



A Faith Denied:

The Persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran



Iran Human Rights Documentation Center

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1. Executive Summary

The Bahá'í community of Iran has faced repeated cycles of persecution since the founding of the faith in the mid-nineteenth century. Today the Bahá'ís are not free to practice their religion, they suffer from economic and social exclusion, and they have been subjected to executions, arbitrary arrests and the destruction of their property - all carried out with the support of national judicial, administrative and law enforcement structures. Since the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in June 2005, there is evidence to suggest a new cycle of repression may be beginning.

The report's key findings are as follows:

- The Shi'a clerical establishment in Iran has long regarded the Bahá'í faith as a heretical deviation from Islam. The Bahá'í community has suffered most severely when the clerical influence in national affairs has been strongest. This report seeks to demonstrate that the clerical establishment has consistently worked to undermine and ultimately extinguish the Bahá'í faith, a project that has been wholeheartedly embraced by the government of the Islamic Republic.
- The 1950s saw organized anti-Bahá'í campaigns resulting in mob violence, the destruction of religious sites and the formation of private anti-Bahá'í organizations, approved and assisted by senior civil, military and religious leadership figures. The propaganda used to cultivate and justify social persecution created negative stereotypes that continue to have repercussions today. Clerics who gained an influential public voice during these campaigns later gained powerful positions in the post-1979 leadership.
- The consolidation of clerical rule after the 1979 revolution gave rise to a centralized and government-directed anti-Bahá'í campaign. The new Islamic constitution explicitly withheld recognition as a religious minority from the Bahá'ís. Instead the Bahá'í faith was categorized as a political threat – a characterization reinforced by frequent accusations of espionage or other anti-revolutionary criminal activity. This effectively criminalized the Bahá'í religion.
- The first years of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) saw the full range of state coercive force deployed against Bahá'ís. The authorities particularly targeted Bahá'í leadership in an attempt to destroy the community. The members of three successive Bahá'í national councils were arrested and summarily executed. A similar fate befell numerous members of local governing assemblies.
- Another recurring feature of anti-Bahá'í campaigns has been the confiscation and destruction of Bahá'í property, including holy sites, cemeteries, personal property and community institutions. The House of the Báb, one of the Bahá'í community's most sacred religious sites, was demolished by the Islamic Republic in 1980.
- Economic and social exclusion has been a consistent feature of the Islamic Republic's treatment of the Bahá'í community. Bahá'ís have been purged from educational institutions and from both state and private businesses at the order of the central government.
- The recent election of President Ahmadinejad and resurgence of conservative political figures appears to have emboldened Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. In November 2005, Ayatollah Khamenei instructed military agencies to identify and monitor all Bahá'ís living within their areas of responsibility. Given the historic hostility of the conservative clerical establishment to the Bahá'í community, there is good reason to fear that this measure is laying the foundation for a new cycle of anti-Bahá'í persecution.

2. About the Bahá'ís

2.1 Origin and Early History

The Bahá'í faith originates from two separate but interrelated religious movements founded in 19th century Persia (modern-day Iran). The precursor to the Bahá'í faith, the Bábí faith, began in 1844 when Seyyed 'Ali Muhammad proclaimed that he was “The Báb” [the Gate], the personification of the “Hidden Imam”, a Messiah-like figure whose return has been awaited by Shi'a Muslims since the ninth century. The Báb also foretold that his appearance signaled the advent of another prophet, “Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest”, whose teachings would establish unity, peace and order on earth.¹

The Báb initially attracted many Iranian followers, but the embryonic faith soon met with opposition from the social elites of the time, in particular the Shi'a clergy.² The Báb's followers actively pressed their cause, in some cases even engaging in armed clashes with government forces.³ Thousands of Bábís were imprisoned, murdered, and tortured in public at the order of religious and political authorities.⁴ The Báb was imprisoned and eventually executed in 1850.⁵ Repression of the Bábí faith was often a coordinated effort of the clergy and the political authorities.⁶ The former opposed the new faith on religious grounds, while the latter believed that the Bábís were a threat to the security of the state. This latter belief was confirmed by an assassination attempt on Nasser al-Din Shah following the Báb's execution.⁷ The failed attempt on the Shah's life provoked a renewed assault on the Bábí community.⁸

¹ MOOJAN MOMEN, *THE BÁBÍ AND BAHÁ'Í RELIGIONS, 1844-1944: SOME CONTEMPORARY WESTERN ACCOUNTS* xxi-xxii (1981) [hereinafter MOMEN, *THE BÁBÍ AND BAHÁ'Í RELIGIONS*]; ABBAS AMANAT, *RESURRECTION AND RENEWAL* 375-77 (1989) [hereinafter *RESURRECTION AND RENEWAL*]; DOUGLAS MARTIN, *THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN 1844-1984* 7 (*Bahá'í Studies*, Vol. 12/13, 1984) [hereinafter MARTIN, *THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN*].

² ERVAND ABRAHAMIAN, *IRAN BETWEEN TWO REVOLUTIONS* 17 (1982); MOMEN, *THE BÁBÍ AND BAHÁ'Í RELIGIONS*, *supra* note 1, at xxv.

³ See MARTIN, *THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN*, *supra* note 1, at 12; for battle accounts, see, e.g., *THE DAWN BREAKERS & NABIL'S NARRATIVE OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE BAHÁ'Í REVELATION* 324-414, 465-495, 527-580 (Shoghi Effendi, trans., Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1996) [hereinafter *THE DAWN BREAKERS*].

⁴ See *RESURRECTION AND RENEWAL*, *supra* note 1, at 401, 405; JOHN SIMPSON AND TIRA SHUBART, *LIFTING THE VEIL* 222 (1995) [hereinafter *LIFTING THE VEIL*]; see also BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CENTER, *SUMMARY REPORT OF PERSECUTION OF THE IRANIAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY DURING THE PAHLAVI REGIME (1921-1979)* 1 (1980) [hereinafter *SUMMARY OF PERSECUTION DURING THE PAHLAVI REGIME*]. JUAN R.I. COLE, *MODERNITY & THE MILLENNIUM* 26 (1998) describes “a vicious pogrom against real and suspected Bábís inside Iran, with much public torture of those accused, resulting in several thousand deaths,” and asserts that “the truly gruesome aspect of church-state entanglement was demonstrated in the joint efforts of officials and clergy to invent ever more ingenious ways of inflicting pain on those branded heretics.”

⁵ See Letter from Sir Justin Sheil, Queen Victoria's Envoy in Tehran, to Lord Palmerston, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (July 22, 1850), reprinted in *The Báb: Accounts of His Martyrdom*, WORLD ORDER, Fall 1973, 8 (1): 6-32 (on file with IHRDC); see also *THE DAWN BREAKERS*, *supra* note 3, at 510-515.

⁶ See generally JUAN R.I. COLE, *MODERNITY & THE MILLENNIUM* 26-28 (1998); *RESURRECTION AND RENEWAL*, *supra* note 1, at 401-402. See also ERVAND ABRAHAMIAN, *TORTURED CONFESSIONS: PRISONS AND PUBLIC RECANTATIONS IN MODERN IRAN* 20-21 (1999) [hereinafter *TORTURED CONFESSIONS*] (noting that Bábí prisoners were “paraded in chains through Tehran, given a final opportunity to recant, and then portioned out for execution to various groups—to the royal family, the Qajar tribe, the clergy, the ministries, the military, the merchants, and the bazaar guilds.”)

⁷ See *Attempt to Kill the Shah of Persia*, N.Y. TIMES, September 25, 1852, at 2, compiled in Ralph Wagner, *Bábí Attempt on the Life of the Shah, 1852: Coverage in the New York Times*, available at http://Bahá'í-library.com/?file=nyt_Babi_life_shah#1 (accessed June 27, 2006) [hereinafter Wagner, *Bábí Attempt on the Life of the Shah*]. Sources indicate that the two Bábí youth involved acted independently of the Bábí community; see, e.g., *THE DAWN BREAKERS*, *supra* note 3, at 600.

⁸ See N.Y. TIMES article dated November 16, 1852, at 6, in Wagner, *Bábí Attempt on the Life of the Shah*, *supra* note 7 (reporting that “upwards of 400 Bábís were put to death in Tehran, as accomplices in the recent attempt against the life of the Shah... The unhappy sufferers were all tortured in the most cruel manner.”) See also Janet Afary, *Civil Liberties and the Making of Iran's Constitution*, in *RETROSPECTIVES ON THE IRANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION, 1905-1909* (Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Duke University Press, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2005) at 41 [hereinafter *Civil Liberties and the Making of Iran's Constitution*]; *TORTURED CONFESSIONS*, *supra* note 6, at 20-21 (noting that “[t]he ultimate in the spectacle of cruelty came in the Bábí executions of 1852... Some were blinded before being shot; others were stabbed repeatedly, then decapitated; yet others were beaten mercilessly before being strangled.”)

A decade after the execution of the Báb, in 1863, Bahá'u'lláh, one of the followers of the Báb, announced that he was “Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest.”⁹ Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned in the Síyáh-Chál in Tehran for four months in 1852 and thereafter spent much of his subsequent life in prison and then in exile, where he died in 1892, although his teachings continued to be widely disseminated.¹⁰

One of the central tenets of the Bahá'í faith is the notion of “progressive revelation,” which is the belief that each of the world's major religions represents an evolution in God's message to mankind.¹¹ These teachings, and the claim made by both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh to be divine messengers, are the main reasons the Bahá'í faith is considered to be heretical by Muslims, who believe Mohammed to be the final prophet. The declaration of the Báb as the “Hidden Imam”¹² is particularly offensive to Shi'ites. This has contributed to a widely-held perception of the Bahá'ís as “public enemies who must be controlled, punished or... forcibly deconverted.”¹³ In addition, the interpretation of Shi'a law practiced by the Islamic Republic asserts that conversion away from Islam into another faith—apostasy—is an offense punishable by death.¹⁴ This prohibition is also used to justify punishment of individuals who, under duress, agree to convert to Islam, but subsequently resume the practice of their own faith.¹⁵

A significant doctrinal shift from the Bábís to the Bahá'í faith was the renouncement of violence, even in the face of persecution.¹⁶ Nonetheless, persecution of the Bahá'ís continued in the late 19th century. Influenced by the Shi'a clergy and fueled by nationalism, in the late 19th and early 20th century Iranians viewed the global message of the Bahá'í faith as an alien, even pro-western influence in Iran.¹⁷ There are presently five million Bahá'í faithful worldwide and an estimated 350,000 Bahá'ís still living inside Iran.¹⁸

⁹ MOMEN, THE BÁBÍ AND BAHÁ'Í RELIGIONS, *supra* note 1, at xxii.

¹⁰ See Bahá'í International Community, *Historical Introduction to Bahá'u'lláh*, available online at <http://info.bahai.org/article-1-3-2-2.html> (accessed November 9, 2006); see also Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community, THE BAHÁ'ÍS: A PROFILE OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH AND ITS WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY 54-62 (1994). After Bábís continued to flock to Baghdad to see Bahá'u'lláh, Iran pressured the Ottoman government into removing him further from Iran. The region of Bahá'u'lláh's exile is now part of Israel and this is seen as the cause of two of the major allegations against the Bahá'ís: first, that they are the same as Israelis and Zionists, and secondly, that their contributions to their World Center in Haifa support Zionist activities. LIFTING THE VEIL, *supra* note 4 at 223, notes that Bahá'u'lláh was exiled by Ottoman officials to Palestine some 80 years prior to the formation of Israel.

¹¹ Bahá'ís believe that Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad were all divine messengers; see Bahá'í International Community, *The Bahá'í Faith and Other Religions*, available online at http://www.bahai.org/dir/other_religions (accessed November 13, 2006).

¹² Shi'a doctrine emphasizes that Mohammad bin Mahdi, the Twelfth and last Imam of the Shi'a sect, also known as the “Hidden Imam”, will return at the time of the last judgment and will save the world.

¹³ Denis MacEoin, *The Bahá'ís of Iran: The Roots of Controversy*, BRITISH SOCIETY FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES BULLETIN (Vol. 14, No. 1, 1987) at 77.

¹⁴ Under Iranian jurisprudence (based on interpretations of Khomeini's *Risalih*) two forms of apostasy (*murtad*) are recognized: *murtad fitri* (referring to a case where an apostate's family is Muslim) and *murtad milli* (referring to a case where someone converts to Islam and then converts into another faith). Both types can be punishable by death. In cases of *murtad milli*, government officials may meet with the accused apostate and try to convince him or her to remain Muslim; if the apostate refuses, a judge will decide the appropriate punishment. See AYATOLLAH RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI, TAHRIR AL-WASILAH (Beirut: Tawzi' Dar al-Ta'aruf lil-Matbu'at) 366, 494-495 (1984).

¹⁵ For an example of the legal treatment of individuals accused of apostasy, see Minutes of the Interrogation, Case of Dhabíhu'lláh Mahrámí, Islamic Revolutionary Court of the Province of Yazd (Branch no. 1), Court classification no. 74/2288/D, Appeal no. 74/2312/D-R (January 2, 1996) (on file with IHRDC).

¹⁶ ELIZ SANASARIAN, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN IRAN 51 (2000) [hereinafter SANASARIAN].

¹⁷ SHAHROUGH AKHAVI, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY IRAN: CLERGY-STATE RELATIONS IN THE PAHVALI PERIOD 77 (1980) [hereinafter AKHAVI].

¹⁸ See Bahá'í International Community, *What is the Bahá'í Faith?*, available online at http://www.bahai.org/faq/facts/bahai_faith (accessed November 28, 2006). The banning of Bahá'í administrative institutions has made it difficult to obtain an exact count of the number of Bahá'ís remaining in Iran. The above estimate of the current number of Bahá'ís in Iran was cited by Bahá'í International Community, *Persecution*, available online at <http://www.bahai.org/dir/worldwide/persecution> (accessed November 28, 2006).

2.2 Spiritual Assemblies

After the death of Bahá'u'lláh in 1892, his son Abdu'l-Baha strengthened the growing international Bahá'í movement by creating opportunities for Western Bahá'ís to travel and help build the community in Iran, while sending Iranian Bahá'ís to promote the movement in the West.¹⁹ Under his leadership, the Bahá'ís created formal educational institutions in rural areas of Iran and promoted equal rights and education for women. In accordance with Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, Abdu'l-Baha established democratically elected councils – known as Spiritual Assemblies – as a focus for the Bahá'í community.²⁰ Spiritual Assemblies have now been established around the globe; they are constituted by election wherever nine or more Bahá'ís reside, in order to provide religious, social and community services.²¹

Internal administrative structures, including Local Spiritual Assemblies, Bahá'í centers, and the Nineteen-Day Feasts²², were established for the exclusive use of the Bahá'í community. Other institutions, including schools, medical facilities, and homes for the aged and the orphaned, were established as development programs for the broader community, including non-Bahá'ís.²³ Overseeing these Local Spiritual Assemblies are National Spiritual Assemblies, which are elected annually by local delegates to help the various localities communicate and further the development of Bahá'í principles.²⁴ Some of the most intense persecution in Iran has been directed at members of these National Spiritual Assemblies (*see* Section 5.1. below).²⁵

The Bahá'í faith rejects the concept of an institutionalized priesthood and so the administrative duties traditionally performed by the clerical leadership in other religions fall to the Spiritual Assemblies. The Spiritual Assemblies oversee the internal affairs of the Bahá'ís, manage their funds and act as channels of communication among the local, national and international bodies. The Local Spiritual Assemblies also empower individuals, committees, and taskforces to conduct community services such as the education, publishing, promotion of Bahá'í teachings, marriage counseling, and fundraising. In essence, these Assemblies are seen as the leadership of the community.²⁶

¹⁹ See GEOFFREY NASH, *IRAN'S SECRET POGROM: THE CONSPIRACY TO WIPE OUT THE BAHÁ'ÍS* 65 (1982) [hereinafter *IRAN'S SECRET POGROM*]; Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community, *THE BAHÁ'ÍS: A PROFILE OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH AND ITS WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY* 54-62 (1994).

²⁰ See Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community, *THE BAHÁ'ÍS: A PROFILE OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH AND ITS WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY* 54-62 (1994).

²¹ See website of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States at <http://www.bahai.us/bahai-administration> (accessed October 7, 2006) (describing Bahá'í administrative structures).

²² The basis for the functioning of each local Bahá'í community is the Nineteen-Day Feast. This event is held every nineteen days on the first day of each Bahá'í month, and all the Bahá'ís in that area are expected to attend it. The meeting is divided into three parts: (1) a devotional portion where prayers are shared; (2) an administrative portion where the affairs of the community are discussed; and (3) a social portion at which refreshments are served.

²³ See, e.g., AMIR BANANI, *THE MODERNIZATION OF IRAN 1921-1941* 96 (1961) [hereinafter *BANANI*] (stating that a large number of children of influential families of Tehran were enrolled in Tehran's Bahá'í schools, including Reza Shah's eldest daughters and eldest son.)

²⁴ See website of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States at <http://www.bahai.us/bahai-administration> (accessed October 7, 2006).

²⁵ The Islamic Republic considers these assemblies to be part of an espionage network. See, e.g., *Musahibiyih Matbu'atiyyih Hakim-i Shar' va Dadsitan-i Inqilab-i Islamiyyih Tehran* [The Press Conference of the Religious Magistrate and the Islamic Revolutionary Prosecutor of Tehran], KAYHAN, 30/10/1360 (January 20, 1982) (on file with the IHRDC) (quoting Ayatollah Mohammadi Gilani, the Head of the Central Revolutionary Courts, describing Bahá'ís as “spies—of imperialism, generally, and of Zionism, specifically” and stating that “it is incumbent upon the courts and religious magistrates to see to it that these people meet with their just punishment... In the case of those who were executed, their spying for Israel and its agents has been established and they met with their just punishment according to the orders of the Holy Koran...”). He added that there was a group among the Bahá'í community, however, “that has weaknesses of intellect and the courts do them a favor and rehabilitate them... because they are ignorant and do not understand [the gravity of] the issue of spying.”

²⁶ See website of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States at <http://www.bahai.us/bahai-administration> (accessed October 7, 2006). Members of these committees, viewed as roles of leadership by the IRI, often became a target of arrest and execution. Being a member of these committees became a crime (*see* Section 5.1 below).

Complementing these bodies is a second branch of administration, composed of appointed individuals. Bahá'í institutions appoint Bahá'ís of merit and distinction who advance the goals of the community and act as advisors in the community. They are referred to as Continental Boards of Counselors, Auxiliary Board Members and their assistants. While the Counselors work at the continental and country-wide level, Auxiliary Board Members and their assistants remain at the regional and local levels.²⁷

Both branches of Bahá'í administration operate under an international governing body known as the Universal House of Justice. The members of the Universal House of Justice are elected to office every five years, and its headquarters is located in Haifa, Israel, near the city to which Bahá'u'lláh was once exiled and where his remains are buried.²⁸ Because of its connection to Bahá'u'lláh, Israel is a place of pilgrimage for Bahá'ís.

3. The Roots of Modern Anti-Bahá'ism

3.1 20th Century Political Change

The Iranian constitution of 1906 set the groundwork for the institutionalized persecution of the Bahá'í faith and this hostility was further consolidated with the rise to power of the Pahlavi dynasty.²⁹ Although the most important model for the 1906 Iranian constitution and 1907 supplementary legislation was Belgium's 1831 constitution, its provisions guaranteeing freedom of worship were conspicuously omitted.³⁰ While subsequent legislation gave some recognition to Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians as equal citizens before state law, it also "gave unprecedented institutional powers to the clerical establishment," and did not guarantee freedom of religion.³¹

In the nineteenth century, repression had impacted individual adherents of the Bahá'í faith, but in the first decades of the twentieth century these attacks were accompanied by centrally-directed campaigns that targeted the Bahá'í community in general terms and its institutions in particular. Prohibitions against the Bahá'ís ranged from the censorship of Bahá'í literature to the closure of Bahá'í schools in the 1930s and 1940s.³²

²⁷ See generally Universal House of Justice, *Elucidation of the Nature of the Continental Boards of Counselors* (April 24, 1972).

²⁸ See website of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States at <http://www.bahai.us/bahai-administration> (accessed October 7, 2006).

²⁹ The constitutional laws contained provisions that were later used to restrict the activities of the Bahá'í community. See, e.g. circular by the Minister of Interior dated 1957, *Iqdam Kunid ta az Majami-i Bahá'í Khuddari Shavad* [Please Stop the Bahá'ís from Congregating] (asserting that Bahá'ís meetings had been taking place in violation of Article 21 of the Constitution, which prohibited gatherings of all organizations which generated threats to religion or state and disturbed order) (on file with IHRDC); see E.G. BROWNE, *THE PERSIAN REVOLUTION OF 1905-1909* (Abbas Amanat, ed., Mage Publishers, 1995) at 375 for full text of provision. SUMMARY OF PERSECUTION DURING THE PAHLAVI REGIME, *supra* note 4, describes a range of personal status restrictions, affecting marriage, inheritance rights, the ability to obtain identity cards, and the ability to carry out Bahá'í burials, among other rights. Similarly, one of the justifications given for closing the Baha'i Tarbiyat schools in Tehran was that "the Iranian Government has not recognized the Baha'i religion as it has other minority religions." See National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD* (Vol. VI, 1934-1936) at 26.

³⁰ *Civil Liberties and the Making of Iran's Constitution*, *supra* note 8, at 41, 46-48, 57.

³¹ *Id.* at 41, 57.

³² See SANASARIAN, *supra* note 16 at 52 (noting that similar measures were directed against the Armenian, Jewish and Zoroastrian minorities, but that the practice of non-recognition of Baha'i marriages was specifically targeted at that community); BANANI, *supra* note 23, at 97; BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, *THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN: THE PERSECUTION OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY* 24 (1981). See also *Namiyyih Kafil-i Vizarat-i Ma'arif bih Mudir-i Dabiristan-i Tarbiyat* [Letter Ordering Closure of Tarbiyat Boys' School] dated 1934 (on file with IHRDC). Two of the two largest schools closed were the Tarbiyat boys' and girls' schools in Tehran, with an estimated 1500 pupils combined; see National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD* (Vol. VI, 1934-1936) at 27, 96 (listing Bahá'í schools closed throughout the country.)

The most intense wave of repression took place in the 1950s, during the reign of the second Pahlavi monarch, Muhammad Reza Shah. Politically weak and faced with growing nationalism and acute economic difficulties³³, the Shah conceded control over certain religious affairs to the clergy.³⁴ This power-sharing resulted, *inter alia*, in a campaign of persecution against the Bahá'ís which, some scholars believe was most likely intended by the government to distract the citizenry from the country's other problems.³⁵ Approved by the highest civil, military and religious leadership in the country,³⁶ the campaign began in 1955 with national and army radio stations, official newspapers and other publications spreading anti-Bahá'í propaganda intended to incite public passions against the Bahá'ís.³⁷

3.2 The Ramadan Riots of 1955

One of the most high-profile anti-Bahá'í propagandists, whose commentaries were widely circulated by the Iranian media in the mid-1950s, was a populist preacher named Sheikh Mohammad Taqi Falsafi, an ally of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.³⁸ Falsafi enjoyed the support and encouragement of prominent religious figures.³⁹ This is documented in a letter of encouragement from Ayatollah Seyyed Hussein Borujerdi, who in 1946 had become a Marja'-e-Taqlid, one of the country's highest religious offices.⁴⁰

In 1951 Falsafi approached Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh on behalf of Ayatollah Borujerdi in order to discuss the Bahá'ís and their activities, but was rebuffed by Mossadegh who rejected the idea that

³³ See AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 77.

³⁴ MARTIN, THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN, *supra* note 1, at 21 (citing discussion in AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 76-90).

³⁵ AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 77.

³⁶ For discussion of the complex political dynamics underlying the government's response to these developments, see *id.* at 76-78.

³⁷ Collection of newspaper articles from 1955, on file with IHRDC. See, e.g., *Tiligirafhay-i Vasilih Darbariyyih Ibraz-i Tanaffur az Bahá'ítha* [Readers' Letters Expressing Hatred of Bahá'ís], DAD, Issue No. 3221, 22/2/1334 (May 13, 1955); *Takhríb-i Hazíratu'l-Quds Kafí Nist, Kanunhayih Fisad-i Idarat Ra Viran Sazid* [Destruction of the Bahá'í Center was Not Enough; Destroy the Centers of Corruption in the Government Offices], SITARIH-YIH ISLAM, 13/3/1334 (June 4, 1955); *Dar Mah Hayih Muharram va Safar Bahá'íyan Ghasd-i Ikhlal Darand* [In the Month of Moharram and Safar, Bahá'ís are Planning to Cause Trouble], SITARIH-YIH ISLAM, Issue No. 180, 21/5/1334 (August 13, 1955). There are also many newspaper publications that propagated anti-Bahá'í sentiments on a regular basis, including: IQDAM, ASHUFTIH, KAYHAN, KHANDANIHA, LUTI, SITARIH-YIH ISLAM, DAD, AND TEHRAN-I MUSAVVAR. With regard to Sheikh Falsafi's radio broadcasts (see below), see IRAN'S SECRET POGROM, *supra* note 19, at 41 and MARTIN, THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN, *supra* note 1, at 22 (stating that "[t]he government signaled its approval by putting both the national and army radio stations at [Falsafi's] service, thus disseminating his attacks throughout Iran.")

³⁸ See MARTIN, *supra* note 37; see also AMIR TAHERI, THE SPIRIT OF ALLAH: KHOMEINI AND THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION 115 (Adler & Adler 1986) [hereinafter THE SPIRIT OF ALLAH]. IRAN'S SECRET POGROM, *supra* note 19 at 41, states that "Falsafi, [who] at his Tehran mosque, preached sermons against the 'false religion' daily... was able to disseminate his views more widely over the radio in an hourly space he had at his command." See also BAQER MOIN, LIFE OF THE AYATOLLAH 66 (1999) [hereinafter LIFE OF THE AYATOLLAH] (asserting that the Shah "not only tolerated the activities of [Hojjatieh founder] Sheikh Mahmud Halabi and his fellow anti-Baha'i clergymen, but allowed the clergy's fight against the Baha'is to be aired from the government-controlled media. In an unprecedented move in 1955, Tehran Radio broadcast a series of anti-Baha'i sermons by Mohammad Taqi Falsafi, Iran's leading preacher.") The abstract to Falsafi's published memoirs acknowledges openly that Falsafi "played an important role in combat with *bahá'íyyat* [Bahá'ís]"; see *Khatirat va Mubarizat-i Hojjatolislam Mohammad Taqi Falsafi* [THE MEMORIES AND CAMPAIGNS OF HOJJATOL-ISLAM MOHAMMAD TAQI FALSAFI] (Ali Davani, ed., The Center for Islamic Revolution Documents, 2003) [hereinafter FALSAFI MEMOIRS].

