

[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets.]

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

[The excerpt below is from the section of the article that pertains to the Baha'i Faith]

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Baha'i Genocide and Silence

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The phenomenon of the Baha'i genocide is one of the most shameful social and cultural phenomena in the history of Iran.

Although the escalation of the threat against the Baha'is is part of a widespread violation of the civil rights of the Iranian citizens with various religions and ethnicities, the issue of persecution of the Baha'is has a historic scope, severity, and continuity that transforms it into a distinct phenomenon among numerous rights violations against the Iranian nation.

According to the international definitions, genocide is any act committed for the destruction and physical elimination, in part or in whole, of a racial, ethnic, national, religious, or ideological group, and has been a crime since 1948. The United Nations considers it to be the responsibility of governments and the international community.

In this regard, the United Nations resolution emphasizes that any attempts to destroy a racial, national, or religious group—such as the massacre of a particular group, causing serious mental or physical harm to members of particular groups, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life that are calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, deliberately inflicting harm on members of a particular group, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, forcibly transferring children of the group to another group, etc.,—are all obvious examples of genocide. Genocide is a social and cultural phenomenon and a remnant of group behaviour in societies based on tribal relations. In these societies, when a group from an alien religion or race or tribe was introduced, a dispute over certain material or spiritual interests could become a popular reason for genocide.

Genocide is not the result of one person's enmity towards others, but the result of one society's enmity towards another society or part of itself; a phenomenon seen in religious wars, such as between Shiites and Sunnis in Safavid Iran, or religious wars in Central Europe in the Middle Ages, or tribal wars in present-day Asia and Africa. But the most pervasive and persistent genocides occur when minority groups are targeted by those in power in the majority of society, like what was done against the Jews in the history of Europe or against the Armenians in Turkey in the years between the two World Wars or against the Baha'is in Iran, from about one hundred fifty years ago, until now.

Accepting the bitter fact that the Shiite community of Iran in the 21st century is continuing the project of genocide that began in the second half of the nineteenth century may feel like a disgrace to the awakened conscience of every Iranian, and they may want to deny it, but the evidence is too obvious for one to deny the current process of the Baha'i genocide that is going on under the auspices of the Shiite clergy and government.

Referring to the good relationship between the majority of non-Baha'is and Baha'is, and the fact that Baha'is are an integral part of the Iranian people, some say that attackers of Baha'is are limited to a small group of government-backed clerics and religious fanatics. This should not be considered a kind of genocide supported by the whole of society. Of course, it is true that the majority of Iranians have no conflict with the Baha'i community in Iran. However, its historical continuity in the three different regimes of Qajar, Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic have shown that an institution higher than the regime is defending this action. This higher institution is the traditional part of the Shiite clergy. The beliefs of this section of the Iranian traditional clergy had the support of Ayatollah Khomeini and currently have the support of Ayatollah Khamenei, the supreme leaders of the Islamic Republic.

In the latest case of the Baha'i genocide, on the evening of Monday, 14 Bahman [3 February 2014], an unidentified man wearing mask entered the home of Ghodratollah Moudi, Touba Sabzejou and their daughter, Azam Moudi, a Baha'i family in Birjand, stabbed and severely injured them with a knife. This summer, Ataollah Rezvani, one of the most respected figures in Bandar Abbas, was assassinated for being a Baha'i.

Iran's law enforcement and security forces and judicial system have practically ignored the attacks on the Baha'is. In this way, this part of Iranian society has become defenceless, and these citizens have no way to confront or realize their rights except to flee Iran. For this reason, most observers say the aim of these attacks is to drive Baha'is out of Iranian society and to force them to seek refuge in home-shelters or in quarantines, such as Jewish ghettos in anti-Semitic societies, or to flee Iran. Leaders of the Baha'i community say that, "In the last eight years, since 2005, there were 50 assassination attempts against Baha'is and nine were killed without any formation of a judicial court or identification of their killer."

This number of cases excludes the repeated arrests of the Baha'is, their prevention from continuing their education, even privately and online, the prevention of their religious gatherings, the destruction of their temples and cemeteries, the exertion of psychological pressures on them through religious and government propaganda, and recountings of accusations and threats against this group of Iranian citizens, the goal of which is to incite the majority of the society against the Baha'i minority.

If these organized operations against the Baha'is were limited to government actions, their social and cultural significance would not be as great as it is seen in the reality of Iranian society today. This organized genocide is accompanied by the silence of clerics and national and religious elites of Iranian society. This silence cannot be attributed solely to the fear of confrontation with the government, as in other cases of human rights abuses by the government. Many of the clerics, political factions, political and religious figures in Iran, at least expressed their opposition, but in the case of the Baha'is there is a kind of public silence among all factions.

Even when conditions exist for recounting the human rights abuses against these citizens, the reformist factions, moderate political figures and clerics outside the government have remained silent in the face of these actions, and Baha'i citizens have been reduced to forgotten, oppressed citizens.

Studies on genocide show that the reason for the persistence and continuation of this behaviour is social silence against it. The larger society, through silence, ignores these actions in a way that implies the implicit approval of these actions in the collective subconscious.

Even if we do not accept the allegations about the participation and support of some high-ranking Shiite clerics, backed by the security organizations through the network of crimes against the Baha'is, again, the fact cannot be denied that the traditional institution of the clergy in Iran has succeeded in isolating Baha'is by perpetuating anti-Baha'i sentiment and forcing the collective psyche of Iranian society to gradually accept this genocide as a natural and necessary trend for the Shiite religious community.

Although, in this regard, the main responsibility lies with the clergy and religious institutions, the public responsibility of the religious jurisprudential authorities, as those who carry out their orders or remain silent in the face of the violation of the rights of Baha'i citizens, cannot be ignored. All the Shiites of Iran, by remaining silent in the face of this inhuman demand of religious institutions, are in fact partners in stabilizing [and continuing] the genocide of some of their compatriots.

Without the strong demand of political, civil and religious leaders of the society, from the Iranian official authorities, the leader and the president, to the judiciary, to end the Baha'i genocide, one cannot hope that the Baha'i community of Iran can achieve even the rights that have been specified in the Constitution of Iran.

For this reason, it is the duty of every Iranian citizen to defend the rights of the Iranian Baha'i citizens, more than it is the duty of the Baha'i International Community outside Iran. It is the duty of those who know that ignoring the rights of other citizens is the first step towards ignoring their own rights; moreover, it is the moral and human duty of every Iranian not to remain silent in the face of the genocide of the Baha'is of Iran in the current situation.