolution which expressed deep concern about the human rights situation in Iran and decided to continue its examination of the situation, "including the situation of minority groups such as the Bahá'ís", during its forty-first session in 1986. The issue is therefore on the General Assembly's agenda again for its forty-first session.

A summary history of this issue at the United Nations is outlined below:

- 1980 Resolution 10 (XXXIII) of the *Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities* expresses profound concern for the Bahá'ís, both individually and collectively, and invites the Government of Iran to protect their fundamental human rights and freedoms.
- 1981 Resolution 8 (XXXIV) of the *Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities* draws the attention of the Commission on Human Rights to the perilous situation facing the Bahá'ís and requests the Secretary-General to report on their plight to the next session of the Commission.
- 1982 Resolution 1982/27 of the *Commission on Human Rights* notes the Secretary-General's report on the Bahá'ís and requests him to establish direct contacts with the Government of Iran and to continue his efforts to ensure to the Bahá'ís full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Grave concern for the Bahá'í minority was expressed by members of the *Human Rights Committee* at its 16th session, when the Committee discussed

with representatives of the Iranian Government the preliminary report submitted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in accordance with its reporting obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Resolution 1982/25 of the *Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities* recalls its earlier resolutions on the plight of the Bahá'ís and expresses its continuing concern at human rights violations in Iran.

- 1983 Resolution 1983/34 of the *Commission on Human Rights* expresses its profound concern at the religious persecution of the Bahá'ís and requests the Secretary-General to continue his direct contacts with the Government of Iran on the human rights situation in that country, "including the situation of the Bahá'ís".

Resolution 1983/14 of the *Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities* expresses its grave concern at the continuing religious persecution of the Bahá'ís and suggests that the Commission on Human Rights appoint a Special Rapporteur to study the human rights situation in Iran.

- 1984 Resolution 1984/54 of the *Commission on Human Rights* expresses its concern for the Bahá'í minority and requests its Chairman to appoint a Special Representative to establish contacts with the Government of Iran and to make a thorough study of the human rights situation in Iran.

Decision 1984/138 of the *Economic and Social Council* endorses the Commission's decision to appoint a Special Representative.

Resolution 1984/14 of the *Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities* expresses alarm at the continuing gross violations of human rights in Iran, including the religious persecution of the Bahá'ís, and welcomes the Commission's decision to appoint a Special Representative.

- 1985 Preliminary report of the *Special Representative* to the Commission on Human Rights expresses great concern at the number and gravity of alleged violations of human rights in Iran, including denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Resolution 1985/39 of the *Commission on Human Rights* endorses the general observations of its Special Representative, expresses its deep concern at the number and gravity of the alleged violations of human rights to which his preliminary report bears witness, extends his mandate, and requests him "...to present an interim report to the General Assembly at its fortieth session on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the situation of minority groups such as the Bahá'ís. . ."

Decision 1985/148 of the *Economic and Social Council* endorses the Commission's decision.

Resolution 1985/17 of the *Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities* welcomes the Commission's decision, expresses its alarm at the continuing reports of gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Iran, "in particular at the evidence of persecution of the Bahá'í religious minority. . .", endorses the general observations of the Special Representative in his preliminary report, and expresses the hope that the initial contacts of the Government of Iran with the Special Representative will develop into a positive cooperation.

Resolution 40/141 of the *General Assembly* "Expresses its deep concern over the specific and detailed allegations of violations of human rights in the Islamic

Republic of Iran to which the Special Representative refers in his interim report, and, in particular, those related to the right to life, such as summary and arbitrary executions; the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to liberty and security of person and to freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention; the right to a fair trial; the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and to freedom of expression; and the right of religious minorities to profess and practice their own religion" (operative paragraph 2);

"Decides to continue its examination of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the situation of minority groups such as the Bahá'ís, during its forty-first session in order to examine this situation anew in the light of additional elements provided by the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council" (operative paragraph 8).

1986 Resolution 1986/41 of the *Commission on Human Rights* "expresses its deep concern over the specific and detailed allegations of grave human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran to which the Special Representative refers in his report"; endorses his conclusion that "specific and detailed allegations concerning grave human rights violations" in Iran cannot be dismissed; decides to extend the mandate of the Commission's Special Representative and requests him to present an interim report on the situation, "including the situation of minority groups such as the Bahá'ís" to the General Assembly at its forty-first session and a final report to the Commission at its forty-third session in 1987.

Decision 1986/137 of the *Economic and Social Council* approves the Commission's decision to extend the Special Representative's mandate and its request to the Special Representative to submit reports to the forty-first session of the General Assembly and the forty-third session of the Commission.

It was announced on 14 July 1986 that, in response to this request, the Chairman of the Commission had appointed Mr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl to serve as the Special Representative of the Commission.

1986 Resolution 41/159 of the *General Assembly* "Expresses its deep concern over the specific and detailed allegations of violations of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and, in particular, over those related to the right to life, such as summary and arbitrary executions, the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to liberty and security of person and to freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, the right to a fair trial, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and to freedom of expression and the right of religious minorities to profess and practise their own religion";

"Requests the Commission on Human Rights to study carefully the final report of the Special Representative, as well as other information pertaining to the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to consider further steps for securing effective respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in that country";

"Decides to continue its examination of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the situation of minority groups such as the Bahá'ís, during its forty-second session. . . ."

SUMMARY NOTE ON THE HISTORY, ORGANISATION AND BELIEFS OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

The Bahá'í Faith was founded by Bahá'u'lláh in Persia in the middle of the nineteenth century. It now has between three and four million members in over 120,000 localities in more than 140 countries.

From the time of its founding, the Bahá'í Faith met with opposition from the government and clergy of Persia. Thousands of early believers were put to death.

Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892) himself was first arrested and imprisoned, then exiled from Persia to several different locations in the Ottoman Empire. He was finally exiled to Acre, near the present-day city of Haifa, in 1868. He spent the last 24 years of his life in exile and died there in 1892. In accordance with Bahá'u'lláh's explicit instructions, the World Centre of the Bahá'í Faith has been based in Haifa ever since.

Bahá'u'lláh appointed his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844–1921), as his successor; and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his turn appointed as his successor his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1896–1957).

Following Shoghi Effendi Rabbani's death, the administration of the Bahá'í Faith became the responsibility of the Universal House of Justice, an international governing council of nine members initiated by Bahá'u'lláh in his writings. This body is elected at five-yearly intervals at an international convention by the national councils of the Bahá'í Faith around the world. These national councils are themselves elected annually at national conventions and are responsible for running Bahá'í affairs in their own country.

The central beliefs of the Bahá'í Faith are the existence of one God and the fundamental unity of the human race. Bahá'ís believe that God's purpose is revealed through a series of prophets and recognise as prophets the founders of all the world's major religions – Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus Christ and Muhammad. They regard Bahá'u'lláh as the latest in this line of prophets with a message of particular relevance to the present era.

Other important principles and concerns of the Bahá'í Faith include the equality of all races and of the sexes; the elimination of racial, religious, sexual, national and ethnic discrimination and prejudice; the need for an effective world authority, for global disarmament, and for an international language; the moral imperative of a reduction in the gap between rich and poor; the cause of universal education, and the need for education to be both spiritual and academic; the observance of chastity and the institutions of marriage and the family; and abstention from alcohol and narcotics.