³⁹ See, e.g., *Didari Az Ayatollah Borujerdi az Abbas Furutan* [Report by Abbas Furutan on his visit with authorities in Qom], ASHUFTIH, No. 19, 7-10, 22/2/1334 (May 13, 1955) (referring to Falsafi as a representative of Ayatollah Borujerdi in Tehran and in the Shah's court, and stating that Sheikh Ahmad Khademi, Seyyed Mustafa Khansari, and Taleqani met with Furutan and discussed their support for Falsafi and his actions.)

⁴⁰ See AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 77-78; see also *Namih-yih Hazrat-i Ayatollah ul'uzma Borujerdi* [Letter from Grand Ayatollah Borujerdi: the letter was recited by Hojjatolislam Falsafi during sermon at Sultani Mosque], PUST-I TEHRAN, No. 581, 18/2/1334 (May 9, 1955) (on file with IHRDC). Falsafi's memoirs state that his anti-Bahá'í sermons in 1955 "were done with the previous agreement of Ayatollah Borujerdi and had his complete support." FALSAFI MEMOIRS, *supra* note 38, at 202, n.1.

the Bahá'ís were any different than Muslim Iranians.⁴¹ However, after the 1953 coup, Falsafi approached the pro-monarchist government to once again press for action against the Bahá'ís.⁴²

In his memoirs, Falsafi described a conversation with Ayatollah Borujerdi shortly before the beginning of Ramadan 1955 in which they discussed possible strategies for pressuring the government to act on the Bahá'ís:

My religious duty compelled me to not be indifferent about this sect and in spite of their connections to the governing body, to propagate against them in my sermons... In the year 1334 [1955], before the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, I said to [Borujerdi]: “Do you agree with me following up on the Bahá'í issue in my sermons at *Masjed-eh Shah*, which are broadcast live on the radio?” He thought about it briefly and said: “It would be good if you do this. Now that the authorities are not listening [to our complaints], at least the Bahá'ís will be disparaged in public opinion.”⁴³

Borujerdi suggested that Falsafi inform the Shah of his plans beforehand, to ensure that these speeches would not be too provocative for the authorities and prompt a crackdown on religious activism. Such a restriction would, he noted, be a burden on Muslims and make the Bahá'ís “even more bold.”⁴⁴ Falsafi thus made an appointment with the Shah's office, where he received permission.⁴⁵ Falsafi then encouraged other members of the Shi'a clergy who were giving sermons during Ramadan to discuss the Bahá'í issue in their sermons as well, which they did.⁴⁶ Falsafi went further than most, repeatedly castigating the Bahá'ís in his Ramadan broadcasts.⁴⁷

By the tenth day of Ramadan Minister of Interior Amir Asadollah Alam was sufficiently alarmed by the violence that he contacted Falsafi to voice his concerns that Falsafi's sermons were disrupting the security of the nation. Alam wrote in his memoir:

Falsafi managed to fool both the Shah and the military authorities and start a campaign against the Bahá'ís that dragged the country to the edge of disaster. It was Ramadan. [Falsafi's] noon sermons were broadcast throughout the nation via radio and caused violence and terror in many locations. People killed a few Bahá'ís here and there. Falsafi justified these acts by saying that they increased the Shah's prestige. I had no choice but to order him, in my own rash way, to refrain from giving further speeches until order was reestablished.⁴⁸

Falsafi was not so easily deterred and as a result, a week or so later, the Shah sent the Head of the Police Force, General Alavi Moghaddam, and Brigadier General Teymur Bakhtiar to order Falsafi to stop referring to the Bahá'ís in his sermons as it was creating a security concern. Falsafi bluntly refused to comply with the order:

It is not possible... If you want to discontinue the radio broadcasts, do it. Arrest me if you want to. Otherwise, I must continue my speeches until the end of Ramadan... If I don't say anything... I'll dishonor Islam and *Marjas* [higher-ranking clergy] and I'll never do that.⁴⁹

⁴¹ *Id.* at 138-139, and 200 (complaining that Mossadegh “didn't see Bahá'ís as a threat and generally considered them part of the nation of Iran, [entitled to] the same rights as the Muslims.”)

⁴² *Id.* at 200.

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.* Falsafi relates that he stated to the Shah: “Ayatollah Borujirdi has agreed that the issue of the Bahá'ís' influence, which has been worrying Muslims, will be discussed in the Ramadan sermons broadcast on the radio. Does His Royal Highness agree?” The Shah reportedly replied, after a pause, “Go and tell.” *Id.*

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Id.* at 201-202.

⁴⁸ *Id.* (citing *Guftugu Ha-i Man ba Shah, Khatirat-i Mahramaniyyih Asadollah 'Alam* [My Conversations with the Shah, the Secret Memoirs of Asadollah 'Alam] (Abdulreza Hushang Mahdavi, Tehran, Tarh-i Naw Publications, 3d ed.) 66-67 (1992 [1371])).

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 205-207.



Shi'a cleric, Sheikh Mohammad Taqi Falsafi, looks on as the National Bahá'í Center is destroyed (1955).

Falsafi continued his sermons until the end of Ramadan and avoided arrest, but he was never again admitted into the Shah's presence and was henceforth banned from preaching the Friday sermon at the *Masjed-eh Shah*, at the time one of the country's most influential religious platforms.⁵⁰

The Ramadan sermons inspired mob violence directed against the Bahá'í community.⁵¹ In the third week of Ramadan the Military Governor of Tehran, Teymur Bakhtiar, ordered his forces to occupy the National Bahá'í Center (*Hazíratu'l-Quds*) in Tehran, an important religious site.⁵² Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Musavi Behbehani⁵³ sent congratulatory messages to the Shah, Borujerdi and Falsafi marking the event.⁵⁴ On May 22, 1955, a delegation headed by senior army officials, Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Nadir Batmanghlich and the Military Governor, Brigadier General Teymur Bakhtiar, led the demolition of building's dome.⁵⁵ The Muslim Spiritual Community of Qom subsequently issued a statement applauding the destruction of this "house of

corruption" and stated that this act had attracted "special attention from the [Mahdi] and had certainly met with the agreement of His Excellency [the Shah]."⁵⁶

The well-publicized drama surrounding the seizure of the National Bahá'í Center provoked further anti-Bahá'í attacks outside Tehran. On July 28, 1955, in the village of Hurmuzdak in Yazd, seven Bahá'ís,

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 209. The *Masjed-eh Shah* is a mosque located in Tehran.

⁵¹ Falsafi states that "[t]he speeches against the Bahá'ís in *Masjed-eh Shah* and their broadcast from the radio caused a strange stir in the country and people who had suffered at the hands of this wayward sect were excited. Everywhere one would go, there was talk of the necessity of suppressing the Bahá'ís who were connected to Zionism and America." *Id.* at 201.

⁵² See *Subh-i Imruz Quva-yih Intizami "Hazíratu'l-Quds" Markaz-i Tabliqat-i Bahá'íyan Ra Ishghal Kard* [This Morning the Armed Forces Occupied "Hazíratu'l-Quds", Bahá'ís' Propaganda Center], KAYHAN, No. 3571, 16/2/1334 (May 7, 1955); *Markaz-i Bahá'íyan Chigunih Viran Shud* [How Was the Bahá'í Center Destroyed], TULU', 4/3/1334 (May 26, 1955). This was the national Bahá'í center where a large collection of documents and records were kept.

⁵³ Ayatollah Behbehani, along with Borujerdi, headed the dominant faction among the Iranian clergy during the 1940s and 1950s. See AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at xvii.

⁵⁴ See *Tiligiaf-i Ayatollah Behbehani bih Pishgah-i Alahazrat-i Humayuni va Hazrat-i Ayatollah ul'Uzma Borujerdi*, [Telegram from Ayatollah Behbehani to Grand Ayatollah Borujerdi and His Eminence the Shah], text reproduced in SHURA, No. 52, 19/2/1334 (May 10, 1955); *Payam-hayih Muhimmi Kih Bayn-ih Ayatollah Borujerdi va Maghamat-i Mu'assir Rad va Badal Shudih Ast* [Important Messages Exchanged Between Ayatollah Borujerdi and Important Officials], KHANDANIHA, No. 690, 111-112; see also AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 77 (noting that Ayatollah Behbehani suggested that henceforth the day of this attack be observed as a religious holiday.)

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 87. See also, e.g., *Subh-i Imruz Kharab Kardan-i Hazíratu'l-Quds Aqaz Shud; Timsar Sarlashkar Batmanghlich Avalin Kulang Ra Bih Zamin Zad* [The Demolition of Hazíratu'l-Quds Started This Morning; General Batmanghlich Was The First to Strike With a Pickaxe], ETTALA'AT, 31/2/1334 (May 22, 1955) (stating that Batmanghlich brought the first blow to the building, Bakhtiar was present and assisted, and Falsafi was also present). Bakhtiar was supported by the Muslim clergy; see, e.g., *Mulaqat-i Timsar Bakhtiyar ba Ayatollah Borujerdi* [The Meeting of General Bakhtiar with Ayatollah Borujerdi], ITTIHAD-I MILLAL, 29/5/1334 (August 21, 1955) (reporting that Borujerdi thanked Bakhtiar for his work during the month of Ramadan.)

⁵⁶ *Nami-yih Jami'iyyih Rawhaniyun-i Qom* [Statement from [Muslim] Clerical Community of Qom], SITARIH-YIH ISLAM, 27/3/1334 (June 18, 1955). Such language was presumably intended to emphasize that the attack on the center was approved of by both religious and secular authorities. In 1957, several years after it was occupied by the military, an order was issued for the return of the National Bahá'í Center in Tehran to the Bahá'í community. See National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD (Vol. XIII, 1954-1963) at 295 [hereinafter BAHÁ'Í WORLD XIII].

ranging in age from nineteen to eighty years old, were killed by a large mob who hacked them to pieces with spades and axes.⁵⁷ In Shiraz, parts of the House of the Báb, one of the Bahá'í faith's most sacred sites, were damaged. Raids and attacks on the Bahá'ís in nearby villages resulted in 800 apparently coerced recantations by members of the Bahá'í faithful which were signed and submitted to the local Islamic authorities.⁵⁸ In Rasht, Ahvaz, Shiraz, Isfahan, Karaj, Mahfuruzak, Abadeh, Reza'iyeh, Takur and Hisar, public and private Bahá'í properties were raided and destroyed, and homes, businesses and Bahá'í centers were looted and burnt.⁵⁹ The Bahá'í community responded to these events by appealing to various international bodies, including the newly-formed United Nations.⁶⁰

Even those merely sympathetic to the plight of the Bahá'ís could find themselves the target of religious extremists. When the Governor of Fars Province, Brigadier-General Himmat, attempted to take action against the instigators of a local anti-Bahá'í uprising, he was accused of being a Bahá'í himself and was dismissed from his post.⁶¹

3.3 Tackling “the Bahá'í Problem”

As anti-Bahá'í violence flared in cities across the country, Iranian politicians conducted equally incendiary debates about “the Bahá'í problem” in the Iranian Parliament or *Majlis*. On May 10, 1955, Seyyed Ahmad Safa'i, the Qazvin deputy, with the support of Borujerdi and Falsafi, introduced a bill in the Iranian *Majlis* which proposed a four-part solution to the problem:⁶²

Article 1- The corrupt community of the Bábís and their adherents, the Azalis and the Bahá'ís, are opposed to the security of the country and are declared illegal.

Article 2- Henceforth, membership in this community, and any pretense and adherence to it in any way, constitute a misdemeanor and the perpetrator will be sentenced to solitary confinement from 2 to 10 years and be deprived of all civil rights.

Article 3- The properties [in form of estate, land or house] that are places of congregation and organizations related to this community or revenue spent on issues related to this community will be transferred to the Ministry of Culture to be used for the purpose of establishing educational organizations and spreading religious and godly principles.

Article 4- People adhering to this community who are serving in government offices and related organizations, will from this day be fired from civil service and in no way will be subject to the employment law [cannot be hired].⁶³

⁵⁷ WILLIAM SEARS, *A CRY FROM THE HEART: THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN* 57 (1982); ELIAS ZOHOORI, *NAMES AND NUMBERS: A BAHÁ'Í HISTORY REFERENCE GUIDE* (University Printers, 2d ed. 1994) at 197 [hereinafter *NAMES AND NUMBERS*]. See also *Dadrasi-yih Muttahamin-i Yazdi Idamih Darad* [Trial of the Yazdi Accused Continues], SAHAR, No. 44, 12/4/1335 (July 3, 1956); *Matn-i Divan-i Jina'i Darbariyyih Muttahamin-i Yazdi Bih Qatl-i Bahá'í-ha* [Text of the Verdict of the Criminal Court Regarding the Yazdis Accused of Murdering the Bahá'ís], SAHAR No. 44, 26/4/1335 (July 17, 1956).

⁵⁸ *Jaryan-i Kamil-i Hadisiyyih Shiraz va Abadeh va Ardestan* [Complete Coverage of the Incidents of Shiraz and Abadeh and Ardestan], SITARIH-YIH ISLAM, No. 175, 10/4/1334 (July 2, 1955).

⁵⁹ See *NAMES AND NUMBERS*, *supra* note 57, at 196-197.

⁶⁰ *Shikayat-i-Bahá'íyan bih Sazman-i Milal-i Muttahid* [The Complaint of the Bahá'ís to the United Nations], TEHRAN-I MUSAVVAR, No. 611, 22/2/1334 (May 13, 1955).

⁶¹ See *Ustandar-i Fars Taq'ir Mikunad* [Governor of Fars Will Change], SITARIH-YIH ISLAM, No. 177, 24/4/1334 (July 16, 1955) and *Jaryan-i Kamil-i Hadisih-yih Shiraz va Aabadeh va Ardestan* [Complete Coverage of the Incidents of Shiraz and Abadeh and Ardestan], SITARIH-YIH ISLAM, No. 175, 10/4/1334 (July 2, 1955).

⁶² AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 78-80; FALSAFI MEMOIRS, *supra* note 38, at 207.

⁶³ See generally AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 78-80 for a description of the debates surrounding this legislation; for text of bill, see FALSAFI MEMOIRS, *supra* note 38, at 207, citing to KAYHAN, no. 3575, 20/2/1334 (May 11, 1955). Safa'i, who had introduced the bill at the request of Borujerdi, subsequently continued to urge the implementation of point # 4, the purging of Bahá'ís from government positions (AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 80-83). See also *Bakhshnamiyih Vazir-i Kishvar Raji' Bih Firqiyyih Bahá'í* [Circular from Minister of Interior about the Bahá'í sect], published in ETTELA'AT, no. 8677 on 26/2/1334 (May 17, 1955) (warning that centers and societies that are anti-religion would be dissolved, but that attempts to disrupt order on the pretext of

Safa'i's bill failed to garner sufficient support to pass into law, due in part to the government's anxieties over the potential international repercussions and concern about the legality of such measures.

On May 17 Minister of Interior Alam presented the *Majlis* with a draft decree the government proposed to circulate to provincial and city governors in accordance with the government's decision to put down all anti-religious manifestations and demonstrations. Some deputies complained that the decree did not explicitly identify the Bahá'ís as agitators, making it difficult for the local authorities to know exactly where their duty lay, and they pressed Alam to implement the policies suggested in Safa'i's bill. Alam responded that the government was prepared to act but only within the constraints of the law.⁶⁴

Majlis Deputy Dr. Shahkar proposed a compromise that he felt would obviate the government's concern for legal proprieties.⁶⁵ Dr. Shahkar suggested that Alam's decree be amended to include the following formulation:

The formation of sects which, *under the guise of religion*, spread disorder, and which have adopted the name of Bahá'ísm *in order to implement political objectives* is proscribed, inasmuch as their existence is illegal and the cause of the dissolution of order and security; and since they contradict the true religion of Islam.⁶⁶

Although this language was not retained in the final version of the decree, which simply restated the position of *Ja'fari Shi'ism* as the official state religion, this formula for dismissing Bahá'ísm as a political movement rather than a faith was one to which the IRI authorities would later return.

The decree ultimately issued by Minister of Interior Alam empowered local authorities to "take measures to dissolve those social centers which are causing religious and secular sedition and are the source of the attack against security and order."⁶⁷ However, in a firm rebuff to the clergy and their supporters in the *Majlis*, Alam's decree also underlined that taking such measures was the sole responsibility of government officials and instructed local governors "to take measures" against anyone provoking unrest "under the guise... of struggling against deceiving sects."⁶⁸

Throughout the 1950s the clergy consistently spearheaded the repression of the Bahá'í community. Their efforts, however, were ultimately checked by government ministers, who, although sympathetic to the popular anti-Bahá'í sentiment, feared that anti-Bahá'í violence would spin out of control and attract

fighting the "straying sects" would not be tolerated either.) Ayatollah Borujerdi was dismayed with the governmental authorities when this proposal met with opposition and delays. See FALSAFI MEMOIRS, *supra* note 38, at 210, citing to ALI DAVANI, *Zindiganiyyih Za'im-i Buzurg-i 'Alam-i Tasha'yu Ayatollah Borujerdi* [THE LIFE OF THE GREAT LEADER OF THE WORLD OF SHI'ISM, AYATOLLAH BORUJERDI] (Tehran, Motahhar, 2d ed., 1370 (1991) at 246: "After the fight against the Bahá'ís proved unsuccessful, Ayatollah Borujerdi's relationship with the government, the Shah and his court became cold and despair and distrust settled in [the Ayatollah's] mind. The Shah and the government did not care for Ayatollah Borujerdi's requests and with sarcastic and derogatory remarks, caused much worry and tribulation for him in the last years of his life.")

⁶⁴ AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 80.

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 80-81 (emphasis added by Akhavi).

⁶⁷ *Id.* at 81.

⁶⁸ *Id.* at 82. The final draft read: "[I]n keeping with Articles 20 and 21 of the Constitution, anti-religious publications and the formation of societies and associations provoking religious and secular sedition and disorder are prohibited throughout the country. Therefore, in implementing the principles of the Constitution you shall take measures to dissolve those social centers which are causing religious and secular sedition and are the source of attack against security and order. Henceforth, you will take steps in all seriousness to implement this important duty with which you are entrusted in conformity with the Constitution and stop any kind of demonstrations or acts on the part of this type of groups, and which acts are prohibited by law.

At the same time, since taking steps in these matters and implementing these laws is the task of government officials, and since the intervention of individuals or groups having no responsibility will cause disorder and insecurity, therefore, it is to be remembered that you are fully empowered to take measures against any person who provokes the people to act against the security of the country, under the guise and in the capacity of struggling against deceiving sects, or [any person] who himself commits acts which produce the smallest tremor against public order and security, according to those provisions of the criminal code which anticipate such crimes." *Ibid.*

international criticism.⁶⁹ Once clerical rule was established through the Islamic Revolution, the clergy was free to revisit the objectives it had failed to attain in the 1950s without interference. As will be seen below, most of Safa'i's proposals were ultimately implemented by the new Islamic Republic, although they were now couched in the language suggested by Dr. Shahkar.

As Hojjatolislam Falsafi observed in his memoirs:

Although the sermons of Ramadan 1334 [1955] dealt a blow against the Bahá'ís, what really destroyed Bahá'ísm was the Islamic Revolution...⁷⁰

3.4 The Rise of the Hojjatiyeh

The 1950s also saw the rise of private religious societies like the *Hojjatiyeh*. The *Hojjatiyeh*, or *Anjuman-i Khayriyyeh-yi Hujjatieh-yi Mahdaviyyat* (Charitable Society of the Mahdi),⁷¹ was a fundamentalist Islamic organization, founded by a clerical student named Sheik Mahmoud Zikrazadih Tavalla'i, also known as Halabi.⁷² Sometimes termed the "anti-Bahá'í society,"⁷³ the principal aim of the *Hojjatiyeh* society was to combat the Bahá'í faith⁷⁴ and it devoted much of its energies to training cadres in the "scientific defense" of Shi'a Islam in the face of the Bahá'í theological challenge.⁷⁵ The organization attracted the support of such key religious leaders as Ayatollah Borujerdi, Hojjatolislam Falsafi,⁷⁶ Ayatollah Mara'shi Najafi, Ayatollah Milani, Seyyed Abdullah Shirazi, and Ayatollah Baha'eddin Mahallati.⁷⁷ Other alleged members of Hojjatiyeh who obtained powerful positions after the 1979 revolution were Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and the Minister of Education and President Mohammad Ali Raja'i.⁷⁸

In 1970 several members of *Hojjatiyeh* sent a letter to the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini seeking his opinion about the group's activities. The letter opened by recapitulating the organization's recent achievements:

⁶⁹ See AKHAVI, *supra* note 17, at 79 (noting that "[t]he regime faced the dilemma of requiring clergy support for its internal and foreign policies but not wishing to lose control over events and be castigated by international opinion for its complicity in the anti-Bahá'í campaign.") According to Akhavi, a distinctive feature of the anti-Bahá'í actions in the 1950s was that "[t]he clergy was consistently leading the way [in anti-Bahá'í actions], and the government was holding back." However, he notes, while "[t]he *ulama* manifestly created the issue", "[t]he regime, presented with it, tried to take advantage of it for its own purposes," although it made efforts to minimize its participation. *Id.* He adds that "[e]ven if they had not won all the points in 1955, the religious leaders obviously had managed to rivet the government's attention to their demands in general and gain its respect in the public policy arena." *Id.* at 79-80.

⁷⁰ FALSAFI MEMOIRS, *supra* note 38, at 209-210.

⁷¹ See SAID AMIR ARJOMAND, *THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN: THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN 157* (1988) [hereinafter *THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN*]; MICHAEL RUBIN, *INTO THE SHADOWS: RADICAL VIGILANTES IN KHATAMI'S IRAN 13* (2001) [hereinafter *RUBIN*]. The organization's name refers to Hojjat, a title of the Hidden Imam Mahdi, awaited by Shi'a Muslims, as a sign of opposition to the Bahá'ís who believe the Báb was the Hidden Imam. Hojjatiyeh is said to be affiliated and at times considered synonymous with the *Anjuman-i Tablighat-i Islami* (Islamic Propaganda Society); see RUBIN, *supra* note 71, at 14.

⁷² Bill Samii, *Bahá'ís sound the alarm on abuses in Iran*, *Radio Free Europe*, September 13, 2004, available at <http://www.rferl.org/reports/iran-report/2004/09/31-130904.asp> (accessed July 10, 2006). *THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN*, *supra* note 71, at 157 notes that Halabi was a close friend of Khomeini.

⁷³ In Farsi, *Anjuman-i Zidd-i Baha'iyat*; see RUBIN, *supra* note 71, at 13.

⁷⁴ SANASARIAN, *supra* note 16, at 120. See also MICHAEL FISCHER AND MEHDI ABEDI, *DEBATING MUSLIMS: CULTURAL DIALOGUES IN POST-MODERNITY AND TRADITION 49* (1990).

⁷⁵ *Hojjatiyeh* entry, *ENCYCLOPEDIA IRANICA 426*, available at <http://www.Bahá'í.org/persecution/iran/iranica2> (accessed June 28, 2006).

⁷⁶ See Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Bahá'ís in Iran: Twenty Years of Repression*, *NEW SCHOOL SOCIAL RESEARCH JOURNAL*, June 2000 [hereinafter *Kazemzadeh*]; MARTIN, *THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN*, *supra* note 1, at 34.

⁷⁷ See http://hojjatieh.persianblog.com/1382_5_hojjatieh_archive.html, reproducing information originally published on *Baztab* website under the title *Anjuman-i Hojjatiyeh, Ruyaru-i ya Himayat az Vilaya-i Faqih* [Hojjatiyeh Organization: Clash with or Support of the Supreme Leadership] (August 12, 2003).

⁷⁸ Mansour Farhang, *Farhang Replies*, *THE NATION*, February 27, 1982 at 226; SANASARIAN, *supra* note 16, at 120.

It has been a few years since several religious and pious people led by Haji Aqa Sheikh Mahmud Halabi for the purpose of systematically combating the fabricated sect of Bahá'ísm, have formed structured classes where they teach useful material and introduce people to the high position of His Holiness, the Guardian of the Age [the Twelfth Imam]. The areas of activity of these classes have stretched beyond Tehran, Isfahan, Mashhad, and Shiraz... and now are even working in the remote villages... and have so far been able to convert around five hundred of the followers of the wayward sect of Bahá'ísm back to the straight path of Oneness (*towhid*) [Islam].

The authors then asked Ayatollah Khomeini:

First, what is Your Eminence's exalted opinion about this group and their acts? Second, what are the rules for collaborating with them and strengthening them - how should one go about it? Third, can legal Islamic tax money be given to this cause if necessary? It is humbly requested that you give your exalted opinion clearly.

Khomeini responded:

The actions of these gentlemen will be appreciated and please God and also collaboration with them will please the heart of the Guardian of The Age. Furthermore, Muslims are allowed to give them [*Hojjatiyeh*] money from the... [Islamic legal taxes]. If necessary, it is allowable for one third of the Imam's share to be given to them. Of course under supervision of trusted parties, [so] if Mr. Halabi is able, the money should be placed under his supervision.⁷⁹

Hojjatiyeh members were able to infiltrate Bahá'í groups throughout the country in the years leading up to the Islamic Revolution; Iranian scholar Eliz Sanasarian notes that "the sweeping tide of Bahá'í arrests, imprisonment and executions after the revolution is often attributed to *Hojjatiyeh* infiltrators' access to Bahá'í registration books and confidential correspondence."⁸⁰

At various points during the Pahlavi era, anti-Bahá'í organizations appear to have cooperated with the government's intelligence agency, SAVAK.⁸¹ Halabi reportedly requested SAVAK to gather information on the religious affiliation of every citizen through their enforcement of the Civil Service Code, requiring every employee and applicant to identify their religious affiliation.⁸²

By the late 1970s, *Hojjatiyeh* grew to include more than 12,000 members,⁸³ and its mission expanded to include the repression of other minorities, such as Christians.⁸⁴ Many individuals trained by the

⁷⁹ SAHIFIYYIH IMAM (COLLECTION OF KHOMEINI'S WRITINGS) (Vol. 2, October 7, 1970) at 299-300. However, Khomeini later changed his mind about *Hojjatiyeh* and wrote a letter expressing his disapproval of *Hojjatiyeh*, on the basis that it removed the focus from his agenda, establishment of an Islamic Republic. *Id.* at 357.

⁸⁰ SANASARIAN, *supra* note 16, at 120.

