

[TRANSCRIPT OF ORIGINAL NEWS ARTICLE IN ENGLISH]

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Religious repression in Iran

Six of the nine members of the local Baha'i governing body of Tehran were secretly executed by Iranian authorities on Jan. 4, 1982, according to reports from the United States Baha'i National Center.

Executed with them was the woman in whose home their meeting was taking place when all seven were summarily arrested on Nov. 2, 1981. This brings to fifteen the number of Baha'is, including eight national leaders, executed within nine days.

Those executed included members of various professions and a 32-year-old father of two. Their names are added to the 111 local Baha'is leaders who have been executed or have disappeared over the last 16 months in Tehran, Tabriz, Yazd, Darun, Isfahan, and Hamadan.

These heinous actions by government authorities have effectively decimated both the national and Tehran leadership of the 300,000-member Baha'i religion in Iran in one fell swoop. Eight members of Iran's Baha'i National Assembly were clandestinely executed on Dec. 27, 1981.

In both instances, authorities have tried to conceal their shameful actions from the world by executing these innocent people furtively and burying them unceremoniously without notifying families.

We are witnessing the fulfilment of the sinister campaign by Iranian authorities to eliminate the Baha'i religion in Iran by ruthlessly attacking its leadership. Neither cowardly denials by government officials nor trumped up charges can obscure the religious motivation for this dastardly program against the Baha'is of Iran.

Immediately following reports carried by the State Department, the Associated Press, and United Press International that the eight members of Iran's Baha'i National Assembly had been secretly executed without charges or trials, the president of Iran's Supreme Court, the Ayatollah Musavi-Ardibili, denied the executions. Several days later, however, he was compelled to admit that eight Baha'is had been executed for "spying for foreign powers."

We are not misled by the now familiar smoke screen of leveling spurious charges against the law-abiding Baha'is in Iran. Not one shred of substantiating evidence has ever been produced by Iranian authorities. Indeed, at every turn, the Baha'is have been denied any opportunity to publicly defend themselves against these malicious accusations.

Despite the Ayatollah Ardibili's denial that the executions are religiously motivated, the published verdicts on many Baha'i leaders executed in recent months have cited such charges as "fighting God and His Messenger," creating discord and disunity amongst Moslems," and "corruption on earth."

Government documents dismissing Baha'is from their jobs, cancelling their pensions, and denying them educational opportunities have referred to them as members of "the misled and misguided sect."

Since its inception in Iran 137 years ago, the Baha'i religion has aroused the opposition of Iran's fundamentalist Muslim clergy, who regard the new religion as a heresy. Baha'is believe that the founder of their religion, Baha'u'llay [Baha'u'llah], is the most recent prophet of God.

His teachings about the common foundation of the world's religions, the oneness of all the races, the equality of men and women, and the necessity of establishing a world government for the maintenance of a lasting peace have stirred the violent opposition of the fundamentalist elements in Iran.

(This column was submitted by the Baha'i Club of West Virginia University.)

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