

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets]

[Personal information has been **redacted**.]

24 Mehr 1359 [16 October 1980]

Respected editorial board of Ettelaat Newspaper,

On page 11 of the newspaper dated 17 Mehr 1359 [9 October 1980], in the second column, there is an article under the title of "Interview with Hojatoleslam, Sheikh Mostafa Rahnama", which was truly far from any truth or fact. It is therefore necessary to offer the following comments regarding the said interview.

First, addressing the respected interviewer, who apparently is not familiar with the teachings and principles of the Baha'i Faith and is using the title "Discovering the Networks of Assemblies of the Baha'i Leadership", this, in itself, is an indication of the ignorance of the interviewer, because Baha'is in principle have neither leaders nor networks; neither do they engage in conspiracies or involve themselves in secrecy and concealed activities against the interests of the land or the public. As it has been publicly mentioned over and over, Baha'is of every locality, in a free and confidential election, vote for righteous and trustworthy individuals, who will serve on a voluntary basis and with no monetary remuneration for a period of one year, directing the spiritual affairs of the community, looking after the needs of the poor, orphans and abandoned children and addressing the problems of the Baha'is. These elections take place every year, so [referring to] these people as "leader or leaders", as is practiced in other religions, has no relevance here.

Regarding the statements made by Hojatoleslam Sheikh Mostafa Rahnama, which cannot be supported by any evidence or documentation, it is necessary to emphasize that Baha'is do not have, and have never had, any affiliation with Israel, the United States or any other foreign government or contemporary politics. They have never offered and will never offer any support to international Zionism, nor do they have any ties to Freemasonry. One of the fundamental principles of the Baha'i Faith is non-involvement of the official members of the Baha'i community in political activities; any [involvement of] the Baha'i community in political affairs is categorically denied. And if a few Baha'i-born individuals who are officially registered as Baha'is, or even other Baha'is, have engaged in political affairs, this has absolutely no bearing on the policies and principles of the Baha'i community. Hojatoleslam Rahnama had mentioned that the leaders of the Baha'i community have taken advantage of the general amnesty introduced by His Holiness Imam Khomeini, and rather than offering to repent for their past actions, have set out in conspiracy against the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is therefore necessary to bring to your attention that:

Firstly, as mentioned above, the Baha'i community has no religious leader or leaders.

Secondly, the Baha'i community has committed no misconduct or breach of trust, which calls for Imam Khomeini's pardon; it has always regarded and will always regard service to the state and the people, and especially to the sacred land of Iran, as its obligation.

Thirdly, during the past 20 months since the Islamic revolution of Iran, Baha'is have proven by action, in spite of all the oppressions and unbearable atrocities, to be [obedient] to the government and the state and have taken no action but to plead for justice to the authorities, and [to practice] forbearance in submission; Hojatoleslam Rahnama's comments regarding the Baha'i conspiracy against the Islamic Republic of Iran cannot be substantiated by any proof or document and are hereby categorically denied. Discovery of Baha'i gathering houses in Tehran and Karaj is unfounded and even assuming a member of the Baha'i community commits a wrong-doing, as mentioned above, it has no bearing on the policies and principles of the Baha'i community; just as wrong-doings of Muslims have no bearing on the principles and essence of the religion of His Holiness, the Seal of the Prophets [Prophet Muhammad].

He pointed out that, "over the past two or three weeks, a Baha'i assembly in the City of Karaj was uncovered". Baha'i Assemblies do not engage in any secret and concealed activities against the interests of the land and government to be "uncovered", and the term "uncovered" is, by no means, applicable to them. Their procedure for electing and [carrying out the] responsibilities of the Spiritual Assemblies of Baha'is was described earlier. Hojatoleslam Rahnama's claims regarding the Baha'i community's abundant support to international Zionism cannot be supported by any evidence or documentation. Necessary clarifications regarding this claim and other false accusations against the oppressed and ill-treated Baha'i community have been repeatedly communicated to the respected authorities and the press, and there is no need for repetition.

Hojatoleslam Rahnama, having no regard for justice and impartiality, a trait with which he must truly be adorned, has mentioned that Baha'is, according to their own claim, were planning to convert Iran to the Land of Baha'u'llah by the year 1361 [1982/1983] and that the dethroned shah had become a Baha'i in 1355 [1976/1977]. Regrettably, these assertions are pure falsehood and cannot be substantiated by any proof or documentation. By taking advantage of his position, and in the current critical situation in our beloved Iran, he allows himself to freely attack this community with all kinds of false accusations and to completely ignore the undesirable outcome of these agitating statements, which will lead to numerous tragedies in all regions and corners of the country, and are by no means in the interest of our beloved country.

The Baha'i community longs for the leaders and authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to be especially adorned with the ornament of justice and righteousness and not to allow religious prejudices to interfere with their fate-laden judgements and statements, which affect thousands of people.

With respect,

On behalf of the Baha'i community of Iran

[Signature]

Sender address: [redacted]