⁸¹ See BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THE BAHÁ'Í'S OF IRAN: A REPORT ON THE PERSECUTION OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY 83 (1982) [hereinafter BIC REPORT ON THE PERSECUTION OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY] for a copy of a letter sent by a secret service official to the director of SAVAK regarding *Anjuman-i Tablighat-i Islami* [the Islamic Propaganda Organization], dated November 1972 (stating that the head of the organization "has requested necessary assistance from SAVAK to attack the Bahá'ís in a reasonable [logical] way", and emphasizing the need to "make them understand that their actions must not be of a provocative and disruptive nature." See also letter sent by Parviz Sabeti to Minister of Court, *Darbariyyih Ta'sis-i Markaz-i Barayih Maslak-i Zalliyiyh Baha'i* [Regarding establishing a center for the wayward sect of Bahá'í], reproduced in MARTIN, THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'Í'S OF IRAN, *supra* note 1, at 35 (agreeing that the *Anjuman-i Tablighat-i Islami* should be allowed to carry out their anti-Bahá'í activities "so long as they do not create public disorder.") SANASARIAN, *supra* note 16 at 120, notes that SAVAK also possessed information on the Bahá'ís that fell into the regime's hands); see also Kazemzadeh, *supra* note 76 (stating that *Hojjatiyeh* and SAVAK worked together.)

⁸² See MARTIN, THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'Í'S OF IRAN, *supra* note 1, at 26 (describing a "series of discriminatory regulations against Bahá'ís adopted by the government and enforced by SAVAK: a new Civil Service Code required applicants for government jobs to state their religion, and attendant regulations made it clear that candidates could be accepted only if they professed one of the recognized faiths.")

⁸³ Nazila Ghanea-Hercock, *Ethnic and Religious Groups in the Islamic Republic of Iran: policy suggestions for the integration of minorities through participation in public life*, 13 UN SUB-COMMISSION ON PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: WORKING GROUP ON MINORITIES, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2003/WP.8 at 13 (May 5, 2003).

Hojjatiyeh eventually held powerful positions in the Islamic Republic during the early years of the Revolution, particularly in the judiciary system and Ministry of Education and Training.⁸⁵

After the Islamic Revolution, IRI leaders began to voice doubts about a future role for the group. In a sermon in 1981, the Friday prayer leader of Qom, Hojatolislam Jannati issued a series of critical questions to the “anti-Bahá’í groups”, commenting:

Previously you were working in connection with the anti-Bahá’í movement and were saying they [the Bahá’ís] are a danger to Islam, and we too were saying we know they are a danger. You were saying that they are connected to Israel, and we knew that, too. Every thing you said, we agreed with. Then we said that their roots must be destroyed. But you were only cutting off their leaves and branches... Very well, today there is no place for [the Bahá’ís] in the Islamic Republic. The atmosphere of the Islamic Republic would not even allow Bahá’ís and any anti-Islamic group to breathe. What is your mission now in this establishment [the Islamic Republic]. Your previous goal is long established, what is, then, your present goal?⁸⁶

The group was soon disbanded by the authorities and it faded from the political scene, at least overtly, though it continued to have influence among conservative elements.⁸⁷ However, since the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad there have been reports suggesting the possible reemergence of *Hojjatiyeh*, as well as what is alleged to be a more violent offshoot calling itself *Mahdaviyyat* (belief in the messianic tradition of Mahdi, the hidden Imam and general messianism).⁸⁸

⁸⁴ For example, *Hojjatiyeh* set up branches in India and Pakistan; see Bahman Nikandish, *Nabard-i Najavanmardanih, Anjuman-i Hojjatiyeh* [An Unfair Battle: the Hojjatiyeh], available at <http://www.iranbozorg.com/Articles/Hojjatiyeh.pdf> (accessed July 13, 2006).

⁸⁵ See *Hojjatiyeh* entry, ENCYCLOPEDIA IRANICA 427, available at <http://www.Bahá’í.org/persecution/iran/iranica2> (accessed June 28, 2006) (stating that “between the early 1950s and 1970s a great number of the future elite of the Islamic revolution were trained... in pedagogic and practical venues provided by Hojjatiyeh.”)

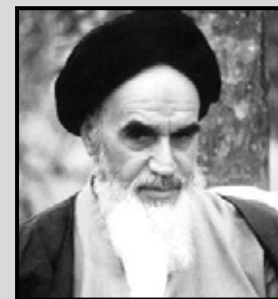
⁸⁶ Sermon quoted in article *Anjuman-i Zidd-i Bahá’iyat Bayad Muzi’ Khud ra Nisbat bih Vilayat-i Faqih Rushan Kunad* [Anti-Bahá’í Organization Must Clarify Their Stance Regarding Supreme Leadership] ETTELA’AT, Issue. No. 16565, 10/8/1360 (November 1, 1981.)

⁸⁷ See RUBIN, *supra* note 71, at 25-31.

⁸⁸ See, e.g., RUBIN, *supra* note 71, at 28-31; Bill Samii, *Iran: Resurgence of Religio-Political Society Raises Concerns*, RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, July 11, 2006, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/07/e2b8d3d9-86c4-44c0-ba75-904d637c29b6.html> (accessed October 6, 2006).

Ayatollah Khomeini: Anti-Bahá'í activities in the 1950s and 1960s

When Ayatollah Borujerdi was being considered for the role of Marja'-e-Taqlid, Khomeini strongly supported him and played an important role in persuading him to come to the Islamic religious center of Qom.⁸⁹ Khomeini later used this relationship to try to recruit Borujerdi's support during the anti-Bahá'í campaign of 1955, but did not obtain as much success as he would have wished.⁹⁰ One biographer quotes Khomeini expressing his frustration as follows:



I went every day to encourage his Holiness's [Borujerdi's] anti-Bahá'í activity in order to rid the administration of Bahá'ís, but by the following day he had gone cold on the issue.⁹¹

After Borujerdi died in 1961, Khomeini was accepted as Marja'-e-Taqlid by a large number of Iranian Shi'as.⁹² In October of 1962, the government promulgated new laws governing elections to local and provincial councils which removed the previous requirement that those elected be sworn into office on the Koran⁹³ and abolished the requirement that candidates be Muslim and male.⁹⁴ Khomeini's response was swift:

Seeing in this a plan to permit the infiltration of public life by the Bahá'ís, Imam Khomeini telegraphed both the Shah and the prime minister of the day, warning them to desist from violating both the law of Islam and the Iranian Constitution... failing which the "Ulama" would engage in a sustained campaign of protest.⁹⁵

When the government went ahead with its plans despite his intervention, Khomeini took a prominent role in the protest campaign, and joined by religious leaders elsewhere in the country, was able to force the repeal of the laws in November, just seven weeks after they had been promulgated.⁹⁶ This achievement "marked his emergence on the scene as the principal voice of opposition to the Shah."⁹⁷

From the post-1955 period through the revolutionary years, Khomeini continued to speak against foreign powers, the Jews, and the Bahá'ís:

Remind the people of the danger posed by Israel and its agents. Recall and explain the catastrophes inflicted upon Islam by the Jews and the Bahá'ís.⁹⁸

As Khomeini moved to further strengthen his position as the leader of the revolutionary movement, he built alliances with figures who were members of anti-Bahá'í organizations or appear to have had vehemently anti-Bahá'í viewpoints. Many of these men held powerful positions after the 1979 Revolution, notably President Seyyedd Ali Khamenei, Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Velayati and the Minister of Education and President Mohammad-Ali Raja'i.⁹⁹

⁸⁹ HAMID ALGAR, A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF IMAM KHOMEINI, available at <http://www.wandea.org.pl/khomeini-pdf/khomeini-biography.pdf> (accessed June 28, 2006) [hereinafter ALGAR BIOGRAPHY] at 5-6 (Section 3: The Years of Spiritual and Intellectual Formation in Qom (1923-1962)).

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 6 (Section 3: The Years of Spiritual and Intellectual Formation in Qom (1923-1962)). However, Moin in LIFE OF THE AYATOLLAH, *supra* note 38, at 67, asserts that "Halabi [Hojjatiyeh founder] and others finally obtained a fatwa from the leading clerics, including Borujerdi, banning transactions with Bahá'ís."

⁹¹ *Id.*

⁹² ALGAR BIOGRAPHY, *supra* note 89, at 6 (Section 4: The Years of Struggle and Exile, 1962-1978).

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ ISLAM AND REVOLUTION I, WRITINGS AND DECLARATIONS OF IMAM KHOMEINI (1941-1980) (Hamid Algar, trans.) (1981) [hereafter ISLAM AND REVOLUTION I] at 16.

⁹⁵ ALGAR BIOGRAPHY, *supra* note 89, at 6 (Section 4: The Years of Struggle and Exile, 1962-1978).

⁹⁶ *Id.*; see also ISLAM AND REVOLUTION I, *supra* note 94, at 16 and 161-2, n. 151 (citing S.H.R, BARRASI VA TAHLILI [STUDY AND ANALYSIS] 142-187).

4. The Iranian Revolution and the Bahá'ís

4.1 1977: General Unrest and Mob Attacks

In the 1960s and 1970s the Shah's authority was challenged by a growing number of factions in Iranian society, including religious conservatives led by Ayatollah Khomeini. Despite being forced into exile in 1964, Khomeini continued to campaign for an end to the Shah's absolute monarchy. Khomeini also railed against what was termed the “Westoxication” of Iranian society,¹⁰⁰ accusing Iranians cooperating with Western business interests of conspiring to rob Iran of its resources and its culture, and denying the religious authorities their historical responsibility to guide government and society.¹⁰¹ By 1977, Khomeini's message, recorded on audio cassettes, was being distributed across the country.¹⁰² While many of Khomeini's speeches focused on the need to topple the monarchy, his message of anti-Bahá'í propaganda continued, as in this example from 1971:

“[T]here are centers of evil propaganda run by the churches, the Zionists, and the Bahá'ís in order to lead our people astray and make them abandon the ordinances and teachings of Islam.”¹⁰³

As Khomeini's lectures gathered more popularity, the Shah's regime increasingly lost legitimacy and one consistent criticism was that his pro-western policies were detrimental to Iran. The crisis of “Westoxication” began to dominate the national debate.¹⁰⁴ Khomeini's supporters actively began to agitate against any individual or group seen as promoting Western values, including the Bahá'ís, who had long been viewed as agents of Western powers.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ ALGAR BIOGRAPHY, *supra* note 89, at 6 (Section 4: The Years of Struggle and Exile, 1962-1978). Khomeini spoke proudly of this accomplishment, noting that: “those who are destroying the welfare of Islam and trampling on the rights of the weak- it is they whom we must force to desist from evil... If a collective protest were made... they certainly would desist. ... When the *ulama* of Qom met and banded together on one occasion, and the provinces supported them by sending delegations and delivering speeches to show their solidarity, the regime retreated and canceled the measure we were objecting to.” ISLAM AND REVOLUTION I, *supra* note 94, at 118.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., THE SPIRIT OF ALLAH, *supra* note 38, at 132, citing to *Guzidiyyih Payam-hayih Imam Khomeini* [Selection of Imam Khomeini's Messages] 81 (Tehran 1970). In another speech Khomeini stated clearly that “the Bahá'ís are not a religion but a secretive organization plotting to subvert the Islamic Republic”; see ERVAND ABRAHAMIAN, *KHOMEINISM* 124 (1993). See also *Khatirat-i Sheikh Mustafa Rahnama* [Memoirs of Sheikh Mustafa Rahnama (Descendant of Fadaiyan Islam Members) Were Published], available at <http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=277838> (accessed October 2006) (alleging that Bahá'ís collaborated with SAVAK in attacking demonstrators on several occasions, including in Qom in March 1963.) Accusations of this type aimed at generating popular anger against Bahá'ís are presumably the reason why, when Khomeini was arrested in 1963, angry protesters responded by desecrating the Bahá'í cemetery in Tehran (see photographs of 1963 attacks on cemetery, on file with IHRDC.)

⁹⁹ Mansour Farhang, *Farhang Replies*, THE NATION, February 27, 1982 at 226; SANASARIAN, *supra* note 16, at 120; see also RUBIN, *supra* note 71, at 25.

¹⁰⁰ “Westoxication” (*Gharbzadegi*) is a notion popularized in the 1960s by Jalal Al-e-Ahmad. He used the phrase to refer to what was perceived as an illness that affected Iranian culture as it diminished and gave way to an identity born out of Western values and dependencies. See JALAL AL-E AHMAD, *Gharbzadegi* (1962).

¹⁰¹ SANDRA MACKAY, THE IRANIANS: PERSIA, ISLAM AND THE SOUL OF A NATION 273-75 (1996) [hereinafter THE IRANIANS].

¹⁰² THE IRANIANS, *supra* note 101, at 276-77.

¹⁰³ ISLAM AND REVOLUTION I, *supra* note 94, at 128.

¹⁰⁴ THE IRANIANS, *supra* note 101, at 253.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., *Ilamiyyih Jam'i az Ruhaniyyun-i Hawziyyih Ilmiyyih Khorasan Darbariyyih Khiyanathayi Firqiyyih Zalliyih Baha'iyat* [Announcement of a Group of Clergy from the Theology School of Khorazan Regarding the Treachery of the Bahá'ís], March 2, 1979, on file with IHRDC (stating that Bahá'ís, contrary to their claims, were backed by foreign political powers, including the Russians and British, asserting that Bahá'ís gave the UK assistance in exchange for tax exemptions in Israel, and naming Amir Abbas Hoveida, Parviz Thabiti, Ayadi, Taslimi, Shapur Rasikh, Habib Sabit, Hujabr Yazdani as Bahá'ís who betrayed Iran through various posts at the time of the Shah.) It states that “[the Bahá'ís'] new mask is the image of ‘meekness’. This [group] who have always been the best collaborators and friends of International Zionism and the usurper, Israel, are now screaming cries of meekness and have written letters to every place they could, insisting on attracting the support and intervention of the foreign governments so that once again, the foreigners come to their aid. The fighting Muslim nation of Iran... [with the aid of] Ayatollah Khomeini... will no longer allow the crimes and treachery [of the Bahá'ís] to continue.”

The pressure against the Bahá'ís built up as the anti-Shah movement gained momentum. Revolutionary propaganda alleged that some of the Shah's close advisors were Bahá'ís.¹⁰⁶ A common slur was that these pro-western Bahá'ís were the real power behind the throne.¹⁰⁷ The prominence of wealthy Bahá'í industrialists like Habib Sabet and Qulamhussein Jalili was further grist for the rumor mill.¹⁰⁸ In a pattern all too familiar to minority communities around the world, the Bahá'ís found their business successes turned against them, as they were portrayed as a “favored elite” benefiting from unspecified advantages, while the local economy struggled.¹⁰⁹ A new caricature of the Bahá'ís as an economic threat to Iranian society joined more “traditional” cultural and religious grievances.¹¹⁰ Fueled by incendiary sermons, popular hatred for the Bahá'ís among parts of the Iranian populace intensified.¹¹¹

4.2 A Revolution Underway

In 1978, as pro-Khomeini marches spread across the country, physical attacks against the Bahá'ís increased. In February 1979 Hojjiyeh gunmen invaded the Bahá'í national headquarters in Tehran and other provincial capitals, taking over the buildings, expelling the staff, and seizing confidential documents including personnel files and membership lists.¹¹² These stolen files were later used to more effectively direct the Hojjiyeh's anti-Bahá'í activities. In more than fifty cities and towns across the country, Bahá'ís reported incidents of persecution including arson, looting, mob attacks, forced recantations, and suspicious deaths and murders.¹¹³ In addition, one clinic, one agricultural institute, twenty two Bahá'í Centers and cemeteries, as well as hundreds of Bahá'í homes, gardens, businesses, and shops were damaged or destroyed.¹¹⁴

In Sa'adi (Sa'adiyah), part of Sarvestan, over the course of a few days in December 1978, there were wide-scale mob attacks on Bahá'ís and their property. It was estimated that several hundred Bahá'í houses in the area were set on fire and looted or vandalized and more than 1,000 Bahá'ís were made

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., ERVAND ABRAHAMIAN, *IRAN BETWEEN TWO REVOLUTIONS* 432 (1982) (noting that a few senior officials came from Bahá'í backgrounds, which “provided fuel for rumors often heard in the bazaars that the whole upper class represented an international conspiracy hatched by Zionists, Bahá'ís centered in Haifa, and British imperialists”, among others.)

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g., *Mu'jizat-i Pepsi Cola ya Sughat-i Akka Az Zaban-i Habib Sabit-i Bahá'í* [The Miracles of Pepsi Cola or Souvenir of Akka, According to Habib Sabet, the Bahá'í], *ZILZILIH*, 17/7/1334 (October 10, 1955) (alleging that because Pepsi was prepared by Bahá'ís it contained harmful substances); *Tanha Barkinariyyih Gholamhussein Jalili Kafī Nist, Ayadi Ou ra az Rah Ahan Birun Kunid* [Jalili's Replacement is Not Enough; Kick Out His Hands [i.e. people he put in place] From the Railroad office], *SITARIH-YIH ISLAM*, no. 173, 27/3/1334 (June 18, 1955) (on file with IHRDC).

¹⁰⁹ MARTIN, *THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN*, *supra* note 1, at 26.

¹¹⁰ There was a widespread perception that the Bahá'í faith was not a genuine religion, but an anti-clerical movement founded by the British and supported by the Israelis. See *LIFTING THE VEIL*, *supra* note 4, at 223; see also MARTIN, *THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN*, *supra* note 1, at 40 (listing the accusations commonly put forth to justify targeting the Bahá'í community, including the allegations that: 1) that the Bahá'í community had been political supporters of the previous regime; 2) the Bahá'í faith is anti-Islamic; 3) the presence of the international headquarters of the Bahá'í faith in Haifa is evidence that the Bahá'í are agents of Zionism; 4) the leadership of the Iranian Bahá'í community is engaged in a conspiracy with the U.S. and British government; and 5) Bahá'ís profited financially from the Pahlavi regime.)

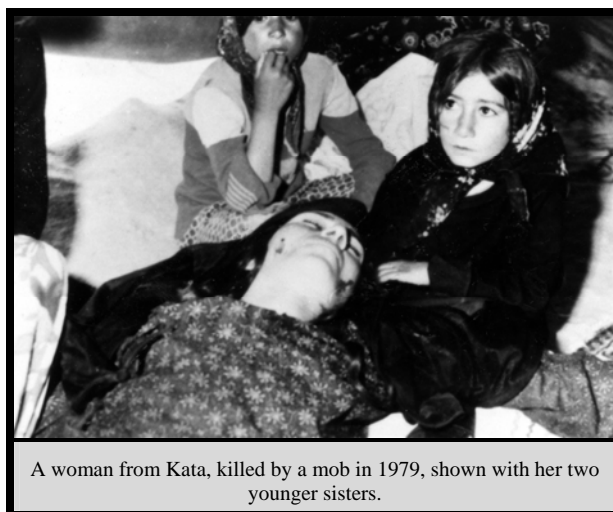
¹¹¹ For an example of anti-Bahá'í sermons, see, e.g., *Ikhtar-i Shadid-i Ayatollah Saduqi bih Bahá'íyan Iran* [Severe Warning of Ayatollah Saduqi to the Bahá'ís of Iran], *ENGHELABE ESLAMI*, June 21, 1980, on file with IHRDC (stating that “in [his] sermon during the Friday prayer yesterday, [Ayatollah Saduqi] spoke about the conspiracy of Bahá'ís in all cities of Iran and declared: the leaders of the Bahá'ís have been conspiring against the Islamic Republic in all the cities of Iran, and their conspiracy has been discovered. Documents have been obtained from them... 27 of these conspirators are from Yazd and so far 25 of them have been arrested. The rest will be arrested soon.”)

¹¹² MARTIN, *THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN*, *supra* note 1, at 37 (noting that “shortly after the membership lists were seized, Bahá'ís began receiving Hojjiyeh flyers in the mail, warning them of the consequences of obstinately holding to Bahá'í beliefs.”); see also *NAMES AND NUMBERS*, *supra* note 57, at 209.

¹¹³ See Bahá'í International Community, *Chronological Summary of Individual Acts of Persecution Against Bahá'ís of Iran from August 1978* (November 1981) [hereinafter *Chronological Summary of Acts of Persecution*]. See also National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD* (Vol. XVIII, 1979-1983) at 291 [hereinafter *BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII*]; *NAMES AND NUMBERS*, *supra* note 57, 198-206.

¹¹⁴ See *id.*

homeless.¹¹⁵ According to eyewitness accounts,¹¹⁶ the incident began when a group went to the house of Sifatu'llah Fahandizh, a Bahá'í man, and threatened to kidnap his daughter. In an attempt to ward off attackers who were climbing the walls of their house, Fahandizh and some male family members went to the rooftop and began firing shots at the crowd, injuring some people. Early the next morning, a mob set fire to Fahandizh's house as well as the houses of other Bahá'ís in the area. The mob went door-to-door, looting property (including sheep, clothing, carpets, and electronic equipment) before setting fire to the houses.¹¹⁷ A number of people (both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í) were reportedly killed or injured in the violence that ensued.¹¹⁸



A woman from Kata, killed by a mob in 1979, shown with her two younger sisters.

Contemporary reports suggested that these mob attacks did not occur spontaneously, but were in fact instigated by the military government appointed by the Shah.¹¹⁹ Observers particularly highlighted the apparent reluctance of government forces to intervene to stop the violence. For example, one contemporary written account reported that:

Eye-witnesses stated that... while the shooting was still continuing, the Military Government did not do anything to stop the incident. One of the police, who was having tea in a teahouse, was heard to have said that “it [was] not time yet.”¹²⁰

This statement further alleged that government forces provided both tacit and active support during the attacks; it stated that the army was slow to respond to arson attacks against Bahá'í houses, and alleged that a list of Bahá'ís was distributed by SAVAK, along with addresses, and that the crowd was encouraged to set those houses on fire. Observers alleged that when the army finally showed up, it did not take action to prevent the fires from spreading, and army trucks actually transported youths to the Pepsi-Cola building (said to be owned by a Bahá'í) and encouraged the group to set it on fire. It was also reported that another Bahá'í-owned building was targeted by an explosion in which one person died. The statement concludes, based on evidence and testimony gathered by the author(s), that “the [killings] in Sa’adi, fires, looting, and subsequent killings in Shiraz and other cities of Fars [province]” were “carried out by the direct provocation and encouragement of the Army.”¹²¹

These allegations were corroborated by a public statement released by the National Organization of the Universities of Iran (Shiraz Division), on December 16, 1978, which stated:

¹¹⁵ OLYA ROOHIZADEGAN, OLYA’S STORY: A SURVIVOR’S DRAMATIC ACCOUNT OF THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ’IS IN REVOLUTIONARY IRAN 12 (1993); NAMES AND NUMBERS, *supra* note 57 at 202-203.

¹¹⁶ See *Saadi dar Atash va Khun; Guzarish-i Yik Shahid-i Iyni* [Saadi in Flames and Blood (an eyewitness account)] (undated document) (on file with IHRDC) [hereinafter *Saadi in Flames and Blood*]. The author is described as “a real Shi’a, follower of Ali,” and states that “[t]he Muslim and clerical community of the world curses those who incited this incident. I do not understand how we, who consider ourselves followers of Ali, could become so cruel and vicious.”

¹¹⁷ *Id.*

¹¹⁸ *Id.* See also BAHÁ’Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THE BAHÁ’Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN 79 (2005) [hereinafter THE BAHAI QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN].

¹¹⁹ See *Some Facts About the Massacre of the Innocent People of Sa’adiyah Village by the Agents of the Criminal Government* (author unknown) (on file with IHRDC) [hereinafter *Facts on Sa’adiyah Massacre*]. On November 6, 1978 the Shah appointed a military government headed by General Gholam Reza Azhari as Prime Minister. He resigned December 31, 1978 and on January 6, 1979, new Prime Minister Bakhtiar presented a cabinet. See DAVID MENASHRI, IRAN: A DECADE OF WAR AND REVOLUTION 58-62 (1990) [hereinafter MENASHRI].

¹²⁰ *Facts on Sa’adiyah Massacre*, *supra* note 119.

¹²¹ *Id.* at 119.

In the last two or three days a number of suspicious individuals, using the religious emotions of the bereaved people and employing professional mobs, have engaged themselves with careful planning in destroying, burning, and looting the houses and shops of individuals who are associated with Bahá'ism. It is strange that all through these incidents, the police and the military Government have not interfered at all!¹²²

Although martial law was announced by the Shah's government in November 1978 in an attempt to bring public unrest under control, the attacks against the Bahá'ís continued with impunity. On January 12, 1979, four days before the Shah fled Iran, a Bahá'í community was attacked in the tribal region of Boyer Ahmad, near Isfahan. Several hundred non-Bahá'í members of the Sadat-Mahmoudi tribe surrounded the homes of their fellow tribesmen who were Bahá'ís in the village of Kata. They fired at the Bahá'í families, destroyed their homes, burnt the town's mill, uprooted orchards, and forced them to flee to the mountains. As attacks on the Bahá'ís in the region continued for weeks and extended from village to village, a number of clerics came to Kata to ask the Bahá'ís to recant their faith if they wanted to save their lives and property.¹²³

On May 8, 1979 an article in *Ayandegan* described a demonstration held by 300 residents of Boyer Ahmad province who went to the Gata area near Yasuj demanding that the Bahá'ís in that area convert to Islam. They warned the Bahá'ís that if they did not convert, their homes and belongings would be looted. However, the demonstrators were apparently prevented from carrying out their violent threats by the arrival of Ayatollah Malak Husseini, a local cleric and spiritual leader, accompanied by Lieutenant Baqiri, a senior local law enforcement official.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, by the end of May 1979, the continuing violence had forced Bahá'ís in the area who refused to recant to leave home and set up refugee camps in the Isfahan area for a number of weeks. They were not able to return to their villages until mid-July.¹²⁵

4.3 1979 and the Victory of the Islamic Revolution

The Shah departed from Iran on January 16, 1979. With the Shah gone, the government of Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar collapsed. On February 1, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran after 15 years in exile and appointed Mahdi Bazargan, a religious nationalist, as provisional prime minister. Bazargan was the former deputy prime minister under Mohammad Mossadegh, and as such his appointment was intended to appease other members of the anti-Shah opposition. The official government led by Bazargan was composed of mostly men from the National Front and prominent leaders of the anti-Shah movement.¹²⁶

Before returning to Iran, Khomeini had established a secret Revolutionary Council.¹²⁷ The purpose of this Council was to establish a government-in-waiting that could lay the groundwork for a new regime based on Islamic principles.¹²⁸ The Revolutionary Council ran parallel governmental agencies, intervened in the conduct of public affairs, and soon began to eclipse the official government led by Bazargan.¹²⁹

¹²² Public Statement Made by the National Organization of the Universities of Iran (Shiraz Division), 25/9/1357 (December 16, 1978), on file with IHRDC.

¹²³ BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 271-274.

¹²⁴ See 300 *Tazahur Kunandihgan Tahdid Kardand; Bahá'íán Gata dar Yasuj Tahdid Shudand Agar Musalman Nashavand Amvalishan Gharat Khahad Shud* [A Protesting Mob of 300 Threatened Bahá'ís of Gata in Yasuj That Their Belongings Would Be Looted if They Do Not Convert to Islam], AYANDEGAN, Issue No. 2351, 18/2/1358 (May 8, 1979).

