

[TRANSCRIPT OF ORIGINAL NEWS ARTICLE IN ENGLISH]

30 May 1979

CABLE TO HIS EXCELLENCY MEHDI BAZARGAN PRIME MINISTER IRAN TEHRAN

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

We are deeply distressed that the holy places of the Baha'i Faith in Iran continue to be occupied by armed men that acts of repression are being increasingly directed against the Baha'is and their properties, and that statements in the Iranian press make virulent and false attacks on their faith. These unfounded press statements can only serve to inflame the animosity and stir the passions of the Mobs against a proscribed community. The firm assurances given by your excellency and other responsible authorities have led us to hope that all minorities and citizens of the Islamic Republic will be justly treated and their rights protected. But since the Bahá'ís in Iran have no opportunity to deny and disprove allegations made against them, we feel it essential to address this letter to your excellency on behalf of the Bahá'í World Community and to officially place on record our position in respect of the various charges now being levelled against the Bahá'ís in your country.

Baha'is are accused of being enemies of Islam. We state unequivocally that Baha'i writings clearly assert that the Holy Quran is a divinely revealed book, declare the station of Muhammad as the apostle of God and uphold the exalted position of the Imams as His appointed and lawful successors. Indeed the Bahá'í Faith is the only independent religion of the world, apart from Islam itself, which fearlessly acknowledges the rightful position of the founder of Islam, His Book and His Successors. Every person who wishes to espouse the Bahá'í faith, whether he be a Zoroastrian, a Jew, A Christian, A Hindu or a Buddhist, even an Atheist, can do so only after sincerely accepting the claim and station of Muhammad, The Prophet of God.

Another accusation asserts an alliance between the Baha'i Faith and Zionism, and in support of this view it is argued that the Bahá'í World Center is in Israel, that funds are sent by Bahá'ís to that country, and that references are found in Bahá'í writings to the return of the Jews to the Holy Land.

In reply to these charges Baha'is point out:

- 1) The Establishment of the world centre of the Baha'i Faith in the Holy Land dates from the arrival of Baha'u'llah in that country in the year 1868, long before the establishment of the State of Israel and has nothing to do with Zionism. He was exiled to that land in compliance with the orders of two Islamic governments, namely, Iran and Turkey, thus Establishing the spiritual centre of the Baha'i in the Holy Land, as is ample documented by historical evidence.
- 2) In accordance with the clear requirements of the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, its world spiritual and administrative centres must always be united in one locality. Therefore, as an act of faith, Baha'i cannot remove from the Holy Land their world administrative centre. Thus separating it from the spiritual centre. It is therefore to that land – a Land held Holy by followers of three other world faiths

and to which pilgrims of these faiths direct their steps – which Baha'is pilgrims travel to visit the Qiblah of their faith and other sites closely associated with its founders. It is also in that Land that the supreme religious body of the Faith. The Universal House of Justice has its seat.

- 3) Contributions sent by Baha'is to the Baha'is World Center in Israel are solely and exclusively for the upkeep of their holy Shrines and historic sites, and for the administration of their faith. The followers of other religions likewise support their own holy places and administrative offices situated in that land. Including contributions offered by Muslims for the upkeep and repairs of the Masjid_i_Aqsa in Jerusalem. Furthermore, it is a principle of the Bahá'í Faith that Baha'is institutions do not and cannot accept contributions from Non- Baha'is, whether individuals, institutions in Israel, such as the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, which apply for and receive government subsidies for the upkeep of their religious endowments, does not accept, as a matter of principle, any such subsidies from the government, and maintains itself and its properties solely from the financial assistance it receives from the adherents of the Baha'is Faith in all lands.
- 4) The references in Baha'i writings to the return of the Jews to the holy land conform in word and in spirit with explicit prophecies found in the scriptures of other faiths, notably in the verses of the Holy Bible. It is therefore intolerable that Baha'is are singled out for special condemnation and abuse because of statements on this theme found in Baha'is writings.

Other accusations charge the Baha'is with being agents of imperialistic and foreign powers, instruments of SAVAK, and that some members of the community had been tools or leaders of the previous regime. These charges are readily refuted by explicit teachings of the Baha'i Faith itself which unmistakably condemn the methods of unscrupulous politicians and emphatically warn against violence, subversion, sedition and involvement in the political affairs of the world. We also should bring to your attention the following specific points:

- 1) We read in the Iranian press that such leaders of the previous regime as Amir Abbas Hoveida, Mansur Rowhani and Parviz Sabeti were Baha'is. These statements are incorrect. The alleged membership of these individuals in the Baha'is Faith stems from the fact that their fathers or families had once been Baha'is. It is a basic principle of the Baha'i religion that the gift of faith springs from the free choice of the individual and cannot be automatically and blindly inherited from an earlier generation.
- 2) The Baha'i principle of non-involvement in politics is so fundamental that in one case under the old regime when an enrolled Baha'i accepted appointment as a cabinet minister he was expelled from the Baha'i community.
- 3) Government assignments in fields such as medicine, administration and management are of course open to Baha'is. To such posts Baha'is were assigned under the previous regime, and this was plainly due to their unquestioned trustworthiness and integrity. To attach the blame of collaboration with and promotion of, the pursuits of the past administration to such reliable members of Iranian society is untenable.
- 4) If any individual Baha'i acts in a manner contrary to the law of the land. He should of course be prosecuted, but this in no way should tarnish the sanctity of the teachings he chose to ignore or cast a slur on the morality of the religious community to which he belongs.

Your excellence, the Baha'is of the world regards Iran with deep affection. To them, Iran is the cradle of their faith, and the Iranians the compatriots of those who have illumined their lives with the light of love and hope. Many long to visit your country and make pilgrimage to sacred sites associated with the lives of those they reverence most dear in their Hearts.

We now appeal to you, your excellency, on behalf of the Baha'is of the entire world to come to the rescue of an oppressed community, whose aims and principles have been unjustly misrepresented, whose legitimate rights are being cruelly trampled upon, and whose sole hope for justice in that Historic land lies in the sincere desire of the new government to adhere in the conduct of its current affairs as well as in the provisions of the future constitution to the noble principles of equity and magnanimity inherent in the fundamental tenets of Islam.

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