

[TRANSCRIPT OF ORIGINAL NEWS ARTICLE IN ENGLISH]

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Outrageous persecution in Iran

Last year the United States appealed to its allies to join with it in condemning Iran's brutal persecution of members of the small Bahai faith. The result of that effort, concedes Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for human rights, has been "startlingly small." Instead of the hoped-for outpouring of publicly expressed international concern over the fate of the Bahais at the hands of the Islamic revolutionary regime, there has been for the most part only unhelpful international indifference and silence. The main reason, as Abrams sees it, is that other countries don't want to risk jeopardizing their business relations with Iran by speaking out against its human-rights abuses.

And so those abuses and the widespread suffering that they have brought continue, with pathetically few indications that democratic nations of the world even find them disturbing. Countries that have not hesitated to speak out against political repression elsewhere, when they have calculated that it would be cost-free to do so, now find it expedient to keep mum about murderous religious intolerance lest their commercial interests be affected. The Bahais, whose faith is built on non-violence and the principles of universal brotherhood and social equality, ironically find themselves without any concerted base of support in the outside world. They have been left defenseless against the barbarities of a regime that has outlawed their religion and engages freely in the killings of its adherents.

At least 170 Bahais, among them teen-age girls, are known to have been executed in Iran since the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his clerical regime came to power in 1979. One woman was executed shortly after giving birth in prison. More than 700 Bahais are in jail. Others who have been arrested have simply disappeared. Torture of Bahais is common, often in an effort to make them recant their faith and accept Islam. The Bahais, according to the regime, are heretics. That, and not the specious claim that they are agents of outside powers, is the primary reason for their persecution.

A resolution sponsored by 210 members of Congress would encourage U.S. efforts to bring the plight of Iran's Bahais before the United Nations and other world bodies. That resolution deserves unanimous legislative approval. The persecution of the Bahais is criminal and an outrage. It cries out for universal condemnation, not for any narrow reasons of state politics but as a moral imperative.

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