¹²⁵ BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 273-274.

¹²⁶ MENASHRI, *supra* note 119, at 78.

¹²⁷ *Id.* at 81.

¹²⁸ *Id.* at 114-5; THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN, *supra* note 71, at 134.

¹²⁹ MENASHRI, *supra* note 119, at 81-82.

Other parallel government institutions such as local Revolutionary Committees, the Revolutionary Courts, and the Revolutionary Guards all helped to implement Khomeini's agenda. The Revolutionary Committees, or *Komitehs*, were Islamic groups organized around mosques in communities around the nation.¹³⁰ The backbone of the anti-Shah strikes and demonstrations in 1978, the *Komitehs* became a rival authority to the police after Khomeini's return, and without any central oversight or control began enforcing what they viewed as the dictates of Shari' a law by arresting and punishing private individuals.¹³¹ The Revolutionary Courts emerged in the revolutionary period to put an end to the executions ordered by the individual *Komitehs*, and asserted control over the judicial authority of the state.¹³² Run by militant clerics, the Courts often operated beyond the scope of the government.¹³³ The Revolutionary Guards, or *Sepah-eh Pasdaran*, served as the military arm of the Revolutionary Council. The Guards were a paramilitary force that also answered directly to the clerics, not the state.¹³⁴

Khomeini and the Revolutionary Council gradually consolidated their control over all three institutions.¹³⁵ To consolidate control over the *Komitehs*, Khomeini appointed Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani to impose and administer the *Komitehs*, which were merged into major district committees headed by clerics.¹³⁶ Although he was an original member of the Revolutionary Council, Bazargan was unable to prevent the Council, the Revolutionary Guards, or the Revolutionary Courts from undermining his cabinet.¹³⁷

The Islamic Constitution and the Bahá'í Community of Iran

The protégés of the most prominent anti-Bahá'í clerics of the 1950s and 1960s were now represented in the highest echelons of the nation's government and so were able to enact many of the anti-Bahá'í bills and policies that had been blocked under the Pahlavi regime. Bahá'ís would soon lose what little informal recognition they received as a religious minority and find themselves firmly categorized by the new regime as political opponents and counter-revolutionaries.

In an interview with Professor James Cockroft published in the magazine *Seven Days* on February 23, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini made clear his views on Bahá'ís:

Cockroft: Will there be either religious or political freedom for the Bahá'ís under an Islamic government?

Khomeini: They are a political faction; they are harmful. They will not be accepted.

Cockroft: How about their freedom of religion – religious practice?

Khomeini: No.¹³⁸

Within two weeks of Khomeini's arrival in Iran, his spokesman in America, while reassuring American Jewish representatives that religious minorities would retain full political, cultural and religious rights, emphasized that the Bahá'ís would not receive the same guarantees.¹³⁹ Other senior members of the regime echoed similar sentiments.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁰ *Id.* at 82; THE IRANIANS, *supra* note 101, at 289.

¹³¹ THE IRANIANS, *supra* note 101, at 289; MENASHRI, *supra* note 119, at 82.

¹³² THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN, *supra* note 71, at 136; MENASHRI, *supra* note 119, at 83.

¹³³ THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN, *supra* note 71, at 136; THE IRANIANS, *supra* note 101, at 290.

¹³⁴ *Id.* at 288-90; MENASHRI, *supra* note 119, at 82.

¹³⁵ *Id.* at 31; THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN, *supra* note 71, at 135.

¹³⁶ THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN, *supra* note 71, at 135.

¹³⁷ THE IRANIANS, *supra* note 101, at 288-91; MENASHRI, *supra* note 119, at 82.

¹³⁸ The interview from December 1978 was published in the February 23, 1979 issue of SEVEN DAYS, cited in MARTIN, THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN, *supra* note 1, at 31.

¹³⁹ See 2 *U.S. Jews Hold Talk With Khomeini Aide on Outlook For Rights*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 13, 1979 (describing interview with Shahriar Rouhani). The article explained that "the Ayatollah is said to regard [the Bahá'ís] as a political rather than a religious movement."

¹⁴⁰ See, e.g., MARTIN, THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN, *supra* note 1, at 43.

Initially, Bazargan and his cabinet were emphatic in their public statements that all Iranians would enjoy the same civil rights, regardless of ethnic or religious background. Nonetheless, Iranian embassies around the world began issuing statements denying reports of persecution and insisting that the Bahá'ís were an anti-revolutionary political movement. These allegations were personally endorsed by the Foreign Minister, Ebrahim Yazdi, a close associate of Khomeini and a judge who had played a major role in the first post-revolutionary trials.¹⁴¹

After a national referendum organized by Khomeini provided an overwhelming mandate to create an Islamic Republic,¹⁴² a debate began on the new government's constitution.¹⁴³ The initial draft of the constitution, proposed by the Bazargan government, was significantly rewritten by a newly elected Council of Experts, chaired by Khomeini's close associate Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, with Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti as vice-chairman.¹⁴⁴ This new draft intentionally excluded the Bahá'ís from protection as a religious minority,¹⁴⁵ a right that was accorded other groups, specifically Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. Political scientist Eliz Sanasarian describes the debate concerning this point recorded in official transcripts of the drafting proceedings:

Anti-Bahá'ism was obvious throughout the proceedings. This was most apparent in haggling over every word and expression of certain articles to assure the exclusion of the Bahá'ís. For instance, Article 26 of the constitution addresses the right to form political parties, societies, and professional associations whether they be Islamic or belong to one of the recognized religious minorities. In the ensuing debates the original version referred to "official religious minorities." The speaker of the committee that had worked on the wording of the article explained that the expression was selected on purpose in order to ensure that the Bahá'ís would not be included. In another discussion over the issue of freedom of the press, a deputy commented that, if the press was allowed to operate freely, "the stray Bahá'í sect" through their publications would "seduce" the people.¹⁴⁶

This final version took the concept of "official" religions one step further explicitly withholding recognition as such from the Bahá'ís in Article 13:

Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the *only* recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.

In Article 14 Montazeri's Council of Experts set the frame that would justify the coming persecution: non-Muslims judged to be engaging in conspiracy or activity against Islam would be exempted from

¹⁴¹ *Id.* at 40-43.

¹⁴² Over the opposition of Bazargan and other nationalists, Khomeini organized a referendum on March 30 and 31 1979, asking the nation only one question: "Islamic Republic?", with a ballot of two colors, green for yes and red for no. Opponents of this type of referendum had wished for an open question referendum, allowing voters to specify the type of government they wanted. Khomeini refused, and personally campaigned for the referendum. The 92.5% turnout of eligible voters and the 92.8% "yes" vote were raised suspicions of irregularities, especially in light of the fact that the election was supervised by the Revolutionary Guards. MENASHRI, *supra* note 119, at 84.

¹⁴³ *Id.* at 85.

¹⁴⁴ *Id.* at 86-7.

¹⁴⁵ As Reza Afshari notes, the very notion of enumerating a list of "protected" religious minorities conflicts with the concept of religious freedom: "it was derived from the clerics' ancient understanding of the country as a sacralized land with an eternal religious (Islamic) essence, the abode of Islam," implying that "the non-Muslims just happened to be there, more or less as guests." The Zoroastrian parliamentary representative complained that the result was that religious minorities "who are indigenous to this land and have no country other than Iran are only recognized as second-class citizens." REZA AFSHARI, HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN: THE ABUSE OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM 132 (2001) [hereinafter AFSHARI].

¹⁴⁶ SANASARIAN, *supra* note 16, at 64, citing to comment in Qa'emi in *Surat-e Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majlis-e Barrasi-ye Nahaiye Qanun-e Asasiye Jomhuri-ye Islami-ye Iran* [The Complete Proceedings of the Assembly for the Final Revision of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran], 26th session, 31/6/1358 (September 22, 1979) at 669; and 28th session, 1/7/1358 (September 23, 1979) at 722.

protection of the Constitution. Written with the Bahá'ís firmly in mind and driven by an animus which regarded the Bahá'í religion as heresy, Article 14 effectively criminalized the faith:

In accordance with the sacred verse "God does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who have not fought against you because of your religion and who have not expelled you from your homes" [60:8], the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all Muslims are duty-bound to treat non-Muslims in conformity with ethical norms and the principles of Islamic justice and equity, and to respect their human rights. This principle applies to all who refrain from engaging in conspiracy or activity against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹⁴⁷

Iranian officials brushed off the growing concerns of the international community about the constitutional status of the Bahá'ís. A spokesman for the Iranian Embassy in Argentina explained that the exclusion was prompted by the fact that the Bahá'ís were a "misguided group... whose affiliation and association with world Zionism is a clear fact" and who could not be "in the same category as minorities like the Christian, Jews and Zoroastrians."¹⁴⁸ Hassan Habibi, a Minister in the Bani-Sadr government which succeeded Bazargan¹⁴⁹ and an expert in Islamic constitutional law, asserted that "Bahá'ísm is not a religion, but a political doctrine."¹⁵⁰ However, authorities often stated that if Bahá'ís converted to Islam, their rights would be immediately restored, effective confirmation that these individuals were being targeted solely for their religious affiliation rather than because of any political activity.¹⁵¹

Ramifications of Exclusion of the Bahá'ís from the Constitution

In a 1981 report, the Bahá'í International Community highlighted the consequences of the omission of the Bahá'ís from the 1979 and the 1906 Constitutions:

1. The followers of the Bahá'í faith are deprived *as Bahá'ís* of any form of protection under the law, including their civil rights and liberties.
2. Deprived of constitutional safeguards, Bahá'ís are subject to discriminatory legislation, and to rules and regulations which do not affect other citizens. A great mass of this kind of legislation was enacted during the Pahlavi regime.
3. In many areas of their daily lives, and in matters related to civil rights, Bahá'ís are denied the ability to live according to the laws and teachings of their faith.¹⁵²

The document goes on to specify four categories of 'disabilities' stemming from this omission:

1. *Personal Status*. Refusal to legally recognize Bahá'í marriages, led to the categorization of Bahá'í wives as mistresses and Bahá'í children as illegitimate. As a result, Bahá'ís frequently

¹⁴⁷ QANUN-I ASSASIYYIH JUMHOURIYYIH ISLAMIYYIH IRAN [Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran] (adopted 1979, amended 1989) (emphasis added).

¹⁴⁸ Statement by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Buenos Aires, September 26, 1979, cited in MARTIN, THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN, *supra* note 1, at 43 (emphasis added).

¹⁴⁹ After the resignation of President Bazargan, a presidential election was held under the auspices of the new constitution resulting in the election of Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, who was sworn into office on July 22, 1980. On June 21, 1981 the Majlis voted Bani-Sadr out of office. See MENASHRI, *supra* note 119, at 122, 181.

¹⁵⁰ MARK KRAVETZ, IRANO NOX 237 (1982).

¹⁵¹ See, e.g., *Namiyyih Ustandar-i Fars Ni'matullah Taqa bih Karmand-i Bahá'í* [Circular Letter from the Office of the Fars Provincial Governor addressed to suspended employees of the Governorate of Fars], (date not legible) (on file with IHRDC). See also *Bih Ittihad-i Hamkari ba SAVAK va Baha'igari, 153 Nafar az Amuzish va Parvarish-i Azerbaijan-i Sharqi Ikhray Mishavanad* [Convicted of Collaboration with SAVAK and Bahá'ísm, 153 People will be Fired from the Department of Education of Eastern Azerbaijan], ETTELA'AT, 29/11/1358 (February 18, 1980) [attached as Appendix 1] (quoting the Director of the Department of Education in Eastern Azerbaijan, Dr. Nayyirivand, as stating that during that week, 50 Bahá'ís had been dismissed from their jobs, and adding that "[i]f the Bahá'ís accept the true faith of Islam, they will be hired again; otherwise, they will be referred to the Revolutionary Court of Tabriz for further investigation of their files.")

¹⁵² BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN: A REPORT ON THE PERSECUTION OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY 25 (1981).

- had difficulty obtaining passports and identity cards, which were denied to children based on the non-recognition of their parents' marriage. Similar arguments were often invoked to block Bahá'í children claiming their inheritances;
2. *Education.* Bahá'í students could be expelled on the grounds of their religion;
 3. *Employment.* Various measures prevented Bahá'ís from professional advancement if employed, or denial of benefits when retired. Their profession of faith could even lead to their dismissal;
 4. *Religious practice.* Bahá'ís were not accorded freedom of expression or assembly as a religious community.¹⁵³

5. Post-Revolutionary Persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran

As clerical rule became more consolidated in post-revolutionary Iran, persecution of the Bahá'ís became more overt, more widespread and more systematic. Local clerics, through the newly reorganized *Komitehs* and Revolutionary Courts, began to target the Bahá'ís in their individual communities using the Revolutionary Guards to conduct interrogations and arrests, confiscate property, expel Bahá'ís from both private and public institutions, and even execute religious leaders. The IHRDC believes that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran deliberately set in motion a plan to eliminate the Bahá'í leadership inside Iran and to suffocate the community.

5.1 Arrest, Torture, and Execution of Bahá'í Leaders

In the early 1980s the institutions of the newly formed Islamic Republic systematically targeted the leadership of the Bahá'í community. The Revolutionary Committees focused on the Bahá'ís' Local and National Spiritual Assemblies. By 1986, over half of the Bahá'ís executed by the IRI had held a community leadership position at the time of their deaths.¹⁵⁴ In addition, IHRDC has gathered accounts of 183 executions of Bahá'ís in non-leadership positions that occurred between May 1980 and November 1985. By 1986 the IRI had eliminated the members of three successive National Spiritual Assemblies formed in Tehran, and most of the Local Spiritual Assemblies found in major cities around the country.¹⁵⁵

First National Spiritual Assembly of Iran

Throughout 1980, members of the National Spiritual Assembly were repeatedly harassed. In February 1980, National Spiritual Assembly member Dr. Husayn Nají sent a telegram to Ayatollah Khomeini, President Bani-Sadr, the Minister of Health Hadi Manafí, Attorney General of the Revolutionary Guards Ayatollah Ali Qodusi, and the Iranian Medical Association describing several invasions of his home by armed men and the arrest of his wife. He requested advice about what he could do to stop this harassment.¹⁵⁶ His protest was of little avail; all nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly were summarily arrested by Revolutionary Guardsmen on August 21, 1980, along with two members of the Auxiliary Board, while they were attending a regular National Spiritual Assembly meeting at a private home.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, *THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN: A REPORT ON THE PERSECUTION OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY* 26-27 (1981).

¹⁵⁴ BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, *PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN 1979-1986: A 7-YEAR CAMPAIGN TO ELIMINATE A RELIGIOUS MINORITY*, at 3 (1986) [hereinafter *CAMPAIGN TO ELIMINATE A RELIGIOUS MINORITY*].

¹⁵⁵ *LIFTING THE VEIL*, *supra* note 4, at 224.

¹⁵⁶ Translation of Statement by Dr. Nají, NSA Member (1980) (on file with the IHRDC).

¹⁵⁷ See Statement made by the Bahá'í International Community to the UN Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 34th Session, August 28, 1981. According to *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII*, *supra* note 113, at 257, the individuals forcibly disappeared include: Mr. 'Abdu'l Husayn Taslímí, Mr. Húshang Mahmúdí, Mr. Ibráhím Rahmání, Dr. Husayn Nají, Mr. Manúhír Qá'im-Maqámí, Mr. 'Atá'u'lláh Muqarrabí, Mr. Yúsif Qádimí, Mrs. Bahíyyih Nádirí, Dr. Kámbíz

Families of the missing individuals relentlessly pursued the case from the date of their disappearance to the end of January 1981, meeting with Attorney General Ayatollah Qodusi, Head of the Iranian Judiciary Ayatollah Muhammad Beheshti, and Speaker of Parliament Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.¹⁵⁸ In a meeting on September 10, 1980, Rafsanjani confirmed that an order had been issued for the arrest of eleven Bahá'ís, but told family members that they would be denied access to the prisoners until their interrogation was complete. However, on October 9, 1980, Rafsanjani changed his story, telling family members that the government had not arrested any members of the National Spiritual Assembly, and instead rather implausibly suggested that an independent “group” might be behind their disappearance.¹⁵⁹

The fate of the nine National Spiritual Assembly and two Auxiliary Board members remains unknown, although there are reports that they were briefly held in Evin prison;¹⁶⁰ there has been no further news of them since August 29, 1980 and they are all now presumed dead.¹⁶¹

Second National Spiritual Assembly

Soon after the disappearance of the members of the National Spiritual Assembly, Iranian Bahá'ís gathered to elect a new National Spiritual Assembly. The members of this second National Assembly were fully aware that they risked being subjected to the same treatment as their predecessors.¹⁶²

The authorities immediately targeted the new leadership. Amnesty International reported that on December 13, 1981, Iranian authorities arrested eight of the nine new National Spiritual Assembly members at the home of Zough'u'llah Momen. The eight NSA members arrested were Mehdi Amín Amín, Jalál Azízí, Izzatu'lláh Furúhí, Ginous Ni'mat Mahmúdí, Mahmúd Majdhúb, Qudratu'lláh Rawhání, Sírús Rawshání, and Kámrán Samímí.¹⁶³ Momen was also detained as was Farídeh Samímí, wife of the Assembly's Secretary Kámrán Samímí, who had been helping out as a hostess. Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action memo calling for appeals to be sent directly by telegram and postal service to the Head of the Supreme Court, Ayatollah Mousavi Ardebili, Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi, and Prosecutor-General Rabbani Amleshi demanding further information on the location of those arrested, as well as suggesting that appeals be sent by telex to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of the Interior.¹⁶⁴

In an interview with IHRDC, Farídeh Samímí, who was arrested along with the second National Spiritual Assembly, described the events. Mrs. Samímí explained that because “there was always a fear that the [Assembly members] would be arrested”, the Assembly had taken the precaution of regularly changing their meeting place to different buildings and neighborhoods. Only four of the Assembly's nine members would meet at a time, designating an intermediary to act as a go-between with the absent members.

Sádiqzádi, Dr. Yúsif 'Abbásíyán and Dr. Hishmat'ulláh Rawhání. Two Auxiliary Board Members, Yúsif 'Abbásíyán and Dr. Hishmat'ulláh Rawhání, also disappeared.

¹⁵⁸ For details of steps taken to pursue the case, see Bahá'í International Community, *Statement to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances* (January 31, 1981) [attached as Appendix 2].

¹⁵⁹ *Id.*

¹⁶⁰ *Id.*

¹⁶¹ THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 256-7. Since the execution of the second National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, it has been assumed that the first National Spiritual Assembly suffered the same fate.

¹⁶² For example, Farídeh Samímí, who was arrested along with the second National Spiritual Assembly, described precautionary measures the NSA had taken, such as meeting only in small groups and frequently changing meeting locations. See Oct. 17, 2006 Statement of Farídeh Samímí (on file with IHRDC) [hereinafter Statement of Farídeh Samímí].

¹⁶³ The ninth member was not present at the meeting (see below) and was able to escape Iran at a later time.

¹⁶⁴ Amnesty International, *Urgent Action: Fear of ill-treatment/Death Penalty- Iran: Members of the Bahá'í faith*, December 18, 1981.

Mrs. Samímí explained that on the day of the arrests, December 13, 1981, the Assembly had, contrary to its usual practice, met in plenary session - only Gitti Qadímí Vahíd (who was undergoing surgery) was missing. Mrs. Samímí provided the IHRDC with the following account of what happened next:

[T]wo of the members, Ginous and another Assembly member, were saying goodbye and leaving. But a few minutes later, they returned, accompanied by three Revolutionary Guards with guns. It seemed that several other Revolutionary Guards were surrounding the house, we could hear them outside. When the Revolutionary Guards came, they immediately told everyone to stand with his or her face to the wall without making any noise. So we all obeyed and they searched our bodies... They knew everything: that I wasn't a member of the Assembly, that I was Kamran's wife, detail by detail, they knew everything... They did not show us a warrant. Mr. Mehdi Amín Amín who was a lawyer (there was three lawyers altogether on the Assembly) asked them if they had a paper for our arrest, but the Revolutionary Guards didn't need any warrants. Whatever they said would go. They just said get ready... they blindfolded and simultaneously questioned every one and said that they would take us but didn't say where.¹⁶⁵

The National Spiritual Assembly members and their two hosts were blindfolded, put into a van and driven to Kakheh Javanan, a temporary holding facility. Once there, Mrs. Samímí was interrogated at least once a day:

We were at Kakheh Javanan a total of 5 days (maybe a week). We were interrogated every day. Ginous' interrogations were written and not oral and she was questioned more extensively because she was an NSA member. When we returned to the cell we would share the details of our interrogations with each other...

Our first interrogation was unlike any of the others. They took Ginous to another room and then four people came to where I was. Out of the four, three were clergy. The fourth one was one of the Revolutionary Guards who had arrested us... One of them was a Majles representative and the other was a representative of some sort... They entered the prison, only this one time I was not blindfolded for interrogation. They started to ask me questions. They said if I told them a single lie they would know and they would send me to Evin. They would ask questions that they already knew the answers to; I knew this because when I would make a mistake they would correct me.

During the daily interrogations they would take off my blindfold and position me so that I was facing the wall and couldn't see who my interrogator was, but I know that it was a man. I don't know if he was a Revolutionary Guard, I never saw him, but I doubt it because the person asking the questions seemed to have more knowledge than an ordinary Revolutionary Guard would. During these interrogations, they always asked us for names of other Bahá'ís.¹⁶⁶

As reported by Mrs. Samímí, statements by the interrogators made it clear that the Bahá'í prisoners were being targeted for their religious beliefs:

There were two other Bahá'ís in a different cell, a man and a woman; God knows what they did to one of them, because she recanted her faith. The authorities asked questions and she answered and finally recanted. And so they brought us sweets and offered them to us to eat, telling us that those two have recanted from our wayward sect and have come to Islam. It was never clear to us what happened that made them recant. The other person was in the same situation and was made to recant.

During my first interrogation... the Revolutionary Guard asked me if I wanted to recant my faith and become a Muslim. I said no and said that if being a Bahá'í is a crime, then I'm a criminal. They would try this with everyone. Before we were arrested, Kamran and I would always buy the newspapers and the names of those who had recanted were printed in them. They always asked

¹⁶⁵ Statement of Farídeh Samímí, *supra* note 162.

¹⁶⁶ *Id.*

these questions. They did not use torture, at least with me, though I don't know what happened with others.¹⁶⁷

After being held for nearly a week, Mrs. Samímí was released, but the Assembly members she had been arrested with remained behind in Kakheh Javanan.¹⁶⁸ While processing her release, Samímí's jailers demonstrated that they had previously gathered extensive information on the activities of her and her husband. They knew the locations of each building the couple had lived in previously, despite the fact that they had moved frequently and tried to keep their whereabouts closely held:

[H]e [the Revolutionary Guard] took me to Gitti Ghadimi's house... he asked me if I knew where we were. I said no... He listed all the places that Kamran and I had lived in, all the places that we had thought no one knew about; he knew about all of them.¹⁶⁹

Even after Mrs. Samímí was released, Revolutionary Guards continued to stop by her house several times a week, pressuring her to help them identify other Bahá'ís:

Several times a week, they'd come and take me to the Revolutionary Guards (*Sepah Pasdaran*) headquarters to ask me questions about Kamran's friends. They'd also take me to the rooftop and ask me to show them the houses of the Bahá'ís... They'd tell me to give them the names of Kamran's friends and I gave the names of those who had been executed. They would respond by saying that the people I had named had all been executed. I'd say, "Those are the ones I know."¹⁷⁰

On December 27, 1981, eight of the nine members of the second National Spiritual Assembly of Iran were executed without trial.¹⁷¹ Mrs. Samímí later discovered from the authorities that their bodies were buried in Tehran's Kufabad cemetery.¹⁷² She described how the executions were portrayed by the Iranian media:

A cleric was interviewed on TV, it was Ayatollah Ardebili. He said that the regime didn't kill any Bahá'ís... They didn't want to acknowledge that it is an independent religion. They just said that they killed people who had committed treason [*khiyanat*] against the government.¹⁷³

After initially denying that the executions took place, the new Head of

Grand Ayatollah Abdul Karim Mousavi Ardebili

Grand Ayatollah Abdul Karim Mousavi Ardebili is one of Iran's most prominent Shi'a clerical leaders. He studied in the Shi'a schools of Qom and Najaf under the direction of Ayatollah Borujerdi and Ayatollah Khomeini. In November of 1978, Ayatollah Ardebili visited Khomeini in Paris, and there Khomeini asked him to join the Revolutionary



Council. Ayatollah Ardebili was the first Prosecutor General of Iran and held that position until June 29, 1981 when he succeeded Ayatollah Beheshti as Head of the Iranian Judiciary and as a member of the Presidential Council. As the Head of the Judiciary, Ardebili was responsible for the Islamitization of the judiciary. Ayatollah Ardebili held this position until the death of Khomeini on July 4, 1989, when he resigned and return to Qom, now serving as a Grand Ayatollah.

¹⁶⁷ *Id.*

¹⁶⁸ It appears that Farídeh Samímí was released because her husband convinced the Revolutionary Guards that she had no useful information to provide, since she was not an Assembly member and had no senior position in the Bahá'í administration.

¹⁶⁹ Statement of Farídeh Samímí, *supra* note 162.

¹⁷⁰ *Id.*

¹⁷¹ *An Eyewitness Account: Prepared Statement of Mahmoudí Nouraní*, WORLD ORDER (Spring 1982) at 26 [hereinafter *Prepared Statement of Mahmoudí Nouraní*]; THE BAHÁ'Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 81.

¹⁷² Statement of Farídeh Samímí, *supra* note 162.

¹⁷³ *Id.*

the Judiciary, Ayatollah Ardebili, finally acknowledged the execution of eight Bahá'ís on grounds of “espionage for the benefit of foreign powers.”¹⁷⁴ Ardebili reportedly told the Iranian News Agency IRNA that there was no religious motivation behind the killing.¹⁷⁵ Later that month, Ayatollah Mohammadi Gilani, Head of the Central Revolutionary Courts, justified the executions of the second National Spiritual Assembly’s members by alleging that membership in the Bahá'í community was synonymous with spying for a foreign power:

It has become clear that [the members of] this group or sect spy for imperialist espionage organizations and the damages they have caused to this country [is immeasurable] ... In the case of those who were executed, their spying for Israel and its agents has become quite clear and they met with their just punishment according to the orders of the Holy Koran.¹⁷⁶

Although the executions were not officially announced, the Bahá'í community was able to locate the burial sites in the “infidel” section of the Kufabad cemetery; some of the bodies had been thrown in a collective grave.¹⁷⁷ It was reported by Ramna Mahmúdí Núraní, Ginous Ni'mat Mahmúdí's daughter, that some families were not able to discover the location of their loved ones' bodies until they paid the authorities for the bullets used to execute them.¹⁷⁸

Attacks on the Local Spiritual Assemblies

In addition to targeting the national Bahá'í leadership, the judicial authorities also pursued members of the local Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies.

Tehran and Karaj

In Tehran the first Local Spiritual Assembly member to be executed was Alí-Akbar Khursandí, who was hanged on April 12, 1979.¹⁷⁹ Khursandí's execution was followed by the execution of seven further prominent members of the city's Bahá'í community between May and December of 1980: Ghulám-Husayn A'zamí, Alí-Akbar Mu'íní, Badí'u'lláh Yazdání, Yúsif Subhání, Yadu'lláh Mahbubíyán, Dhabíhu'lláh Mu'míní and Bihruz Saná'í.¹⁸⁰

Buzurg 'Alavíyán, a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Tehran was executed on June 23, 1981. The official charges cited in his original indictment included “active membership in [the] Zionist establishment of the misguided Bahá'í sect,” in particular “membership in the Bahá'í center of command in [Tehran]” and holding “anti-Islamic and constitutionally illegal meetings for the sole purpose of strengthening the misguided sect [Bahá'í] at his own home”, as well as the provision of financial assistance to Bahá'í organizations outside of Iran.¹⁸¹ In addition, the indictment notes that 'Alavíyán's

¹⁷⁴ *Téhéran dément l'exécution de huit responsables Bahá'ís* [Tehran denies the execution of eight Bahá'í leaders], LE MONDE, January 5, 1982 at 6 [hereinafter *Tehran denies Execution*]; *Téhéran confirme – après l'avoir démentie – la mise a mort de huit responsables Bahá'ís* [Tehran confirms – after having denied – the execution of eight Bahá'í leaders], LE MONDE, January 8, 1982.

¹⁷⁵ *Tehran denies Execution*, *supra* note 174, at 6.

¹⁷⁶ *Musahibíyyih Matbu'atiyyih Hakím-i Shar' va Dadsitan-i Inqilab-i Islamiyyih Tehran* [Press Conference with the Religious Judge and the Chief Prosecutor of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Tehran] KAYHAN, No. 11-488, January 20, 1982.

¹⁷⁷ *Prepared Statement of Mahmoudi Nourani*, *supra* note 171, at 26.

¹⁷⁸ *Id.*

¹⁷⁹ THE BAHÁ'Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 79.

¹⁸⁰ *Id.* at 80.

¹⁸¹ Other charges included “ex-membership on the Board of Directors of the Umana Company” (see discussion of Umana company below), and being a managing director of the Rankin Company. See Bill of Indictment for Buzurg 'Alavíyán, dated April 5, 1981, on file with IHRDC, at 1 [hereinafter Bill of Indictment for Buzurg 'Alavíyán]. It should be noted that these charges were brought several years prior to the August 29, 1983 decree by Prosecutor General Tabrizi officially banning participation in Baha'i assemblies (see Section 5.1 below.)

“confessed that he would give reports of his imprisonment and detention to the NSA of Iran,” as evidence of his “complete obedience to the House of Justice in Haifa.”¹⁸² The indictment notes that the other Local Spiritual Assembly members participated in Bahá’í meetings.¹⁸³

On the same day that 'Alavíyán was executed, two members of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Karaj also shared the same fate: Háshim Farnúsh and Farhang Mavaddat.¹⁸⁴ The following day, on June 24, 1981, Dr. Masáh Farhangí, a member of the Continental Board of Counselors who had also served on the National Spiritual Assemblies of Iraq and Iran, the prominent Bahá’í author Bad’u'lláh Faríd, and Yadu'lláh Pústchí were also executed, after sixteen months of imprisonment.¹⁸⁵ Varqá Tibyáníyán was executed along with them, although he, like Faríd and Pústchí, held no official position in the Bahá’í administration.¹⁸⁶

Only a few months after this group execution, two more Bahá’í s from the Tehran community were executed: Husayn Rastigár-Námdár on August 5, 1981 and Habíbu'lláh 'Azízí, a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tehran, on August 29, 1981.¹⁸⁷ On November 3, 1981, six members of Tehran’s newly elected Local Spiritual Assembly, were arrested along with the owners of the house they were meeting in.¹⁸⁸ On January 4, 1982, all six were executed along with Shídrukh Amír-Kíyá Baqá, the woman in whose house the meeting had occurred.¹⁸⁹ A cousin of Shívá Mahmúdí Asadu'lláh-Zádih - one of the executed members of the Assembly – reported that while they had been held in solitary confinement the Assembly members had been given the opportunity to recant their beliefs and reclaim their place in society.¹⁹⁰ Only one of those arrested, Shídrukh Baqá’s husband, recanted and was released.¹⁹¹

An additional eighteen prominent members of Tehran’s Bahá’í community who did not hold official leadership positions were killed or died in prison in Tehran between October 1981 and August 1985.¹⁹²

Yazd

On September 2, 1980, fifteen Bahá’ís, including members of the Auxiliary Board and the Local Spiritual Assembly, were tried in Yazd on charges of “leading Muslims astray and drawing them towards

¹⁸² Bill of Indictment for Buzurg 'Alavíyán, *supra* note 181, at 1.

¹⁸³ *Id.* at 2 (noting that “Mr. 'Alavíyán along with other members of the Bahá’í center of command of Tehran have attempted to form different meetings, some of which have taken place in the private home of the accused.”)

¹⁸⁴ THE BAHÁ’Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 80; THE BAHÁ’Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 283.

¹⁸⁵ THE BAHÁ’Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 80; THE BAHÁ’Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 283. They had been arrested on February 6, 1980 (*see Chronological Summary of Acts of Persecution, supra* note 113, at 19).

¹⁸⁶ BAHÁ’Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, IRAN’S SECRET BLUEPRINT FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ’ÍS OF IRAN 69 (1999) [hereinafter IRAN’S SECRET BLUEPRINT].

¹⁸⁷ THE BAHÁ’Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 80.

¹⁸⁸ Bahá’í International Community, *Persecutions suffered by the Bahá’ís in Iran during the period July 1981 to January 1982* at 2 (on file with IHRDC); THE BAHÁ’Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 262.

¹⁸⁹ Bahá’í International Community, *Persecutions suffered by the Bahá’ís in Iran during the period July 1981 to January 1982* at 2. These were: Shívá Mahmúdí Asadu'lláh-Zádih, Iskandar 'Azízí, Fathu'lláh Ferdowsí, Khusraw Muhandsí, Kúrush Talá’í, 'Atá'u'lláh Yávarí. *See also* THE BAHÁ’Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 262-264; Bahá’í International Community, *References made to the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran at the 38th Session of the Commission on Human Rights, Geneva (February 1, 1982-March 12, 1982)* (March 31, 1982) at 6 (on file with IHRDC).

¹⁹⁰ *See Prepared Statement of Mahmoudi Nourani, supra* note 171, at 27.

¹⁹¹ *See References made to the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran at the 38th Session of the Commission on Human Rights, Geneva (February 1, 1982-March 12, 1982)* (March 31, 1982) at 6.

¹⁹² These were: Yadu'lláh Sipih-rArfa', Ibráhím Khayrkháh, Husayn Vahdat-i-Haqq, 'Atá'u'lláh Haqqání, Manúchihr Vafá’í, Jalál Hakímán, Suhayl Safá’í, Ghulám-Husayn Hasanzádih-Shákírí, Muhsin Radaví, Kámrán Lutfí, Rahím Rahímíyán, Yadu'lláh Sábiri'yán, Asadu'lláh Kámil-Muqaddam, 'Ali-Muhammad Zamání, Ihsánu'lláh Kathírí, Rustam Varjávandí, Nusratu'lláh Subhání, 'Abbás Ídilkhání. *See* THE BAHÁ’Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 80-83.

blasphemy”, “membership in the Zionist party”, and spying for the United States and Israel.¹⁹³ The following exchange was recorded between the defense attorney, Yadu’llah Lutfi, and the prosecutor, Mr. Ghods:

Mr. Lutfi asked Mr. Ghods: “Is the Bahá’í faith being put on trial?” He answered in the negative. “Is the Bahá’í community being put on trial?” Again the response was negative. Then he asked: “So who are you putting on trial?” Mr. Ghods replied: “We are trying the leaders of the Bahá’ís.” Mr. Lutfi pointed to Mr. Badi’ullah Saadatmand, accused person # 9, who was sitting next to him, and said: “This man who is from Minshad and is a farmer who hardly ever comes to the city... is this man is a leader of the Bahá’ís?”¹⁹⁴

In their defense, the accused asserted that Bahá’ís deeply respect Islamic teachings and that they shared information about their own religion not to lead Muslims astray, but to counter unfounded accusations. They argued that Bahá’í religious beliefs prohibited them from engaging in espionage or membership in political parties and that Bahá’ís sent donations to Israel to support the upkeep of Bahá’í holy sites there, not the Israeli government. The defense attorney, Mr. Lutfi, further noted that the SAVAK reports offered by the prosecution had no obvious connection with the accused, whose names were not even mentioned in the documents.¹⁹⁵

As evidence that one of the accused, Mr. Faridani, was a Zionist spy, the prosecution appears to have simply cited his contacts with Bahá’í institutions and administrative bodies. The questioning proceeded as follows:

Mr. Faridani said: “I have been working in the education office for over 30 years and fulfilled my duties with honesty and compassion and no one ever had a complaint about me.” Mr. Ghods replied: “[t]hat you are a spy is [complaint] enough.” Then Mr. Kazemi [another accused person] recited a few lines from the Koran, and Mr. Ghods asked him: “Are you a Bahá’í or not?” He kept repeating his question and once he received an affirmative response, he said: “Very well, this is enough.” Mr. Kazemi responded: “this is not a trial and there is no justice; this is a battlefield.”¹⁹⁶

The trial was partially televised, and covered by the media. An article in the state-run newspaper, *Kayhan*, described the events:

The Revolutionary Court of Yazd studied [the evidence] and sentenced seven of the accused to be executed, in accordance with Shari’a law. The sentence was carried out early this morning on the anniversary of the Black Friday of Tehran, 17 of Shahrivar [September 8, 1980]. This act of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Yazd was done as a salute to the brave men who willingly gave their lives to overthrow the tyrannical Pahlavi regime and kept the Holy Revolution of Iran alive with their blood. With this revolutionary action [the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Yazd] pays homage to the pure blood of the martyrs and warns the enemies of Islam and Iran that our beloved Iran will never again fall in the arms of the foreigner, and the enemies of Islam will be dealt with decisively.¹⁹⁷

A statement prepared by Yadu’llah Lutfi describes how the remaining prisoners learned of the execution of seven of their number:

¹⁹³ THE BAHÁ’Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 279; Statement Prepared by Yadu’llah Lutfi, the defense attorney representing the Baha’is accused in this case (on file with IHRDC) [*hereinafter* Statement of Yadu’llah Lutfi]. Mr. Lutfi was imprisoned along with the clients he represented.

¹⁹⁴ *Id.* at 280.

¹⁹⁵ Statement of Yadu’llah Lutfi, *supra* note 193.

¹⁹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁹⁷ *Bih Jurm-i Khiyanat bih Millat-i Musلمان-i Iran, 7 Bahá’í dar Yazd Tirbaran Shudand* [For Committing Treachery Against the Muslim Nation of Iran, 7 Bahá’ís Were Executed by Firing Squad in Yazd], KAYHAN, No. 11089, 18/6/1359 (September 9, 1980), reporting from Islamic Revolutionary Court of Yazd. The victims included eighty-four-year-old ‘Abdu’l-Vahháb Kázemí-Manshádí.

That night [September 8, 1980], Mr. Ghods accompanied by a few Revolutionary Guards entered the cell and read the names of Mr. Dhabibian, Mr. Faridani, Mr. Kazemi, Mr. Akhtar-Khavari, Mr. Mostaghim, Mr. Motahhari, and Mr. Hassanzadeh. He said that since their files had been transferred to Tehran, they should gather their belongings and leave for Tehran immediately. Of course, there was some doubt about the veracity of this. The seven aforementioned individuals said goodbye and left the rest worried. A few hours later, one of the Revolutionary Guards who had left with them returned. He threw Mr. Kazemi's hat through the window of the prison cell and said: "The minibus that was taking them had an accident." Then he threw [a Persian sweet] into the cell for the prisoners and said: "Tonight, Abbas Effendi [a reference to Abdu'l-Baha, the son of Bahá'u'lláh] is crying."¹⁹⁸

The media coverage of the events in Yazd was apparently so graphic that the Revolutionary Court of Yazd received complaints from the general public who did not wish to see such events televised. The Revolutionary Courts refrained from publicizing further executions, although the authorities continued to engage in the confiscation of Bahá'í property and the expulsion of Bahá'ís from schools and jobs.¹⁹⁹ The eight surviving detainees were released four months later in December 1980.²⁰⁰

Tabriz

In late 1979 two members of the Tabriz Local Spiritual Assembly, Yadu'lláh Ástání and Dr. Farámarz Samandarí, were arrested and charged with conspiring against the government, spying for Israel, plotting against Islam, participating in Bahá'í conferences in London and New Delhi, prostitution and immorality, and conspiring against the sovereignty of the country.²⁰¹ Dr. Samandarí was also formally charged with being the Chairman of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tabriz.²⁰² The hearing was presided over by the Head of the Iranian Judiciary, Ayatollah Ardebili. There were no witnesses present and the defendants were not permitted defense counsel. The proceedings of this trial were not made public; however, the execution of the two men by a firing squad was announced by Tehran Radio on July 14, 1980.²⁰³

On July 29, 1981, all nine members of Tabriz's reconstituted Local Spiritual Assembly were executed together in the courtyard of Tabriz prison. Each member of the Tabriz assembly had originally been arrested individually. On June 14, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini's personal representative in Tabriz, Judge Tabataba'i, arrested and imprisoned 'Abdu'l-'Alí 'Asadyári for ten days before releasing him. On June 10, 1980 Adayari received a summons to return to court, at which point he was placed in solitary confinement for 21 days before being transferred to a regular cell where he was kept for over a year. Dr. Parvíz Fírúzí was arrested and imprisoned on July 19, 1980. Mr. Mihdí Báhirí was arrested on August 3, 1980. Dr. Masrúr Dakhilí was arrested on July 6, 1981. Husayn Asadu'lláh-Zádih was arrested in July 1980 in his home by Revolutionary Guards. Alláh-Virdí Mítháqí and Manúchihir Khází'í were arrested with 17 others (some of who were eventually released) meeting to discuss their dismissal from jobs because of their Bahá'í affiliation. Habíbu'lláh Tahqíqí was arrested in March 1981. Mr. Ismá'íl Zihtáb was first arrested on September 18, 1979 by Revolutionary Guards at a Local Spiritual Assembly and was released on April 11, 1980. He was rearrested on July 18, 1981 and was executed along with the others 11 days later.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Statement of Yadu'llah Lutfi, *supra* note 192.

¹⁹⁹ THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 259.

²⁰⁰ *Chronological Summary of Acts of Persecution*, *supra* note 113, at 20-24.

²⁰¹ EZZATOLLAH DJAZAYERI (NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF SWEDEN), STRANGERS IN THEIR NATIVE LAND 70 (1987) (citing SOBHI AZADIGAN, July 1980, no. 151, 24, 4.)

²⁰² *Id.*

²⁰³ Statement by Dr. Victor De Araujo, Representative to the UN, *Background Information on the Execution of Bahá'ís in Iran* (July 1980) (on file with IHRDC).

²⁰⁴ MAHMEHR GOLISTANEH, A TRIBUTE TO THE FAITHFUL (1992) 77-84; THE BAHAI QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 80.

Hamadan

On June 14, 1981, seven members of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Hamadan were executed by a firing squad.²⁰⁵ Their bodies were released to the Bahá'í community for appropriate burial. Examination of the corpses while the bodies were being prepared for the funeral revealed that six of these men had been physically tortured before their deaths. The body of the seventh was "riddled with bullets."²⁰⁶

Reuters published a detailed account of the men's injuries:

The body of Husayn Motlaq Aráni showed no signs of torture but he had been shot nine times. Muhammad Baqer Habibi had a broken shoulder; Dr. Násir Vafá'í had had his thighs cut open as far as the waist and had been shot seven times; Husayn Khándil had had the fingers of one hand pressed and his back had been burned; Sohráb Habíbí had had his back burned and had been shot five times' and Tarázu'lláh Khuzayn suffered a smashed chest and left hand and had been shot seven times.²⁰⁷

Similar reports reached the Bahá'í international community:

The ribs of Tarázu'lláh Khuzayn were crushed, and his hands were slashed. His legs and thighs had been pierced with a bayonet, and the injuries had turned his skin black and the tissues were swollen. [He was sixty-four when he died.] Suhráb Habíbí's back had been branded with a hot ring – his own – and he had severe burns. The fingers of Husayn Khándil were slashed and his abdomen had been cut open. Dr. Na'ímí's back had been broken and Dr. Vafá'í's thighs had been cut open; Suhayl Habíbí's shoulders had been broken and smashed. Hossein Mutlaq had not been tortured but his body showed the greatest number of bullet wounds.²⁰⁸

Shiraz

The Bahá'ís of Shiraz witnessed the largest waves of arrest and executions. From 1978 through 1981 the Bahá'í community of Shiraz had already suffered a large-scale mob attack (see 4.2 above), the destruction of the House of the Báb (see 5.2 below), and the execution of five prominent members of the community. On October 23, 1982 about forty-five Bahá'ís were arrested and taken to *Sepah* Prison for interrogations. In the month of November, the public prosecutor's office ordered the arrest of an additional 40 Bahá'ís. The grounds for the arrests were not publicized; some detainees were subsequently released while others were held for nearly a year before being executed.²⁰⁹

On February 22, 1983, the newspaper *Khabar-i Jonub* reported that Hojatolislam Qaza'i, the Religious Magistrate and Head of the Revolutionary Court of Shiraz, had announced that the court had issued an order for the execution of twenty-two unnamed Bahá'ís.²¹⁰ The court order provoked an international outcry. Three Bahá'í detainees - Túbá Zá'irpúr, Yadu'lláh Mahmúdnizhád, and Rahmatu'lláh Vafá'í²¹¹ - were executed on March 12, 1983. On May 23, 1983 U.S. President Ronald Reagan appealed to Ayatollah Khomeini not to allow the executions to continue, commenting "these individuals are not guilty of any political offence or crime, they have not plotted the overthrow of the regime and they are not responsible for the deaths of anyone."²¹²

²⁰⁵ They were: Mr. Muhammad (Suhráb) Habíbí, Mr. Muhammad-Báqir (Suhayl) Habíbí, Mr. Husayn Khándil, Mr. Tarázu'lláh Khuzayn, Mr. Husayn Mutlaq, Dr. Fírúz Na'ímí, Dr. Násir Vafá'í. See PR Newswire articles, June 15 and June 17, 1981 (citing statement released by the NSA of Bahá'ís of the U.S.); see also *7 Bahá'ís Executed By Iran*, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, June 15, 1981 at p. 12.

²⁰⁶ THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 261; Reuters article regarding Hamadan Local Spiritual Assembly (date unknown) (on file with IHRDC).

²⁰⁷ Reuters article regarding Hamadan Local Spiritual Assembly (date unknown)(on file with IHRDC).

²⁰⁸ THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 283.

²⁰⁹ Statement of Witness A (dated July 21, 2005) (on file with IHRDC).

²¹⁰ *Guft-u-Guyih Ikhtisásiyyih Khabar Ba Hojatolislam Qaza'i Hakím-i Shar' va Ra'is-i Dadgah-i Enghilab-i Shiraz, Hakem-i Shar'e Shiraz: Bih Bahá'ían Tazakkur Midaham Bih Daman-i Islam Biyayand* [Exclusive Interview of Khabar with Hojatolislam Qaza'i, the Religious Magistrate and Head of the Shiraz Revolutionary Court; the Religious Magistrate of Shiraz: "I Warn Bahá'ís to Come to the Hem of Islam" [i.e., into the arms of Islam]], KHABAR-I JONUB, No. 782, 3/12/1361 (February 22, 1983).

²¹¹ THE BAHÁ'Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 80.

²¹² *Reagan Asks Iran to Spare Bahá'í Lives*, KHALEEJ TIMES, May 24, 1983.



Source: Bahá'í International Community

Ayatollah Khomeini responded to President Reagan's appeal in a speech delivered at the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Imam Mahdi on May 28, 1983:

Mr. Reagan says that these poor, calm Bahá'ís are silently doing their prayers and religious ceremonies; and that Iran has arrested them only because our beliefs are against their beliefs. Were these people not spies, you would not be raising your voices! You are doing this because you benefit from them... Bahá'ís are not a religious group, they are a party which was previously supported by the British, and now is being supported by the United States. They [the Bahá'ís] are spies like them [the Americans and British].²¹³

²¹³ See *Imam-i Ummat dar Didar-i bah Mas'ulin-i Kishvar bih Munasibat-i Milad-i bah Sa'adat-i Imam-i Zaman (AJ): Mavara'yih Taz'if-i Urganhayih in Jumhuri Dastha-i Ast kih Gardanandih Hastand* [Imam of the nation in a visit with the

Present at the Ayatollah's speech were senior members of the clergy, high-ranking military officers and members of the government, including President Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Prime Minister Mir Hussein Musavi and Chief Justice Abdolkarim Musavi Ardebili.²¹⁴

Just two weeks later, on June 16 and June 18, 1983, sixteen more of the Bahá'í detainees in Shiraz were executed: Bahrám Afnán, 'Abdu'l-Husayn Ázadí, Kúrush Haqbín, 'Ináyatu'lláh Ishráqí, Jamshíd Síyávushí, Bahram Yaldá'í, Shahín (Shírín) Dálvand, 'Izzat Jánamí Ishráqí, Ru'yá Ishráqí, Muná Mahmúdnizhád, Zarrín Muqímí-Abyánih, Mahshíd Nírúmand, Símin Sábírí, Táhirih Arjumandí Síyávushí, Akhtar Thábit, and Nusrat Ghufrání Yaldá'í.²¹⁵ In all, 31 Bahá'í residents of Shiraz were killed between 1978 and 1983. The youngest victim was 17-year-old Muná Mahmúdnizhád, and the oldest was 62-year-old Ináyatu'lláh Ishráqí.²¹⁶

Elsewhere in Iran

Throughout many smaller cities in Iran, authorities used the same pattern of targeting the Bahá'í leadership. The following are representative examples and are not intended to constitute an exhaustive list: in March 1981, Hidáyatu'lláh Dihqání, a member of the Abadeh Local Spiritual Assembly, was charged with having connections with Israel and "being a corrupt and seditious person and waging a war on God and his messenger and the Imam of Time [Mahdi]" and was executed;²¹⁷ in May 1982, two members of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Urumiyeh (Urmia) were executed;²¹⁸ and in April 1982, eight members of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Qazvin were detained and questioned. Following their arrest, four were executed on July 9, 1982, and another three recanted under pressure and were released.²¹⁹ In Zanjan, six members of the Bahá'í Assembly of Zanjan were arrested.²²⁰

Third National Spiritual Assembly of Iran

On August 29, 1983, Attorney-General Seyyed Hussein Musavi-Tabrizi announced a legal ban on all administrative and community activities undertaken by the Bahá'í community.²²¹ This order required the dissolution of the third National Spiritual Assembly and roughly 400 local assemblies.²²² Membership in any Bahá'í organization or engagement in acts which could be construed as religious instruction to non-adherents were strictly prohibited.²²³ The government justified its decision by claiming that the

authorities of the country on the occasion of the anniversary of the birth of the Imam of Time: There are hands masterminding the attempts to weaken this Republic], KAYHAN, 8/3/1362 [May 29, 1983] (on file with IHRDC).

²¹⁴ *Reagan Asks Iran to Spare Bahá'í Lives*, KHALEJ TIMES, May 24, 1983.

²¹⁵ THE BAHÁ'Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 80.

²¹⁶ *Id.* at 54.

²¹⁷ *See Bih Hukm-i Dadgah-i Inqilab-i Islamiyyih Shiraz: Du Nafar bih Jurm-i Hamkari ba Sihyunism-i Jahani Dastgir Shudand* [According to Orders of Revolutionary Court of Shiraz, Two Persons Accused of Collaboration with World Zionism were Arrested], JOMHOURI ESLAMI NO. 520, 27/12/1359 (March 18, 1981), at 4 (on file with IHRDC).

²¹⁸ THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 266; *see also* Amnesty International, *Urgent Action, Iran: Members of the Bahá'í Faith* May 28, 1982 (describing reports of executions of Local Spiritual Assembly members, and urging that appeals be sent to President Seyyed Ali Khamenei and Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi).

²¹⁹ THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 265. It is unclear what happened to the eighth person.

²²⁰ *Id.* at 266; *see also* Amnesty International, *Urgent Action, Iran: Members of the Bahá'í Faith* May 28, 1982 (describing reports of executions of Local Spiritual Assembly members, and urging that appeals be sent to President Seyyed Ali Khamenei and Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi).

²²¹ *Izharat-i Dadsitan-i Kull-i Inghilab dar Kayhan-i Hava'i* [Interview with the Attorney General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyyed Hussein Musavi-Tabrizi], KAYHAN HAVA'I, 7/6/1362 (August 29, 1983).

²²² Bahá'í International Community, *Implications of the Iranian Government's Ban on the Administrative and Community Activities of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran* at 1 (October 1983).

²²³ "Now, if a person is a Bahá'í himself and performs his religious acts in accordance with his own beliefs, such a man will not be bothered by us, provided he does not invite others to Bahá'ism, does not propagate, is not active [in Bahá'í organizations], does not form Assemblies, does not give information to others, and has nothing to do with the Bahá'í establishment, such a man

administrative Bahá'í bodies were “at war with God (*maharib*),” “conspirators,” and engaging in espionage.²²⁴

Attorney General Musavi-Tabrizi stated in an interview with the government-funded newspaper *Kayhan Hava'i*:

[The Bahá'ís] agitate and sabotage in some affairs, and spy for others... All of these problems have caused us to announce right now that all the collective and administrative activities of Bahá'ism in Iran are, and have always been, banned. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Constitution of the country does not recognize them.²²⁵

Before the Bahá'í National Spiritual Assembly complied with the ban, they released an open letter to Iranian leaders refuting the government's allegations. The letter detailed the abuses faced by the Bahá'ís in the Islamic Republic, and appealed to the Iranian people, to the Islamic government and to God to restore their rights as Iranian citizens and as human beings. This letter was the final act of the National Spiritual Assembly before they voluntarily disbanded.²²⁶

Despite the dissolution, IRI authorities continued to harass and intimidate the former National Spiritual Assembly members, former members of Local Spiritual Assemblies and other administrative officials around the country, as well as every individual who had signed the open letter defending the Bahá'í community. Between late 1983 and in early 1984 over 500 Bahá'ís – most of whom were former council members or related to former members – were arrested without charge.²²⁷

In time, seven former members of the third National Spiritual Assembly were arrested and eventually executed by the government:²²⁸

Jahángír Hidáyatí, who had already attracted much hostile attention from the Islamic regime as a board member of the Bahá'í-run *Nawnahálán* Corporation (see 5.2), was arrested on June 30, 1983, and held in solitary confinement in Evin prison for eleven months, during which time he was repeatedly tortured in an effort to persuade him to recant his faith on public television. He refused. Hidáyatí was executed on May 15, 1984.²²⁹

will not be bothered by us. Not only do we not execute such people, we do not even imprison them, and they can be active within the society.” See *Izharat-i Dadsitan-i Kull-i Inghilab dar Kayhan-i Hava'i* [Interview with the Attorney General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyyed Hussein Musavi-Tabrizi], *KAYHAN* (August 29, 1983).

²²⁴ *Izharat-i Dadsitan-i Kull-i Inghilab dar Kayhan-i Hava'i* [Interview with the Attorney General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyyed Hussein Musavi-Tabrizi], *KAYHAN*, 7/6/1362 (August 29, 1983).

²²⁵ *Id.*

²²⁶ See Open Letter from National Spiritual Assembly of Iran to various IRI officials, dated 12/6/1362 (September 3, 1983) (on file with IHRDC). In this letter, which was delivered to some 2,000 government officials and prominent persons, the NSA called on the IRI to end the persecution, arrest, torture, and imprisonment of Bahá'ís “for imaginary crimes and on baseless pretexts, because God knows—and so do the authorities—that the only ‘crime’ of which these innocent ones are guilty is that of their beliefs... .” Emphasizing the implausibility of the espionage allegations, the letter asked: “What kind of spy is an 85-year-old man from Yazd who has never set foot outside his village? ... How could students, housewives, innocent young girls, and old men and women... be spies? How could [village farmers] be spies? What secret intelligence documents have been found in their possession? What espionage equipment has come to hand? What ‘spying’ activities were engaged in by the primary school children who have been expelled from their schools?” The letter further emphasized that “spying is an element of politics, while noninterference in politics is an established principle of the Bahá'í faith.” Responding to the accusation that Bahá'ís had been “hoarding” spare automobile parts, the NSA objected: “[i]f the Prosecutor chooses to label the Bahá'í administration as a network of espionage, let him at least consider it intelligent enough not to plan the overthrow of such a strong regime by hoarding a few spare parts!” The letter also drew attention to the fact that while Muslims were praised for sending money abroad (e.g. to Iraq and Jerusalem) for the upkeep of religious shrines, when a Bahá'í did the same, it was considered “an unforgivable sin and... proof that he has done so in order to strengthen other countries [particularly Israel].”

²²⁷ CAMPAIGN TO ELIMINATE A RELIGIOUS MINORITY, *supra* note 154, at 4.

²²⁸ *Id.* at 3.

²²⁹ National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD* (Vol. XIX, 1983-1986) at 205 [hereinafter *BAHÁ'Í WORLD XIX*].

Shápúr (Húshang) Markazí was arrested in September 1983. During the course of his imprisonment, torturers broke his ribs and damaged one eye so badly that it seriously impaired his vision. Their goal was reportedly to force him to admit to false charges implicating the Bahá'í institutions as a network involved in espionage and himself as a spy.²³⁰ He was executed on September 23, 1984.

Ahmad Bashiri was arrested in July of 1983 for serving on several Local Spiritual Assemblies in different towns and eventually on the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran. He was severely tortured during his 15 months in prison and finally executed on November 1, 1984.²³¹

Dr. Farhád Asdaqí was called to Tehran and asked to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly after the arrest of the second National Assembly. He did this until the third National Assembly was disbanded in September 1983. Dr. Asdaqí went into hiding in 1983 but was finally arrested in June 1984. He was executed on November 19, 1984 – after four months of imprisonment and torture.

Farid Bihmardi was elected and served on the last National Spiritual Assembly of Iran. He was arrested in the streets of Tehran and was imprisoned a total of twenty-two months in Evin prison. During this period he was tortured and spent nearly 9 months in solitary confinement. He was never allowed visitors and was executed on June 10, 1986. It is believed that he was hung; however, since he was buried before his family was told of his execution, no proper examination was done to determine the cause of death.²³²

Ardishír Akhtarí was arrested by four Revolutionary Guards from Zarat Group at Evin on September 11, 1984 at his home. He spent over three years in prison before he was finally executed on September 28, 1987.²³³

Amír-Husayn Nádirí was also arrested on September 11, 1984. He was imprisoned at Evin and Gohardasht where he was tortured extensively. He was held in detention for over three years before being executed with Ardishír Akhtarí on September 28, 1987.²³⁴

The IHRDC concludes from the events outlined above that the Revolutionary Courts and other agencies of the Islamic Republic pursued a deliberate strategy designed both to deprive the Bahá'í community of leadership and to criminalize an entire faith. The widespread and systematic nature of the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'ís strongly suggests coordinated action and the public statements of senior members of the Iranian regime serve only to further reinforce this impression.

5.2. Cultural and Social Repression

In addition to targeting individuals that were imprisoned, tortured or executed, the government of the Islamic Republic also launched a direct assault on the collective cultural and social fabric of the Bahá'í community in Iran through the destruction of important religious, historical and cultural sites, and the confiscation of collectively-held community property.

²³⁰ *Id.* at 208.

²³¹ *Id.* at 211.

²³² National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD* (Vol. XX, 1986-1992) [hereinafter *BAHÁ'Í WORLD XX*] at 385.

²³³ *Id.* at 387; MAHMEHR GOLISTANEH, *A TRIBUTE TO THE FAITHFUL* (1992) 210.

²³⁴ *BAHÁ'Í WORLD XX*, *supra* note 232, at 387; MAHMEHR GOLISTANEH, *A TRIBUTE TO THE FAITHFUL* (1992) 211.

Destruction of Religious and Cultural Monuments

Numerous Bahá'í religious and cultural monuments were seized, desecrated and/or demolished in the post-Revolutionary period. The first step towards the identification, confiscation and destruction of Bahá'í cultural monuments was the simultaneous confiscation in February 1979 of the assets of two companies: *Nawnahálán* and *Umaná*. These were longstanding Bahá'í commercial ventures allowing Bahá'í individuals to own and invest property despite the Pahlavi-era restrictions on property ownership by the Bahá'í community.²³⁵

According to Bahá'í records, the premises of both companies were taken over by Revolutionary Guards during the summer of 1979.²³⁶ While *Nawnahálán* was an investment company, *Umana* (“Trustees”) was created to be the holding company for all Iranian Bahá'í properties, including almost all of the sites of historical or religious significance.²³⁷ The confiscation of *Umana* therefore allowed the government to easily and quickly identify all the sites of importance to the Bahá'ís through the inspection of the company's records.

Between March and April 1979, a number of Bahá'í religious monuments were confiscated or destroyed. In Reza'iyeh (Urumiyeh), authorities confiscated the upper room of a building where the Báb had stayed. Another Bahá'í holy site, Síyáh-Chál, was confiscated in Tehran, and in Isfahan, a holy place known as the “House of the King of Martyrs and Beloved of Martyrs” was confiscated. The Garden of Badasht, where Bábís held their first conference in 1848, was demolished.²³⁸ The Home of Bahá'u'lláh in Darkula was demolished and the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Takur, where the Bahá'í founder spent his youth, was confiscated. In December 1981, it was completely destroyed and the land sold.²³⁹ On July 24, 1979, the holy site known as “the House of the Martyrs” in Arak was destroyed by an unknown group, who also removed the remains of the people buried there.²⁴⁰

The House of the Báb

The culmination of the attacks on Bahá'í religious monuments was the confiscation and destruction of the House of the Báb in Shiraz, considered a place of pilgrimage to Bahá'ís all over the world. On April 26, 1979, the Bahá'í community in Shiraz was given a notice that the Revolutionary guards were confiscating the property. Local Bahá'ís were informed by the office of the *Sepah-eh Pasdaran* [Revolutionary guards] that “in order to protect and prevent possible damage, [to the House of the Báb] is [being] placed under the supervision of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards of Shiraz.”²⁴¹

²³⁵ See, e.g., SUMMARY OF PERSECUTION DURING THE PAHLAVI REGIME, *supra* note 4, at 6 (asserting that “[p]roperties belonging to the Bahá'í community could neither be held under the name of the Bahá'í community nor registered for religious purposes. Such properties had to be registered under the names of individual Bahá'ís, and thus [even religious sites] became subject to property and inheritance taxes.”)

²³⁶ THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 252. Among the properties the Umana Company held were holy places, including the House of the Báb in Shiraz, the houses of Bahá'u'lláh in Tehran and Takur, a temple site, the national Bahá'í headquarters, Bahá'í cemeteries, and a Bahá'í-operated hospital in Tehran; see THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE 1963 TO 1986: THE THIRD EPOCH OF THE FORMATIVE AGE (compiled by Geoffry W. Marks, 1986) at 753.

²³⁷ See THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE 1963 TO 1986: THE THIRD EPOCH OF THE FORMATIVE AGE (compiled by Geoffry W. Marks, 1986) at 748, 753.

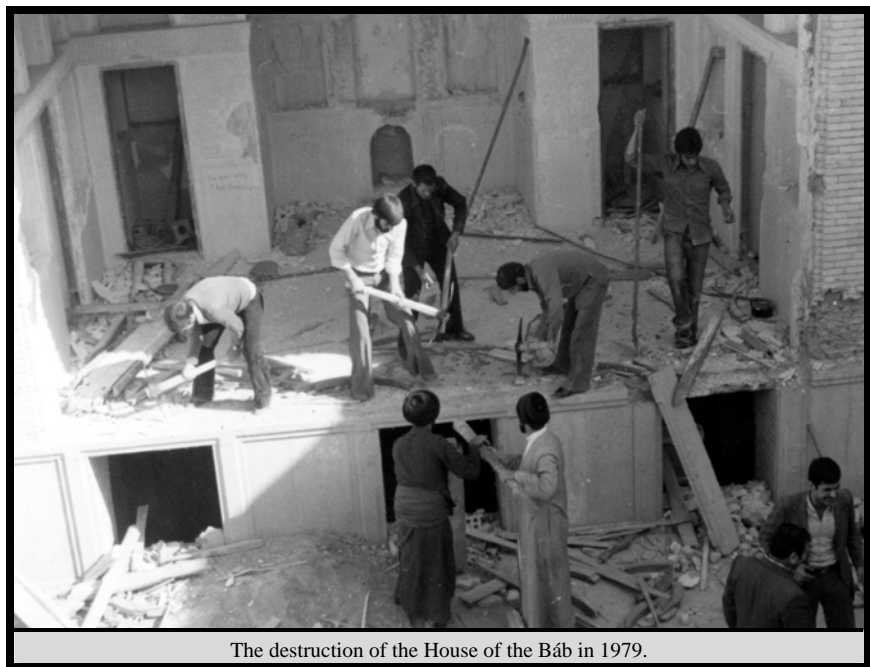
²³⁸ See *Map of Bahá'í Holy Places Confiscated or Destroyed (March-April 1979)* in National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, *Attacks on the Bahá'ís of Iran* (September 9, 1979).

²³⁹ Bahá'í International Community, *The persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran – Major Developments During December 1981/January 1982* (January 19, 1982) at 2 [hereinafter *Major Developments During December 1981/January 1982*].

²⁴⁰ Letter from the Department of the Secretariat, International House of Justice to the Bahá'í International Community (August 2, 1979) (on file with IHRDC).

²⁴¹ *Namiyyih Sepah-i Pasdaran-i Inqilab-i Islamiyyih Fars Darbariyyih Khaniyyih Seyyed Báb* [Notice of Confiscation of the House of the Báb by the Sepah-eh Pasdaran in Shiraz], 6/2/1358 (April 26, 1979) (on file with IHRDC) [attached as Appendix 3].

Although the property was confiscated in April, the government's ultimate intentions did not become apparent until September. On September 1, 1979, several laborers under the instruction of Mr. Shumali, the head mason responsible for carrying out the destruction of the House of the Báb, began the demolition of other buildings surrounding the House in the building complex.²⁴²



The destruction of the House of the Báb in 1979.

Bahá'í communities around the world, attempting to save the monument, mobilized an international letter-writing campaign to pressure the Islamic Republic to relent.²⁴³

Kúrush Talá'í,²⁴⁴ a member of the Bahá'í community in Tehran sent to bear witness, concluded that the final decision to destroy the house was probably made on September 7, during a meeting held at the house of Mr. Mo'takif, the mayor of Shiraz, and attended by Ayatollah Mahallati.²⁴⁵ A decree confirming the decision to proceed with the demolition was issued by the Attorney General of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. On September 8, Kúrush Talá'í arrived at the site to find the road blocked, and saw that municipal vans filled with pickaxes and spades were being taken to the building across from the site.²⁴⁶ Later that day, events began to escalate. Talá'í recounted:

At 11 o'clock in the morning, a group of people arrived in the street. In front of them was an old man called Haji Sharif, who is an official in the Endowment Department²⁴⁷ in Shiraz. Next to him was a mullah called Tuba'i, who was marshalling a number of armed men. Behind them were about 150 people. The armed men from the Mihdiyyih *Komiteh*²⁴⁸ numbered about 30, and about 10 to 12 ordinary people carried arms, as well. They came near Hosseiniyyih and suddenly they broke the lock of the house no. 5, which was not under Bahá'í occupation and had already been confiscated by the Revolutionary forces, and then they entered the house no. 2 before entering the House of the Báb next door. When they arrived, they didn't waste a minute and started demolishing it. Haji Sharif and a few others whom I had met before in the house of Mahallati were giving orders. One of the first to enter the House of the Báb was the attendant of the [Mihdiyyih *Komiteh*]. The Mullah who was in front of the procession was giving orders also. On the upper rooms of the House of the Báb they started destroying the plaster and opening the walls to the house no. 3.²⁴⁹

²⁴² Statement by Kúrush Tala'i forwarded by Hushmand Fatheazam regarding the House of the Báb in Shiraz (October 2, 1979) at 1 [hereinafter *Statement by Kúrush Tala'i regarding the House of the Báb*] (on file with IHRDC).

²⁴³ See, e.g., Telegraph from Bahá'í community of Taichung, Taiwan to Ayatollah Khomeini, dated June 23, 1979 (appealing, in the name of the standards of "justice and tolerance promoted by Islam", for the expropriation of Bahá'í holy sites to be stopped) (on file with IHRDC).

²⁴⁴ Mr. Tala'i was subsequently executed in January 1982 as a newly elected member of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Tehran. See THE BAHÁ'Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 81.

²⁴⁵ Statement by Kúrush Tala'i regarding the House of the Báb, *supra* note 241, at 2.

²⁴⁶ *Id.* at 4.

²⁴⁷ The Endowment and Charity Organization (*Sazmanih Owqaf va Umurih Khairiyyih*) is a sub-organization of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance but manages to maintain its independence by having a director appointed by the Supreme Leader. The scope of this organization's work includes looking after mosques, endowments (typically land and buildings) and holy places, publishing Islamic educational material, and engaging in charitable activities; see <http://english.awqaf.ir/> (accessed November 22, 2006).

²⁴⁸ This was one of the local *Komitehs*; its name is a reference to the awaited Twelfth Imam (or Mahdi).

²⁴⁹ Statement by Kúrush Tala'i regarding the House of the Bab, *supra* note 242, at 4.

'Abdu'l-Husayn Taslímí, with a few others, approached Ayatollah Baha'eddin Mahallati to appeal to him, as a senior cleric in Shiraz, to prevent further destruction of the building. Mr. Taslímí gave an account of what then took place:

[Mahallati] knew all the details and said, “yes, that is the House of Heresy. It has been so for 130 years and now it should be demolished.” I replied, “the brick and wood of a house cannot be heresy. Besides, what is the fault of innocent people living on this street or the houses in the vicinity that they should be constantly threatened with the demolition of their houses?” His reply was, “these people either should become Muslims, or anything may befall them.” I replied, “Mr. Mahallati, sir, is this the meaning of Islamic justice? What about the humanitarian principles of Islam?” His answer was, “those are for Jews and Christians. But these people (Bahá’ís) either should become Muslim, or it will not be a problem if their homes are demolished. That House of Heresy (House of the Báb) should also be destroyed.” When the conversation reached this point we thought there would be no use to continue... We departed with the understanding that Ayatollah Mahallati was one of the main architects of the demolition of the House.²⁵⁰

In 1981, the site was transformed into a road and public square.²⁵¹ The area was eventually completely razed to prepare for the construction of the Mosque of Mahdi, which was built over the site.²⁵²

Destruction of Bahá’í Centers and Desecration of Bahá’í Cemeteries

The Islamic Republic also seized and destroyed Bahá’í community centers around the country. On March 6, 1979, Ayatollah Qomi told the newspaper *Ettela'at* that the Bahá’ís were spies for Britain, Russia, the USA, and Israel; which justified the confiscation and destruction of all Bahá’í centers, and the confiscation of all Bahá’í documents.²⁵³ In Tehran, the publishing offices of the Bahá’í National Center and the local Bahá’í center were closed and sealed, and the books and documents within were removed.²⁵⁴ The Bahá’í center in Marvdasht was razed to the ground.²⁵⁵

The desecration of Bahá’í cemeteries occurred across the country; in Sangsar, Bahnamir, Koshkak, Shamsavar, Babolsar, Manshad, and Chabahar, local Bahá’í cemeteries were destroyed.²⁵⁶ In Sa’adi, Yazd and Shiraz, Bahá’í remains were exhumed by vandals, and families were prevented by the authorities from re-burying their dead.²⁵⁷ On December 5, 1981, the Bahá’í cemetery in Tehran was confiscated and closed, and thirteen cemetery employees were arrested, by an order of the Central Revolutionary Court.²⁵⁸ Only one month later, on January 14, 1982, the Bahá’í cemetery of Bab-salman, a village near Tehran,

²⁵⁰ *Id.* at 10.

²⁵¹ THE BAHÁ’Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 253.

²⁵² THE BAHÁ’Í QUESTION: CULTURAL CLEANSING IN IRAN, *supra* note 118, at 68-69. This was a symbolic move on the part of the IRI, due to the fact the Báb had declared himself as the return of the Twelfth Imam (Mahdi).

²⁵³ Bahá’í International Community, News Release (March 12, 1979) (on file with IHRDC). Cities where Bahá’í centers were confiscated include: Tabriz, Reza’iyeh, Shahabah on Arak, Arak, Kermanshah, Isfahan, Tehran, Amirabad, Zargandeh, Tajrish, Bagh-i Tegeh, Khaniabad, Ferdows, Shiraz, Marvdasht, Arab-Khayl, Mashhad, Baghistan in Mashhad, Yazd, Mahdiabad in Yazd, Maryamabad in Yazd, Taft, Rafsanjan, Kerman, and Neyriz. Centers that were destroyed or set on fire include: Darghuk in Abadeh, Koshkak in Abadeh, Chinabar in Abadeh, Hemmatabad in Abadeh, Sangsar, Babolsar, Ardekan, Vadighan, Fathabad in Kashan, and Mashhad. *Bahá’í centers confiscated*, National Spiritual Assembly of the UK April-May 1979 (on file with the IHRDC). *Bahá’í Properties Attacked*, National Spiritual Assembly of the UK, March-June 1979 (on file with IHRDC).

²⁵⁴ Bahá’í International Community, News Release (March 12, 1979) (on file with IHRDC). See also flyer cited in MARTIN, THE PERSECUTION OF THE BAHÁ’ÍS OF IRAN, *supra* note 1 at 45 (inviting people to a celebration at the former national Bahá’í center in Tehran, where Ayatollah Nuri would give a speech about “messianism and waging a holy war on Imperialism, Zionism and Kabbalism.”)

²⁵⁵ Bahá’í International Community, *Recent attacks on the lives and properties of Bahá’ís in Iran, 25 September-3 November 1978* (1978) at 9 [hereinafter *Recent Attacks* (1978)].

²⁵⁶ See *Map of Cemeteries destroyed (April-May 1979)* in National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, *Attacks on the Bahá’ís of Iran* (September 9, 1979).

²⁵⁷ *Id.*

²⁵⁸ *Major Developments During December 1981/January 1982*, Bahá’í International Community, *supra* note 239, at 1.

was also closed, and the Bahá'ís of Tehran were compelled to bury their dead in an area reserved by the authorities specifically for “infidels” - a barren area known as La'nat-Abad (“City of the Accursed”).²⁵⁹ In December 1983, the Bahá'í cemetery in Babolsar was confiscated by the Foundation for the Dispossessed²⁶⁰ and Bahá'í representatives were forced to seek judicial intervention in order to bury their dead.²⁶¹

Destruction of Bahá'í Community Property

Government authorities also confiscated and closed down Bahá'í community properties such as schools, hospitals and playgrounds. The Institution of Higher Education, the Summer School (*Hadíqih*), youth recreation grounds in Shiraz and Tehran, and the School of Húshangí in Yazd were all closed in the post-revolutionary period.²⁶²

Mítháqíyyih Hospital

One of the best documented cases of confiscation is that of the Mítháqíyyih Hospital, a Bahá'í-owned and run hospital in Tehran. In early June 1979, Professor Manúchíhr Hakím, the founder of the hospital, learned that the Mehrabad *Komiteh* had labeled the hospital “anti-Islamic and anti-revolutionary” and had demanded the right to supervise the hospital’s activities.²⁶³ Arguing that such interference by a *Komiteh* would be illegal, Prof. Hakím contacted the *Komiteh* and the Medical Association of Iran, requesting that any such action be supported by a written order.²⁶⁴ His request provoked a visit from two men who presented Prof. Hakím with a letter from the Deputy Chief Administrator of the Office of Confiscated Material Foundation for the Dispossessed, Abulqasim Sarhadizadih.²⁶⁵ The document stated:

According to this order, Dr. Khosrow Sadiqi Tehrani and Mr. Mohammad Raziqi are assigned to investigate and identify all of the affairs of the Mítháqíyyih Hospital that was confiscated according to the Revolutionary Court and take necessary actions regarding the [confiscated hospital].²⁶⁶

Professor Hakím recorded the details of this meeting:

These two people, Dr. Khosrow Sadiqi Tehrani and Mr. Raziqi, questioned [me] the whole day, and while Dr. Tehrani was doing the interrogation, Mr. Raziqi... was interjecting remarks... [asserting that] 1) one-half of the people in charge of torturing others were Bahá'ís; 2) Mr.

²⁵⁹ *Id.*

²⁶⁰ This is one of the most powerful of the various state-run foundation-corporations established after the revolution to help the government consolidate economic and political control. This foundation controls thousands of workshops, factories, hotels and other properties obtained when they were nationalized in the earlier years of the revolution. The Foundation for the Dispossessed is under the authority of the Supreme Leader and exempt from oversight by other government organs. See Ali Aboutalebi, *State-Society Relations and Prospects for Democracy in Iran*, MIDDLE EAST REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, Vol. 5, No. 3. (September 2001). It was reported that the Foundation for the Dispossessed controls as much as \$80 billion in assets and has an annual turnover of \$10 billion. See Amir Taheri, *Who Rules Iran*, IRAN PRESS SERVICE, March 2004, available at http://www.iran-press-service.com/articles_2004/Mar_04/who_rules_iran_29304.htm (accessed November 28, 2006).

²⁶¹ *Namiyyih Ra'is Shubiyyih Yik-i Dadgah-i Babolsar bih Shahrदार-ih Babolsar Darbariyyih Ghabristan-i Bahá'í ha* [Letter from the Ministry of Justice of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the mayor and district governor of Babolsar regarding arrangements for burying dead Bahá'ís in confiscated Bahá'í cemetery], dated December 26, 1983 (on file with the IHRDC).

²⁶² *Id.*

²⁶³ *Namiyyih Doctor Manúchíhr-i Hakím Darbariyyih Bimaristan-i Mítháqíyyih* [Letter from Professor Manúchíhr Hakím regarding confiscation of Bahá'í hospital], dated 26/4/1358 (July 17, 1979) (on file with the IHRDC).

²⁶⁴ *Id.*

²⁶⁵ See Copy of Warrant dated June 13, 1979, reproduced in: National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Germany, *Die Bahá'í im Iran: Dokumentation der Verfolgung einer religiösen Minderheit* [The Baha'is in Iran: Documentation of the Pursuit of a Religious Minority] 131 (1985).

²⁶⁶ *Id.*

Hoveida, General Nasiri and Mr. Sabiti were Bahá'ís; 3) the Shah and Queen Farah were Bahá'ís.²⁶⁷

The Central Revolutionary Court further formalized the takeover of the hospital by ordering its confiscation. The court order cited the influence of Bahá'ís in founding, funding and operating the hospital, its connection to the Universal House of Justice, accusations of anti-Islamic propaganda and Zionism as reason for the confiscation.²⁶⁸ Other charges included that “out of the 290 employees of the Hospital, the 123 Bahá'ís ‘most probably have been responsible for advancing the interests of imperialism.’”²⁶⁹

Through an emissary, Prof. Hakím appealed to Prime Minister Bazargan on behalf of the hospital. The Prime Minister responded that he had no authority and that “[t]his confiscation is done by the Revolutionary Committee, which is under direct supervision of the Imam [Ayatollah Khomeini].”²⁷⁰ Prof. Hakím was murdered in Tehran by an unknown gunman on January 12, 1980.²⁷¹

As with the targeting of the Bahá'í leadership, the IHRDC concludes that the systematic destruction of important historic, cultural and religious monuments was designed to expunge all traces of the origins of the Bahá'í faith in Iran and to intimidate the Bahá'í community into abandoning their beliefs. The deprivation of objects of great significance and the destruction of community institutions seem explicitly designed to destroy the community's sense of identity and cohesiveness.

5.3. Economic and Social Repression

The post-revolutionary period was also a time of acute discrimination for ordinary members of the Bahá'í faithful. The authorities of the Islamic Republic imposed a number of hardships on members of the Bahá'í faith apparently designed to suffocate the economic life of the community. These included bars to employment and rules preventing Bahá'ís from entering educational institutions or owning property. This further resulted in a loss of livelihood, and economic stability for adults, and the deprivation of educational opportunities in public schools and higher education for their children. Bahá'í businessmen were denied permits, licenses, and government contracts. Because many of the individuals mentioned in this section of the report still reside in Iran, it has been necessary to conceal their identities behind pseudonymic initials. In each instance, specific documentation relating to these victims is held on file at the IHRDC.

Property

As late as 1982, the authorities made a regular practice of seizing the assets of executed Bahá'ís and their family members.²⁷² In some cases, the houses of executed Bahá'ís were actually seized prior to a public acknowledgment of their execution.²⁷³ There are numerous reported incidents of looting, vandalizing, and

²⁶⁷ *Namiyyih Doctor Manúchih-r-i Hakím Darbariyyih Bimaristan-i Mitháqíyyih* [Letter from Professor Manúchih-r Hakím regarding confiscation of Bahá'í hospital], dated 26/4/1358 (July 17, 1979) (on file with IHRDC).

²⁶⁸ *Ra'y-i Dadgah-i Inqilab Darbariyyih Mo'assisin-i Bimaristan-ih Mitháqíyyih* [Excerpts from the verdict of the Central Revolutionary Court ordering the confiscation of the Bahá'í Hospital (Mitháqíyyih Hospital) in Tehran], reprinted in BIC REPORT ON THE PERSECUTION OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY, *supra* note 81, at 80.

²⁶⁹ *Ra'y-i Dadgah-i Inqilab Darbariyyih Mo'assisin-i Bimaristan-ih Mitháqíyyih* [Excerpts from the verdict of the Central Revolutionary Court ordering the confiscation of the Bahá'í Hospital (Mitháqíyyih Hospital) in Tehran] (on file with IHRDC), reprinted in BIC REPORT ON THE PERSECUTION OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY, *supra* note 81, at 80.

²⁷⁰ *Namiyyih Doctor Manúchih-r-i Hakím Darbariyyih Bimaristan-i Mitháqíyyih* [Letter from Professor Manúchih-r Hakím regarding confiscation of Bahá'í hospital], dated 26/4/1358 (July 17, 1979) (on file with IHRDC).

²⁷¹ Letter from the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assembly of U.S., January 14, 1981 (on file with IHRDC).

²⁷² *Major Developments During December 1981/January 1982*, *supra* note 239, at 2.

²⁷³ *Id.*

setting fire to the private property of Bahá'ís, beginning in the months just prior to the Revolution and continuing after the Revolution.²⁷⁴ These events occurred across the country, ranging from villages, such as Kata, Khurmuaj, and Sangsar, to large cities like Shiraz, Tehran, and particularly Yazd.²⁷⁵ In many other cases, the properties of Bahá'ís were confiscated on orders from government officials and well respected clerics. Some of these properties were seized while the Bahá'ís were still alive, others were prohibited from passing through intestacy.

Ruling 59/70

In 1980, the Revolutionary Court in Yazd passed “Ruling 59/70” which empowered the local authorities led by Ayatollah Saduqi to confiscate privately-held Bahá'í property following the death of the owner.²⁷⁶ The actual text of this ruling has remained secret and inaccessible, although its implementation sheds much light onto its contents. At first, the damaging effects of this ruling were not immediately apparent, and its implementation proceeded very gradually. In the initial stages, individual Bahá'ís would be summoned to the Revolutionary Court, where it was confirmed that the individual was indeed Bahá'í and determined what property he or she held. From that hearing onwards, the property was considered to be confiscated.²⁷⁷ However, the ruling permitted the owner to remain, with his or her family, in the residence for the remainder of the owner's life. Upon the owner's death, however, the property could not remain in the family unless it was inherited by a Muslim family member.²⁷⁸ If no Muslim relative could be found, the property automatically transferred to the ownership of Imam Khomeini's Charitable Organization (*Komitiyyih Imdadih Imam Khomeini*).²⁷⁹ A copy of a letter from the Property Office of the Province of Yazd to the Registrar's Office of Yazd illustrates how Ruling 59/70 was enforced:

According to verdict number 73/861/D/R-23/6/73 issued by the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Yazd, considers the accused, Mihrabán Ahurá'í, son of Jamshíd, as applicable to the ruling 59/70. Therefore, an ownership deed is in the process of being issued in the name of the Commerce Complex of the Imam Khomeini's Charitable Organization in Yazd for the orchard... The aforementioned individual's deed of ownership [for this property] is therefore void and if the deed is presented to you by anyone, first, you are to refrain from doing any transaction with that individual and second, take possession of the presented deed and send it to this office.²⁸⁰

IHRDC has obtained several letters of this type, each detailing a near identical story. The court rulings include such language as “in light of the content of the file and the report... which indicates that the aforementioned and his wife have passed away and that their children are also Bahá'ís – hence this case is subject to ruling 59/70 of this court, and therefore and order in favor of the confiscation of their properties for the benefit of the Commerce Complex of the Imam's Charitable Organization is issued and announced.”²⁸¹

Ayatollah Saduqi proved particularly assiduous in his persecution of the Bahá'í community of Yazd. In a Friday sermon delivered on June 20, 1980, Ayatollah Saduqi denounced the Bahá'ís as heretics and announced that the Bahá'ís “were plotting in all the towns of Iran.” He invited the “faithful” to “seek out

²⁷⁴ See generally *Recent Attacks* (1978), *supra* note 255.

²⁷⁵ *Id.*

²⁷⁶ *Namiyyih Bahá'íyan-i Yazd* [Letter from Yazd], 25/9/1374 (December 16, 1995) at 1 (on file with IHRDC).

²⁷⁷ *Id.*

²⁷⁸ *Dadgah-i Inqilab-i Islamiyyih Yazd, Barg-i Bazju'i va Suratmajlis, Darbariyyih Amval-i CA* [Islamic Revolutionary Court of Yazd, Record of Interrogation and Proceedings regarding the property of CA], dated 2/12/1372 (February 21, 1994).

²⁷⁹ *Namiyyih Bahá'íyan-i Yazd* [Letter from Yazd], 25/9/1374 (December 16, 1995).

²⁸⁰ *Namih bih Daftarkhaniyyih Asnad-i Rasmiyyih Yazd Darbariyyih Mihrabán Ahurá'í* [Letter to Registrar's Office of Yazd, regarding Mihrabán Ahurá'í] (on file with IHRDC).

²⁸¹ *Dadgah-i Inqilab-i Islamiyyih Yazd, Barg-i Bazju'i va Suratmajlis, Darbariyyih CB* [Islamic Revolutionary Court of Yazd, Record of Interrogation and Proceedings, regarding the case of CB], dated 22/8/1373 (November 13, 1994) (on file with the IHRDC) [attached as Appendix 4].

the Bahá'ís and deliver them to the revolutionary prosecutor's office."²⁸² His remarks provoked a mob attack resulting in the destruction of hundreds of Bahá'í homes and the dismissal of several hundred Bahá'ís from their jobs.²⁸³

Purging Committees

On June 12, 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini appointed a Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution (SCCR), tasked with "Islamizing" the universities, training and selecting professors and students, and bringing the university curriculum and management policies in line with the goals of the Cultural Revolution.²⁸⁴ The SCCR was initially composed of six members,²⁸⁵ but over time it expanded to include "the heads of the three branches of government", which at the time included Khamenei (Executive), Ardebili (Judiciary) and Rafsanjani (Legislative),²⁸⁶ as well as the Ministers of Education and Culture and other members of parliament.²⁸⁷

Inspired by the Supreme Leader's initiative, a number of other "purging committees" sprang up during the summer of 1980 to eliminate supporters of the Shah and Westernized elements from the government and workplace.²⁸⁸ It has been estimated by the historian Said Amir Arjomand that by the beginning of July 1980, after less than ten days of purges, over 1,000 functionaries had been discharged and that 150 "purging committees" were operating across the country.²⁸⁹ Certain government ministries had individual "purging committees" which reviewed employee files and removed those deemed unsuitable.²⁹⁰ While some of these committees may have formed spontaneously, it appears that the government in other instances set up these committees.²⁹¹ Inevitably, Bahá'ís were among those targeted in these "purging" campaigns.

²⁸² Eric Rouleau, *Des militaires de haut rang sont arrêtés pour complot* [High-ranking military officers are arrested for plotting], LE MONDE, June 24, 1980; see also Letter from the Bahá'í International Community to Dr. Mansour Farhang, Permanent Representative to the UN (June 26, 1980) (on file with IHRDC) and THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 256.

²⁸³ THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD XVIII, *supra* note 113, at 256.

²⁸⁴ *Ra'is-i Jihad-i Danishgahi az Shura-i A'liyyih Inqilab-i Farhangi Miguyad, Paksazi Nabud, Tasfiyyih Bud* [The Head of the University Jihad Committee Talks About the Supreme Counsel of the Cultural Revolution; "It Was Not Cleansing, It Was Filtering."], SHARGH (online), 21/10/1384 (January 11, 2006), available at: <http://sharghnewspaper.com/841013/html/societ.htm#s351291> (accessed November 1, 2006) [hereinafter SHARGH]; Official website of Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution [*Shura-i A'liyyih Inqilab-i Farhangi*], available at <http://www.iranculture.org> (accessed December 8, 2006) [hereinafter SCCR website].

²⁸⁵ Khomeini appointed the six original members of the SCCR in his order of June 1980. They were: Dr. Bahonar, Dr. Hassan Habibi, Dr. Shariatmadari, Dr. Abdol-Karim Soroush, Jaleddin Farsi, Mahdi Rabbani Amlashi and Shams Al-Ahmad. SHARGH, *supra* note 284.

²⁸⁶ SCCR website, *supra* note 284, states that the addition of these members was announced by Khomeini in 1984.

²⁸⁷ SHARGH, *supra* note 284. The SCCR website, *supra* note 283, states that in 1983, Khomeini responded to a proposal made by then-president Khamenei to restructure the committee, and added the following members: Prime Minister, Ministers of Culture and Higher Education and Culture and Islamic Guidance, two students appointed by University Jihad and Mr. Ali Shariatmadari. Then, in 1984, the heads of the three branches of government were added, as well as Mahdavi Kani, Seyyed Kazem Akrami (Minister of Education), Reza Devri, Nasrollah Pourjavadi and Mohammed Reza Hashemi.

²⁸⁸ SHARGH, *supra* note 284. In an interview, an SCCR member denied that "cleansing" was a goal of the council—he conceded that "some people might have gone overboard", but stated these were not the result of a unified program on the part of the committee, but rather arbitrary interactions and personal actions not intended by Khomeini or the SCCR. *Id.*

²⁸⁹ THE TURBAN FOR THE CROWN, *supra* note 71, at 144. There is debate over whether these other groups are actually sub-organizations or independent of the SCCR.

²⁹⁰ See, e.g., BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, *The Purges in Iran* (July 1, 1980) (discussing purge committee for the Oil Ministry and quoting a Ministry spokesman as stating that those expelled include 500 persons associated with the dissolved SAVAK security apparatus, all Freemasons, members of the dissolved parliament and persons associated with the previous regime.)

²⁹¹ See, e.g., Assef Bayat, *Workers' Control after the Revolution*, MERIP REPORTS (March-April 1983) at 20, with regard to factory purging committees: "About a year and a half after the revolution, in August 1980, the government itself moved to set up special committees in [factory] production units dedicated to 'the purification... from the conspiracies of the agents of the West, the East, and the overthrown Pahlavi regime.' ... These purging bodies (*hay'at-i paksazi*) consisted of a representative each of the provincial governor, the Revolutionary Prosecutor, the factory management, the Ministry of Labor, and one elected employee."

Loss of Livelihood

Soon after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, circulars from the central government were disseminated throughout Iran, instructing that Bahá'ís were to be removed from civil service positions. In a typical example, the Governor of the Province of Fars, Ni'matollah Taqa, circulated a letter marked “confidential” warning that individuals who did not return to Islam would henceforth be expelled from government employment for the crime of immorality and would have no rights, as provided by Article 14, Part 3 of the National Employment Laws.²⁹² The letter emphasized that:

If you express regret and remorse about your affiliation with the wayward sect [of Bahá'ís]... and seek refuge in the rejuvenating bosom of Islam... your penitence will be accepted and you will be hired to work and your withheld wages will be paid.²⁹³

On June 30, 1980, *Jomhuri Eslami* published an article entitled “Payment to Bahá'ís from National Treasury has been declared *haram* [prohibited].” The article stated that 44 people had been dismissed from their positions under Article 440 of the Civil Service code, “on charges of belief in the Bahá'í creed.”²⁹⁴ When the Ministry of Education assured retired Bahá'ís that they would continue to receive their pensions, Ayatollahs Mahallati, Shirazi, and Dastgheib issued an order stating that giving money from the treasury to Bahá'ís was forbidden, and that anyone who violated this instruction would be considered *khati* [a transgressor].²⁹⁵ The Organization for Expansion and Renovation of Industries of Iran citing the Ayatollahs' edict on July 3, 1980, issued a similar circular.²⁹⁶ The circular also indicated that companies operating under the auspices of the organization were responsible, upon the identification of a Bahá'í employee, for suspending that individual and reporting the case to the organization's “Purge Committee” in Tehran.

Similarly, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs issued a letter to the Labor Department informing it of new regulations regarding the purging of Bahá'í employees. The document specified that:

In accordance with Paragraph 8 of Article 29 of the Reconstruction of Human Resources Policy for Ministries, Governmental Organizations and other Government-affiliated Offices which was approved on 5/7/136 [Oct. 27, 1981] by the Consultative Islamic Majlis, the punishment for membership in misguided sects recognized by all Muslims to be outside of Islam [having left Islam] or membership in organizations whose doctrine and constitution are founded on the basis of rejecting the divine religions, is permanent dismissal from governmental employment.²⁹⁷

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs further stated that government officials were forbidden from overturning such dismissal orders. Bahá'í employees, it was argued, had been legally prohibited from government employment since the adoption of the 1922 legislation and therefore, they were required to

²⁹² See *Namiyyih Ni'matollah Taqa bih Karmand-i Bahá'í* [Letter of expulsion from Ni'matollah Taqa, Governor of Fars Province] (date not legible) (on file with IHRDC).

²⁹³ *Id.*

²⁹⁴ *Az suyih Ayatollah Rabbani Shirazi, Ayatollah Dastgheib va Ayatollah Mahallati Pardakht-i Pul-i Beitu'l-mal bih Bahá'íyan Haram l'lam Shud* [From Ayatollah Rabbani-Shirazi, Ayatollah Dastgheib and Ayatollah Mahallati- Payment of money from public funds to Bahá'ís is declared prohibited], *JOMHOURI ESLAMI*, 9/4/1359 (June 30, 1980).

²⁹⁵ *Id.*

²⁹⁶ *Namiyyih Hassan Sadr, Mu'avin-i Vazir-i Sana'yih va Ra'is-i Hay'at-i Amil bih Sazman-i gustarish va Nawsaziyyih Sanayi'-i Iran* [Letter to Organization for Expansion and Renovation of Industries of Iran from the Deputy Minister of Industries and the Head of the Board of Directors, Hasan Sadr] 12/4/1359 (July 3, 1980) (on file with IHRDC) [**attached as Appendix 5**]. The circular cited a June 30, 1980 issue of *JOMHOURI ESLAMI* and was based on article 440 of the Employment Law of the State. A handwritten note at the bottom of the copy of the order on file with IHRDC requests that the human resources department review all employee files to identify such people.

²⁹⁷ *Namiyyih Hasan Mu'tamid Rizá'í az Idariyyih Kar va Umur-i Ijtima'i Darbariyyih Bahá'íyan* [Letter of dismissal from Hasan Mu'tamid Rizá'í, Deputy Supervisor of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs], dated 16/9/1360 (December 7, 1981) (on file with IHRDC).

return all and any wages earned from the National Treasury.²⁹⁸ In some cases, this would require the employees to return many years' worth of wages or face jail time.²⁹⁹

Sometime after a series of circulars had been distributed by the central government, public announcements were made of dismissals of Bahá'ís from corporations. These notices were either published in large newspapers or were in the form of personal letters to Bahá'í employees.

On September 13, 1980, the Ministry of Oil notified Bahá'í employees of the National Iranian Oil Company that their salaries and pensions had been suspended and that they should not come into work until further notice. However, the circular stated that if the employees denied their affiliation with Bahá'ísm in a written statement, their employment might be reconsidered.³⁰⁰ In Ahvaz, the Human Resource Taskforce of the Ministry of Oil notified Bahá'í employees that they had 15 days to report to the Office of Public Relations, or face penalty of law. The Taskforce's letter also called on all Ministry employees to identify Bahá'ís or anyone in communication with them.³⁰¹

In a letter to the ZamZam Company, the judge of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Kermanshah announced that "if Bahá'í workers and employees are willing to repent, and write in the personnel files that they adhere to the Islamic *Ithna Ashari* creed (the followers of the twelve Imams), and reproduce and publish this in the widely circulated newspapers along with their photographs" they could keep their jobs. They were given 20 days to fulfill this demand.³⁰²

In a February 1982 meeting of the Supreme Council of Banks, the Secretariat stated that Bahá'í employees "should be suspended from work and receive no money pending a final decision by the Board of Reconstruction of Human Resources." Following this decision, a letter was circulated at Mellat Bank requesting a list of Bahá'ís who refused to recant be sent to the Personnel Department "so that the necessary action [could] be taken."³⁰³

Irsaco Company in Tehran notified its Bahá'í employees in 1982 that "as long as they have not cut off their relation with this sect, and have not accepted the Islamic Republic, they do not have the right to enter this factory." The company emphasized that they were being fired purely on the basis of their faith, not because of any subversive actions.³⁰⁴

Bahá'í public servants typically received notification of their dismissal through a letter from their employer, instructing them to refrain from coming to work in the future unless they were prepared to publicly recant their faith. Letters of dismissal commonly noted that if the employee would simply recant, their employment or pension could be reinstated.

²⁹⁸ *Namiyyih Vazir-i Kishavarzi va Umran-i Rusta'i bih Karmand-i Ikhrayiyih Bahá'í* [Statement by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Construction, Stopping Payment to Bahá'ís], dated 26/6/1360 (September 17, 1981) (on file with IHRDC) [attached as **Appendix 6**].

²⁹⁹ Fergus M. Bordewich, *Holy Terror: Moslem Zealots Wage a Deadly War Against Bahá'í Heresies*, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Vol. 259 (April 1987) at 26.

³⁰⁰ *Namiyyih Mu'avin-i Umur-i Idari va Maliyyih Manatig-i Naftkhiz-i Vizarat-i Naft, Mohammad Reza Shammasi, bih CC* [Letter of Deputy Financial and Administrator officer of the Oil Producing Regions of the Ministry of Oil, Mohammad Reza Shammasi to CC], dated 8/6/1359 (August 30, 1980) (on file with IHRDC).

³⁰¹ *See Itila'iyih-yih Hay'at-i Badaviyyih Bazsaziyyih Niruyeh Insaniyyih Vizarat-i Naft-i Mantaqiyyih Ahvaz* [Announcement of the Office of Rebuilding the Task Force of the Ministry of Oil in Ahvaz], dated 25/3/1361 (June 15, 1982) (on file with IHRDC).

³⁰² *See Namiyyih Qaziyyih Shar'-i Dadgah-i Inqilab-i Islamiyyih Kermanshah bih Shirkat-i ZamZam-i Kermanshah* [Letter of Judge of Islamic Revolutionary Court of Kermanshah to ZamZam Company] dated 10/6/1360 (September 1, 1981) (on file with IHRDC).

³⁰³ *See Namiyyih Umumiyyih Bank-i Mellat bih Karkunan* [Mellat Bank Circular], dated 25/12/1360 (March 16, 1982), a follow-up to a circular dated 6/12/1360 (February 25, 1982) (on file with IHRDC).

³⁰⁴ *See Namiyyih Shirkat-i Irsaco bih Karmandan Darbariyyih Bahá'íyan-i Shirkat* [Letter from Irsaco Company], dated 9/3/1361 (May 30, 1982) (on file with IHRDC).

Some employers appear to have been reluctant to enforce the dismissal orders and provided letters which attested to the skills and contributions of those Bahá'ís who were fired. Warehouse manager CD was dismissed from the army because he was Bahá'í, despite the fact that his superiors testified that he “performed his duties to perfection.”³⁰⁵ In a similar instance, CE was dismissed from as an employee of a Tehran Travel Agency. The Agency’s termination letter recognized his “sincere services” and wished him “every success,” before adding regretfully: “[Because] you refused to conceal your belief and explicitly stated in this questionnaire [that was filled earlier] that you were a Bahá'í, hence... your employment is hereby terminated.”³⁰⁶

Occasionally, Bahá'ís employed in the private sector were also affected by the prohibition on Bahá'í employment. CF was instructed by the Revolutionary Committee in Gorgan to close down his independent business and hand it over to the authorities because of his “suspicious connection with anti-revolutionary elements and religious minorities.”³⁰⁷

Employees in the education sector were also significantly affected. In June 1979, Muhammad Raja’i, the Minister of Education, issued a memo referring to decree no. 14973/2 which ordered the expulsion of all Bahá'í teachers from the nation’s schools. The memo explained that “the Ministry of Education... will not allow, like the previous regime, the followers of the Bahá'í sect to stay in its educational unit, and through this channel, defile and lead astray the pure minds and thoughts of the innocent students,” and that “dismissal according to the existing law is a minimum punishment.”³⁰⁸ The ramifications of this memo extended across the Islamic Republic of Iran. For example, in Fars, a local “Purge Committee” under the Department of Education dismissed 44 Bahá'í teachers.³⁰⁹ In June 1980, an order was circulated by the superintendent of Sabzevar requiring the Sabzevar Ministry of Education to halt payment of all Bahá'í employees and send their names and last pay stubs to the Central Employment Office.³¹⁰

As with the dismissal of Bahá'ís from other sectors, Bahá'í employees under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education were given the option of recanting their faith in order to maintain their position. This was the case for CG who was told that she could either “announce that you do not adhere to this sect in one of the widely published newspapers (*Kayhan*, *Ettela'at*, *Jomhourī Eslami*) and send the clipping to the [Ministry of Education]” or seek to “obtain a testimony from one of the *Marjas* of Islam showing you do not adhere to the Bahá'í sect.”³¹¹

By 1987, over 11,000 Bahá'í government employees had lost their jobs as a result of the anti-Bahá'í legislation.³¹²

³⁰⁵ *Namih az Dayiriyyih Makhazīn – Shubiyyih Khudruha-yeh Artish Darbariyyih Agha-yih CD* [Letter from Army (Storage-Automotives Branch) about Mr. CD], dated 20/11/1358 (February 9, 1980) (on file with IHRDC).

³⁰⁶ *Namih az, Ra'is-i Shirkat-i Mosafiratiyyih bih Agha-yih CE* [Letter to CE from his employer], dated 21/6/1373 (September 12, 1994).

³⁰⁷ *Namiyyih Sitad-i Amaliyatiyyih Pasdaran-i Komiteh-yeh Inqilab-i Islamiyyih Fazil Abad-i Gorgan bih CF* [Letter to CF from Islamic Revolutionary Guards of Fazil Abad in Gorgan], dated 4/3/1360 (May 25, 1981) (on file with IHRDC).

³⁰⁸ *Namiyyih Mohammad Ali Raja'i Sarparast-i Vizarat-i Amuzish va Parvarish Darbariyyih Hokm-i 14974/2-1-4-1358* [Letter from Muhammad Ali Raja'i, Guardian of the Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran referring to Decree No. 14973/2], dated 1/4/1358 (June 22, 1979) (on file with IHRDC).

³⁰⁹ *Tavasut-i Kumisiun-i 5 nafariyyih Paksazi, 104 Farhangiyyih Fars Ikhraj va Baznishastih Shudand* [As Directed by the Five-member Purging Committee, 104 members of the Education Department of Fars have been Expelled and Put On Pension], *KAYHAN*, dated 9/4/1359 (June 30, 1980).

³¹⁰ *Tiligiram bih Amuzish va Parvarish-i Sabzevar az Idarih-yih Amuzish va Parvarish-i Shahrīstan-i Sabzevar* [Telegram regarding expulsion of employees at the Ministry of Education in Sabzevar to Sabzevar's Ministry of Education], dated June 1980 (on file with IHRDC).

³¹¹ *Namiyyih Vizarat-i Farhang va Amuzish-i Ali bih Khanum CG* [Letter from the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education to CG] (September 20, 1980) (on file with the IHRDC).

³¹² Fergus M. Bordewich, *Holy terror: Moslem zealots wage a deadly war against Bahá'í heresies*, *THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY* Vol. 259, at 36(5), April 1987.

The Denial of Education to Bahá'í Students

Bahá'í students were also targeted in the purge of the education system. In the post-revolutionary period, schools across Iran issued blanket statements prohibiting the enrollment of Bahá'í students, as was the case with Pishahang High School in July 1979; the school authorities distributed instructions to applying students which stated that “students must be followers of one of the official religions of the country (Muslim, Jewish, Christian or Zoroastrian).”³¹³

Many Bahá'í students who wished to enroll for the 1981-1982 school year were required to complete an application form issued by the Ministry of Education which included questions such as whether the applicant or his family were Bahá'í, and if so, if he or she was willing to recant.³¹⁴ Those who affirmed their Bahá'í faith were prohibited from admission. Bahá'í students already in school were often expelled in this period. Often they would receive individual letters notifying them of their expulsion which cited their faith as the reason for the decision, as was the case with CH who was expelled from his high school in the province of Kerman.³¹⁵ CI received a similar letter of expulsion from the head of her high school in 1981 because she admitted to being a Bahá'í and had “refused to participate in demonstrations or political debates.”³¹⁶

The Ministry of Education formalized the prohibition against Bahá'ís in the university system by issuing a decree in September of 1981, which identified membership in the “mised and heretical sect” of the Bahá'í faith as a “crime,” and prohibited Bahá'í professors and students alike from working for or attending colleges.³¹⁷ In a 1982 letter to CJ, the University Purge Committee of her university in Mashhad made it clear that her expulsion was a result of her Bahá'í faith, explaining that “all sects of Islam including the Shi'a consider the Bahá'í faith as a misguided sect for many reasons such as the system of belief in the Prophet, the imamate and their particular adherence to religious laws and regulations which are not derive from the Koran and tradition.”³¹⁸

Bahá'í students studying abroad also had their educational opportunities curtailed. In 1981 *Kayhan* newspaper reported a new law that defined thirty categories of students who were ineligible to receive funds wired to them by family members in Iran; category seven were those “students who are not followers of one of the official religions of the state.”³¹⁹

The IHRDC concludes that the totality of cultural, social and economic pressures placed on Bahá'ís individually and collectively were deliberately calculated to make normal life for the Bahá'í community of Iran unsustainable.

³¹³ *Namih bih Awliyayih Danish Amuzan Az Dabiristan-i Pishahang* [Instructions to the Parents from the Pishahang high school] (regarding the qualifications required of students, one of which was belief in one of the state religions, excluding Bahá'ís), dated 15/4/1358 (July 6, 1979) (on file with the IHRDC).

³¹⁴ *Pursishnamih Idarih Kullih Amuzish va Parvarish bih Danish Amuzan-i Bahá'í* [Questionnaire from the Ministry of Education for Bahá'í students] (1981) (on file with IHRDC).

³¹⁵ *Namih az Sarparast-i Madrisih Rahnama'i bih Aqa-yeh CK Vali Danishamuz CH* [Letter of expulsion from high school to CK father of CH], dated 1/9/1360 (November 22, 1981) (on file with IHRDC).

³¹⁶ *Namih bih CI az Sarparast-i Dabiristan* [Letter of expulsion from head of the High School to CI] (1981) (on file with the IHRDC).

³¹⁷ BIC REPORT ON THE PERSECUTION OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY, *supra* note 81, at 17.

³¹⁸ *Namih bih Khanum CJ az Danishgah* [Letter of expulsion to CJ from University Crusade organization of a University in Mashhad], 27/12/1360 (March 18, 1982) (on file with IHRDC).

³¹⁹ *Mugharrarat-i Jadid-i Irsal-i Arz-i Danishjoo-ye Eela'am Shod* [New laws for wiring foreign currency to students outside of Iran was announced], *KAYHAN*, 13/5/1360 (August 4, 1981).

6. Present Conditions

6.1. International Intervention

By 1983, Iran was beginning to face international pressure to end its persecution of the Bahá'ís. UN resolutions initially failed to impact the actions of the Islamic Republic³²⁰ and on March 14, 1984, the Commission on Human Rights passed resolution 1984/54, which mandated the appointment of a Special Representative to monitor the human rights situation in Iran.³²¹

The Special Representative's reports typically provoked an aggressive response from the Iranian delegation to the UN,³²² especially when it came to the Bahá'í issue. The Islamic Republic's refusal to accept the Bahá'í community as a religious minority became the subject of an ongoing battle between UN Special Representative Reynaldo Galindo Pohl and the Iranian regime, as this passage from one of Pohl's reports reflects:

He [the IRI delegate, Kamal Kharrazi] said that those resolutions [concerning the Bahá'ís] contained subjective criteria and lacked objectivity and good will. He said, in particular, that, as on previous occasions, such resolutions attempted to confer on groups a status that they did not really have. That indirect language referred to the attribution of the status of religious minority to the Bahá'ís. Those problems had prevented the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran from cooperating fully with the Special Representative...³²³

Iran continued to contend that the Bahá'í faith did not constitute a religious community but was a political organization that fronted as a religion to gain sympathy from the international community.³²⁴ Iranian representatives to the UN and other countries justified mistreatment of the Bahá'ís by claiming, *inter alia*, that: (a) the Bahá'í faith was created by the British in order to create division amongst Muslims³²⁵; (b) Bahá'ís were Zionist spies gathering information to be taken back to Israel³²⁶; and (c) Bahá'ís had

³²⁰ For an index listing resolutions passed on Iran, see NAZILA GHANEA, HUMAN RIGHTS, THE UN, AND THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN 436-437 (2002) [hereinafter GHANEA].

³²¹ *Id.* at 114-121. Andre Aguilar of Venezuela was the first to be appointed to this position; however, he was repeatedly denied permission to visit Iran, which hindered his ability to fulfill his mandate and eventually prompted his resignation. As the Commission considered new appointments for the position, Iran requested an "objective, impartial and knowledgeable individual" from the Muslim world or third world, with an understanding of Islamic law, evidently intending to suggest that the previous reports on the Bahá'ís had been biased. On July 20, 1986, Reynaldo Galindo Pohl of El Salvador was appointed as the new Special Representative. *See id.* (noting at 121 that "Norway expressed concern about Iran's right, as a country under special consideration by the Commission, to stipulate the qualifications of the next Special Representative.")

³²² *See, e.g.*, AFSHARI, *supra* note 145 at 147 (citing, e.g., Report of the UN Economic and Social Council on the Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, UN Doc. A/42/648 (October 12, 1987) at p. 16, ¶ 47; and Report of the UN Economic and Social Council on the Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, UN Doc. A/44/620 (November 2, 1989), at p. 7, ¶ 4).

³²³ Report of the UN Economic and Social Council on the Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, UN Doc. A/44/620 (November 2, 1989), at ¶ 94.

³²⁴ *See* Transcript of Statements by Head of Delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Khoshroshahi, before the United Nations Human Rights Committee (July 19, 1982) at 6 (stating that "Bahá'í leaders claim hypocritically and shamelessly that they do not interfere in political affairs") [hereinafter Khoshroshahi Transcript] (on file with IHRDC).

³²⁵ *See* Letter from Press and Information Section of Iranian Embassy in the U.K. (August 18, 1983) (on file with the IHRDC) [hereinafter Letter from Iranian Embassy in U.K.] (asserting that "[t]he essence of Bahá'ísm is rather a successful experience by imperialism and the enemies of Islam... particularly Britain and the Czarist Russia... the fabricated mock Bahá'ísm has always been an instrumental in showing discord and disunion among the Muslim people.") SANASARIAN, *supra* note 16 at 115, notes that "[m]any believed that Bahá'ísm was a fake movement founded in Iran by the British colonialists as an instrument of indirect rule in order to destroy Shi'ism and progressive movements."

³²⁶ *See* Letter from Iranian Embassy in U.K., *supra* note 325, at 3 (stating that "[j]ust as the Islamic Revolution was capable of removing all espionage bases in the country of the Imperialists, it can and is determined to crush the Zionist espionage dens acting under cover of Bahá'ísm."); *see also* Khoshroshahi Transcript, *supra* note 324, at 7 (stating that "during the long black night of Pahlavi regime in Iran [Bahá'ís] worked hand-in-hand with Zionism.")

conspired with the Pahlavi regime and the SAVAK secret police.³²⁷ The Bahá'í International Community invited delegates from the UN Commission on Human Rights to investigate the Bahá'í headquarters in Haifa, Israel, and determine for themselves the accuracy of the Iranian government's accusations.³²⁸

By the late 1980s, a combination of increasing international pressure and the internal stresses caused by the Iraq-Iran war seems to have led to a reduction in the overt acts of persecution directed against the Bahá'ís. In 1988, Reynaldo Galindo Pohl reported that, although 152 Bahá'ís were still in prison, the "intensity of the campaign of the persecution against the Bahá'ís had somewhat diminished in the first half of 1988."³²⁹

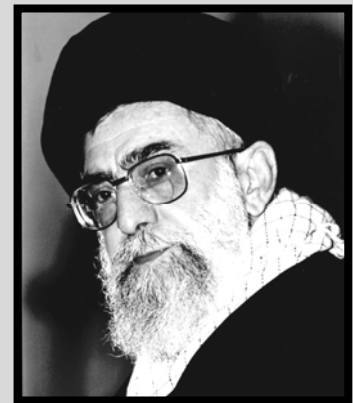
6.2 Renewed Focus on the Bahá'í Question

After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini on June 3, 1989, the constitution was amended and the Assembly of Experts elected a new Supreme Leader.³³⁰ Hojjatolislam Ali Khamenei, who had held the office of the presidency from 1981-1989, was elevated by the Council of Experts to the rank of Ayatollah and chosen to be their Supreme Leader.³³¹ Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected as the new President.

Evidence of a renewed regime focus on the Bahá'í community came in a confidential memo dated February 25, 1991, written by Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Reza Hashemi Golpaygani, Secretary of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution.³³² The memo summarizes the steps taken towards the development of a new government policy on "The Bahá'í Question" before enumerating the actual policy initiatives that resulted from the process. In December of 1990, Ayatollah Khamenei instructed President Rafsanjani

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has been Iran's Supreme Leader since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Khamenei studied under prominent clerical leaders such as Ayatollah Borujerdi and Ayatollah Khomeini, and became one of revolutionary followers of Khomeini. After the revolution he served as the Revolutionary Council's representative to the Revolutionary Guards, Deputy Minister of Defense from November 1979 to February 1980, and was appointed to the prominent position of *Imam Jum'ah* (Friday prayer leader) of Tehran in February 1980. In 1982, he was elected President of the IRI and in 1986 President of the Expediency Council. In 1990, the Council of Experts elected Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader.



³²⁷ See Khoshroshahi Transcript, *supra* note 324, at 7 (stating that "the Bahá'í hypocritical, criminal leaders were they key figures and most important policymakers of the God-forsaken regime of the Shah.")

³²⁸ See, e.g., Bahá'í International Community Statement to the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights regarding Agenda item 12: Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, March 2, 1983, at 3.

³²⁹ Report of the Economic and Social Council on the Situation of human rights in Iran, October 13, 1988, U.N. Doc. A/43/705, ¶¶ 36 and 41.

³³⁰ Khomeini's initial successor was to be Ayatollah Montazeri, but after Montazeri publicly denounced the mass prison executions which took place in 1988, he was no longer in consideration for this position. See ERVAND ABRAHAMIAN, TORTURED CONFESSIONS (1999) 219-221; see also Letter from Ayatollah Khomeini to Ayatollah Montazeri (November 22, 1997), available at: <http://www.irvl.net/Translation%20of%20Ayatollah%20Khomeini's%20Letter%20Dismissing%20Montazeri.htm> (accessed October 23, 2006.)

³³¹ LIFE OF THE AYATOLLAH, *supra* note 38, at 309-310.

³³² Memorandum by Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Reza Hashemi Golpaygani, Secretary of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, dated 6/12/1369 (February 25, 1991) [hereinafter SCCR Memorandum] [attached as Appendix 7]. The document also appears to contain a note from the Supreme Leader (see IRAN'S SECRET BLUEPRINT, *supra* note 186, at 51). This document was brought to the attention of UN Special Representative Reynaldo Galindo Pohl in 1993; see <http://info.bahai.org/article-1-8-3-14.html>. The IRI, however, claimed the document was a forgery. In 1991, members of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution included President Rafsanjani, Abdullah Ja'far Ali Jasbi, Ahmad Ahmadi, Hassan Ibrahim Habibi, Ali Akbar Velayati, Iraj Fazel, Ali Shariatmadari, and Reza Davari Ardakani.

to address “the Bahá’í Question,” and the issue was referred to the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR).³³³ It is clear from the text of the memo that Ayatollah Khamenei was seeking concrete policy proposals “devised in such a way that everyone will understand what should or should not be done.”³³⁴ The SCCR took into consideration the contents of the IRI constitution, religious and civil laws and general policies of the country before developing the following policy guidelines:

A. General status of the Bahá’ís within the country system:

1. They will not be expelled from the country without reason
2. They will not be arrested, imprisoned, or penalized without reason
3. The Government’s dealing with them must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked.

B. Educational and cultural status:

1. They can be enrolled in schools provided they have not identified themselves as Bahá’ís.
2. Preferably, they should be enrolled in schools which have a strong and imposing religious ideology.
3. They must be expelled from universities, either in the admission process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Bahá’ís.
4. Their political (espionage) activities must be dealt with according to appropriate Government laws and policies, and their religious and propaganda activities should be answered by giving them religious and cultural responses, as well as propaganda.
5. Propaganda institutions (such as the Islamic Propaganda Organization) must establish an independent section to counter the propaganda and religious activities of the Bahá’ís.
6. A plan must be devised to confront and destroy their cultural roots outside the country.

C. Legal and social status:

1. Permit them a modest livelihood as is available to the general population.
2. To the extent that it does not encourage them to be Bahá’ís, it is permissible to provide them the means for ordinary living in accordance with the general rights given to every Iranian citizen, such as ration booklets, passports, burial certificates, work permits, etc.
3. Deny them employment if they identify themselves as Bahá’ís.
4. Deny them any position of influence, such as in the educational sector, etc.³³⁵

Many of the repressive measures introduced against the Bahá’ís during the 1980s regarding economic, social and cultural rights are reiterated in the 1991 document, demonstrating very little change from policies laid out at the beginning of the revolution.

³³³ SCCR Memorandum, *supra* note 331.

³³⁴ *Id.*

³³⁵ *Id.*

6.3. Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education

Since Bahá'í youths were denied access to a university education, the Bahá'í community created the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE). The school was started as a small, underground operation in 1987 in order to meet the educational needs of the Bahá'í faithful. By 1998, it had a student enrollment of 900 students, a staff of 150 academics and offered complete degree courses in 10 subjects. Classes took place in private homes and were extremely decentralized to avoid provoking the government.³³⁶ Nevertheless, in September of 1998, the Iranian authorities arrested 36 members of the faculty and raided over 500 homes across Iran. Books, computers, records, lab materials, and other equipment were all confiscated.³³⁷ The *New York Times* reported:

The materials confiscated were neither political nor religious and the people arrested were not fighters or organizers. They were lecturers in subjects like accounting and dentistry; the materials seized were textbooks and laboratory equipment.³³⁸

After the 1998 raids the BIHE began to rebuild, although it continued to face further obstacles placed in its way by the IRI. From 2001 through 2002, classrooms continued to be shut down, faculty members were harassed and Revolutionary Guards in Mashad and Shiraz confiscated the qualifying exams of students during their examinations. Instruction continues through correspondence courses and where possible classes continue to meet discreetly in small groups.³³⁹ Although Western schools have begun to recognize BIHE graduate degrees, the IRI government refuses to recognize BIHE graduates as members of their profession.³⁴⁰

6.4 A New Threat?

Hate Speech

In 2001, the Islamic Republic Documentation Center, which operates under the auspices of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, also published a book entitled *Bahá'ism in Iran* which purports to demonstrate that Bahá'í faith was introduced as a socio-political movement by the colonial powers in an effort to undermine the power and religious authority of the Shi'a clergy.³⁴¹

Since the election of President Ahmadinejad, a new campaign against the Bahá'í community in Iran has begun to take shape in the Iranian media and there some alarming echoes of the 1955 and 1980s campaigns. Four days after the election, *Kayhan*, the government-sponsored newspaper edited by Supreme Leader's representative, Hossein Shariatmadari, began running a series of negative articles about the Bahá'í faith.³⁴² The scope of the articles ranged from historical canards to supposed espionage activities, and the alleged immoral conduct of the community. The following titles from articles published by *Kayhan* in 2005 capture the flavor of their content:

³³⁶ IRAN'S SECRET BLUEPRINT, *supra* note 186, at 63.

³³⁷ BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, CLOSED DOORS: IRAN'S CAMPAIGN TO DENY HIGHER EDUCATION TO BAHÁ'ÍS, available at: <http://denial.Bahá'í.org/> (accessed October 23, 2006) at 19, 23.

³³⁸ Ethan Bronner, *Iran Closes 'University' Run Covertly by the Bahá'ís*, NEW YORK TIMES, October 29, 1998, at A7.

³³⁹ BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, CLOSED DOORS: IRAN'S CAMPAIGN TO DENY HIGHER EDUCATION TO BAHÁ'ÍS, available at: <http://denial.Bahá'í.org/004.php> (accessed October 23, 2006).

³⁴⁰ See *BIHE History and Overview* at http://www.bihe.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=198 (accessed December 7, 2006).

³⁴¹ SEYYED SA'ID ZAHID ZAHIDANI & MOHAMMAD ALI SALAMI, *BAHÁ'ÍYAT DAR IRAN* [BAHÁ'ÍSM IN IRAN] (Islamic Republic Documentation Center, 2001).

³⁴² Bahá'í International Community, *Summary and Analysis of Recent Media Attacks*, available at <http://www.Bahá'í.org/iranthreat/mediaattacks> (accessed October 18, 2006).

The Báb under the Tutelage of the Jews, October 29, 2005³⁴³
Contradictions in Teachings of Bahá'ism, November 10, 2005³⁴⁴
The British Handwriting on the Agenda of Bahá'ism, November 14, 2005³⁴⁵
Promoter of Terrorism, November 19, 2005³⁴⁶
The Helper of the Zionists, November 22, 2005³⁴⁷
Intertwined with the Zionist, November 23, 2005³⁴⁸
Warnings of the Imam against the Influence of the Bahá'ís, November 24, 2005³⁴⁹
A Cesspool of Corruption, November 29, 2005³⁵⁰

Kayhan followed up these articles in January 2006 by publishing the full text of the indictment and court proceedings of a sensational 1949 case concerning the murder of a Muslim family in Abarqú that was blamed on local Bahá'ís. The officers of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Isfandabad and other prominent members of the Bahá'í community were accused of inciting the crime, motivated by the fact that the victims had been heard slandering and insulting the Bahá'í faith.³⁵¹

Since July 2006, *Kayhan* has serialized - in 77 installments - *The Inauspicious Shadow* by Mahnaz Ra'ufi, a book which purports to describe the Bahá'í faith from the point of view of a former Bahá'í who has converted to Islam.³⁵² Ra'ufi portrays the Bahá'í institutions as being corrupt and hungry for both money and power. An extended interview with Ra'ufi was published in 14 parts between October 14 and November 2 in which she repeated her accusations about the perfidious character of the Bahá'í faith.

Informal reports from inside Iran suggest that these media campaigns have already provoked acts of violence directed against the Bahá'í community, most notably in the city of Yazd.

Collecting Names

On March 20, 2006, Asma Jahangir, the UN Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Freedom of Religion or Belief received a confidential memo from sources inside Iran.³⁵³ The memo, stamped "Urgent", was distributed by the Command Headquarters of the Iranian Armed Forces. It stated:

According to the instruction of the Exalted Rank of the Supreme Leader, His Holiness Ayatollah Khamenei, the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces has been given the mission to acquire a comprehensive and complete report of all the activities of these sects (including political, economic, social and cultural) for the purpose of identifying all the individuals of these misguided sects. Therefore, we request that you convey to relevant authorities to collect any and all

³⁴³ *Báb dar Maktab-i Yahudiyan*, available at www.kayhannews.ir/840807/8.htm (accessed April 4, 2006).

³⁴⁴ *Tanaqúz dar Amuzihayyih Bahá'íyat*, available at www.kayhannews.ir/840819/8.htm (accessed April 18, 2006).

³⁴⁵ *Khat-i Ingilis dar Dastur-i Kar-i Bahá'íyat*, available at www.kayhannews.ir/840823/8.htm (accessed April 18, 2006).

³⁴⁶ *Muravvij-i Terrorism*, available at www.kayhannews.ir/840828/8.htm (accessed April 18, 2006).

³⁴⁷ *Yavar-i Sihunist-ha*, available at www.kayhannews.ir/840901/8.htm (accessed April 18, 2006).

³⁴⁸ *Dar ham Tanidigi Ba Jami'iyih Sihunist-ha*, available at www.kayhannews.ir/840902/8.htm (accessed April 18, 2006).

³⁴⁹ *Ilam-i Khatar-i Imam 'Alayh-i Nufuz-i Bahá'íyan*, available at www.kayhannews.ir/840903/8.htm (accessed April 18, 2006).

³⁵⁰ *Munjalab-i fisad*, available at www.kayhannews.ir/840908/8.htm (accessed April 18, 2006).

³⁵¹ *Matn-i Kayfarkhast-i dadsitan-i Yazd 'Alayhi Muttahamin-i Yik Qatl, Bahá'íyan va Majarayih Qatl dar Abarqu* [Content of the Indictment of the Prosecutor of Yazd against Those Charged with Murder: the Bahá'ís and the Story of a Murder in Abarqú], <http://www.kayhannews.ir/841105/8.htm> , <http://www.kayhannews.ir/841106/8.htm#other801> , <http://www.kayhannews.ir/841108/8.htm#other801> , <http://www.kayhannews.ir/841109/8.htm#other801> and <http://www.kayhannews.ir/841110/8.htm#other801> (accessed October 27, 2006).

³⁵² MAHNAZ RA'UFI, *SAYIYIH SHUM, KAHTIRAT-I YIK NIJAT YAFTIH AZ BAHÁ'ÍYAT* [THE INAUSPICIOUS SHADOW; MEMOIR OF A PERSON RESCUED FROM BAHÁ'ISM] (Kayhan Research Institute, 2006). This book was published in serial form by KAYHAN newspaper between July 15, 2006 and October 12, 2006.

³⁵³ Press release issued by the United Nations, *Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief concerned about treatment of followers of Bahá'í Faith in Iran* (March 20, 2006).

information about the above mentioned activities of these individuals, in a highly confidential manner, and report it to this Command Headquarters.³⁵⁴

The letter is signed by Major General Dr. Seyyed Hossein Firuz Abadi, the Chairman of the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces. The document was forwarded to the Ministry of Information of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Belief-Political [organization] of the [office of] the Commander-in-Chief, the Commander of the [Revolutionary] Guard, the Commander of the Basij Resistance Forces of the Revolutionary Guard, the Deputy of the Intelligence Branch of the Police Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Deputy of the Intelligence Branch of the Police Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Representative of [Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei] in the Revolutionary [Guard], the Chairman of the Belief-Political Organization of the Police Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Chief Commander of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran.³⁵⁵

Soon after the Special Rapporteur received this letter, the Iranian regime started arresting members of the Bahá'í community. Those who were arrested were taken into interrogations and released after a few days. The Bahá'í International Community believes that these “revolving door” detentions were intended to intimidate Iranian Bahá'ís and forestall any further protests. There have been 125 such arrests since the beginning of 2005.³⁵⁶

On May 19, 2006, 54 Bahá'í youths were detained in the city of Shiraz. The youths were part of a larger group engaged in a local educational project, modeled after a UNICEF initiative, in which participants taught classes to underprivileged children. The volunteers, who were both Bahá'í and Muslim, had received permission, in writing, from the Islamic Council of Shiraz, to conduct these classes. The authorities initially detained all the volunteers but soon released the Muslim members of the group and one 15-year-old Bahá'í girl without charge. The remaining Bahá'í volunteers were held for a further month before being released on bail. Their trial is pending although the IHRDC has not been able to establish the charges brought against them.³⁵⁷

On August 19, 2006, the Ministry of Interior circulated a letter to the deputies responsible for political security in the various Offices of the Governor General around the country, stating that:

Respectfully, according to the reports we have received, some of the elements of the perverse wayward sect of Bahá'ísm are attempting to proselytize and propagate the ideology of Bahá'ísm, under the cover of social and economic activities. In view of the fact that this sect is illegal and that it is exploited by international and Zionist organizations against the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we therefore ask you to order the relevant offices to cautiously and carefully monitor and manage their [the Bahá'ís'] social activities. In addition, complete the requested information on the attached form and forward it to this office for its use by 15 Shahrivar [September 6, 2006] so that it can be used.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁴ Letter from the Office of the Commander in Chief to multiple recipients regarding “Identification of Individuals of the Misguided Sects of Bahá'ísm and Bábísm”, dated 7/8/1384 (October 29, 2005) (on file with IHRDC) [attached as Appendix 8].

³⁵⁵ *Id.*

³⁵⁶ Bahá'í International Community, *Fifty-four Bahá'ís arrested in Iran* (May 24, 2006), available at: <http://www.Bahá'í.org/persecution/newsreleases/24-05-06> (accessed October 18, 2006);

Human Rights Watch, *Iran: Scores Arrested in Anti-Bahá'í Campaign* (June 6, 2006), available at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/06/05/iran13515.htm> (accessed October 23, 2006).

³⁵⁷ *Id.*

³⁵⁸ Letter from the Ministry of Interior to Political-Security Deputies of the offices of the Governors' General, dated 28/5/1385 (August 19, 2006) (on file with IHRDC) [attached as Appendix 9].

7. Conclusion

Since the foundation of the faith the Bahá'í community in Iran has suffered waves of persecution. Hostility towards the Bahá'ís has deep roots in the Iranian population – particularly among the members of the Shi'a majority. The Shi'a clergy and political elites have exploited this hostility on numerous occasions - most notably in the mid-1950s and then again during the Islamic Revolution and in the post-revolutionary period.

The clerical establishment in Iran views the Bahá'í religion as being heretical and has been consistent in its efforts to marginalize and otherwise undermine the faith. Since the introduction of the 1979 Islamic Constitution, Bahá'í religious practice has effectively been criminalized inside Iran. The members of three successive Bahá'í national assemblies have been eliminated on the flimsiest of pretexts, as have numerous local community leaders. Sites of immense religious and cultural significance to the Bahá'ís have been destroyed with the connivance of the state authorities. Ordinary Bahá'ís have been subjected to an extraordinary degree of social exclusion.

Although the level of active repression has fluctuated since the initial years of the Islamic revolution because of both domestic political shifts and external pressures, the clerical establishment's ideological hostility towards the Bahá'í faith has remained constant. The current Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been closely associated with anti-Bahá'í campaigns. The 1991 Golpaygani memo provides a graphic insight into Khamenei's thinking on "The Bahá'í Question." This document makes clear Khamenei's intention to exclude Bahá'ís from mainstream Iranian life, block the development of their faith, and perhaps most sinister of all, "destroy" their cultural roots outside the country.

Growing tensions between the Islamic Republic and the international community over Iran's nuclear program and the return of populist conservative politicians, like President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to power have strengthened Ayatollah Khamenei's position to act against the Bahá'ís once more.

It is against this backdrop that the IHRDC views recent instructions from the Supreme Leader to the Iranian security forces to gather identifying particulars on surviving members of the Bahá'í community with alarm. Given the Islamic Republic's history of implacable hostility towards the Bahá'ís, and the IRI leadership's personal animus towards the faith, the IHRDC is greatly concerned that the Bahá'í community in Iran may soon face another cycle of repression and violence.

Methodology

IHRDC gathered information for this report from the examination of the following sources:

- *Testimony of victims and witnesses.* These included witness statements taken by IHRDC attorneys, accounts written at the time of the event, and personal memoirs.
- *Government documents.* These include recorded public statements by state officials, statements released by Iranian government agencies and documents relating to judicial proceedings, such as the minutes of revolutionary trials published in the newspapers or transcripts of court proceedings.
- *Documents issued by inter-governmental organizations.* These include UN resolutions emanating from the General Assembly and reports by United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as reports by regional organizations such as the European Union.
- *Documents prepared by NGOs.* IHRDC has used information gathered by human rights monitors such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.
- *Books and articles written by private individuals.* These include accounts published by civil servants from the Islamic Republic of Iran who ordered these violations to be committed, and those who implemented these orders, or simply witnessed their issuance and/or implementation.
- *The Bahá'í International Community.* The Bahá'í World Center and its subsidiary organs have extended the IHRDC access to their archives.
- *Academic articles.* A number of historians and jurists have written on the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'ís.
- *Photographs.* These include photos of attacks on Bahá'í property that have been taken by members of the Bahá'í community as well those published by the Iranian media since 1979.

Where the report cites or relies on information provided by government actors or other involved parties it specifies the source of such information and evaluates the information in light of the relative reliability of each source.

Many individual Bahá'ís mentioned in this report still reside in Iran, so it has been necessary to conceal their identities behind pseudonymic initials. In each instance, specific documentation relating to these victims is held on file at the IHRDC.

Look for these forthcoming IHRDC Reports:

Murder at Mykonos: A Case Study

A report on the 1992 murder of four Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) activists in Berlin, Germany, by agents of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS).

A Faith on Trial: A Case Study

A report on the arrest and execution of twenty-two Bahá'ís in Shiraz in 1983, who refused to recant their faith to save their lives.



On August 21, 1980, all nine members of the Bahá'í National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, were arrested while attending a meeting at a private home in Tehran and subsequently disappeared. Despite repeated requests for information by their families, their fate remains unknown. This is only one incident in a long campaign against the Bahá'í community of Iran.