

NOTES, COMMUNICATIONS AND
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MISCELLANY

I

RESPONSES TO IRANIAN ANTI-BAHA'I POLEMIC

Reproduced below and following a letter to Mr. Robert Stauffer* are two statements written on behalf of the Baha'i International Community. The first, dated November 1982 (see below pp. 68 — 75) is a 'Statement in Rebuttal of Accusations made Against the Baha'i Faith by the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations (General Assembly, 37th session, November 1982)'. The second, dated August 1983, is a 'A Commentary on the Document, "Bahá'ism—Its Origins and its Role" (see pp. 76 — 84 below).

The booklet Bahá'ism—Its Origins and its Role is 54 pp long and was published (in English) in Holland (P.O.Box 85567 The Hague) around August 1983. Its first half (pp. 3-24) consists of an extremely naive and ill-informed account of the alleged "facts" of Bahá'í history and teaching. The rest of the booklet is made up by 'Exhibits No's 1-36': No's 1-16 being citations from miscellaneous Bahá'í publications (allegedly backing up statements made in part one of the book) and No's 17-36 (for the most part) reports by Iranian Intelligence Agencies on internal Bahá'í activities.

(Ed).

* Robert Stauffer has kindly communicated the documents/letters reproduced on pp. 66 — 84 (below).

BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

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Mr. Gerald Knight

2 February 1984

Mr. Robert Stauffer,
818 N. 30th,
Renton, WA 98056.

Dear Mr. Stauffer,

Thank you for your letter of 27 January 1984, in which you raise various queries in connection with two items of anti-Bahá'í literature currently being disseminated on campuses by the Muslim Students' Organization.

The first document you mention, entitled "Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: A review of the facts", made its first appearance when members of the Iranian delegation to the United Nations distributed it to representatives to the Third Committee of the 37th General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters on 23 November 1982. The Bahá'í International Community immediately prepared and circulated to representatives to the Third Committee a written rebuttal of the false allegations contained in the Iranian document. A few days later, on 30 November 1982, a slightly amended version of the rebuttal statement, together with relevant excerpts from the Iranian document, was mailed to all Ambassadors to the United Nations. A copy of the 30 November document, with its attachment, is enclosed for your information.

For the answers to your queries concerning the Bahá'ís (or alleged Bahá'ís) who are identified as having held high office under the Shah, please see pages 4 and 5 of the rebuttal statement.

With regard to the five men listed on page 31 of the Iranian document, all are (or were) Bahá'ís. For details of their fate, please see pages 6 and 7 of the rebuttal statement. There are no grounds whatsoever for believing that those who were released from jail won their freedom by recanting their faith. It has long been the policy of the Iranian authorities to sow doubt and uncertainty among the members of the Bahá'í community by carrying out arbitrary arrests of Bahá'ís and by ordering equally arbitrary releases of some Bahá'í prisoners. Frequently, those released are subsequently re-arrested.

The second document you mention - the booklet entitled "Baháism: Its origins and its role" - made its first appearance in a United Nations forum on 19 August 1983, when representatives of the Government of Iran circulated it to the members of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities at its 36th session in Geneva.

Mr. Robert Stauffer
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The Bahá'í International Community was already aware of the existence of this document and had prepared a written rebuttal, which was immediately circulated to the members of the Sub-Commission. Copies of the Iranian booklet and of our commentary upon it are enclosed for your information.

Once again, the answers to your questions concerning Bahá'ís, or alleged Bahá'ís, named in the Iranian document are to be found in the Bahá'í International Community's rebuttal - see pages 6 and 7.

We are grateful to you for sending us your first-hand report of the anti-Bahá'í activities being carried out on American campuses by the Muslim Students' Organization. Since we believe that the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States would also be interested in this information, we are sending to the National Assembly a copy of your letter, and of our reply.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Margaret N. Knight

Margaret N. Knight
Alternate Representative for Human Rights

Encs: 4

cc: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

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30 November 1982

STATEMENT IN REBUTTAL
OF ACCUSATIONS MADE AGAINST THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH BY THE
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly, 37th session, November 1982

In a document entitled "Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - a review of the facts" circulated to representatives to the Third Committee of the 37th session of the General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters on 23 November 1982, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran made a number of false and damaging statements concerning the nature of the Bahá'í Faith and the activities of its followers. The Bahá'í International Community wishes to refute these false statements and to present the true facts.

(For ease of reference, copies of the relevant pages of Iran's report are attached).

1. *The Bahá'í Faith is accused of being "a political entity created and nourished by anti-Islamic and Colonial Powers" (see page 27 paragraph 3 of the report). Reference is made to "the Bahá'í espionage network" (p.3. para 2) and it is alleged that "a very sophisticated and systematic espionage network has been established by the Bahá'ís" (p.29 para 2). Other references of a similar nature appear elsewhere in the report.*

The Bahá'í International Community categorically denies these allegations. Participation in partisan politics, and involvement in any form of subversive activity, are both totally forbidden to Bahá'ís in accordance with the most fundamental principles of their faith.

Bahá'í communities exist in countries throughout the world and their activities are known to the governments of these countries to be non-political, non-partisan and peaceful.

The activities of Bahá'í communities in every part of the world are open to scrutiny and, in view of the serious nature of the charges made by the Iranian government in this world forum, the Bahá'í International Community invites the establishment of an impartial body of inquiry to mount a thorough investigation into the activities of the Bahá'í world community.

2. All the allegations made against the Bahá'ís in Iran are based on deliberate misinterpretations of the aims and purposes of the Bahá'í Faith and its teachings. The most common charges levelled against the Bahá'ís - and repeated in Iran's new report - are as follows:

1. *Bahá'ís are accused of being political supporters of the late Shah and of having benefited from the former regime.*
2. *Bahá'ís are accused of being a political organization opposed to the present Iranian government.*
3. *Bahá'ís are accused of collaboration with SAVAK.*
4. *Bahá'ís are accused of being enemies of Islam.*
5. *Bahá'ís are accused of being agents of Zionism.*

All these allegations are explained and convincingly refuted in the Bahá'í International Community's publication "The Bahá'ís in Iran: A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority", revised and updated July 1982, pages 19 to 24.

The new and/or very specific allegations contained in Iran's latest report can be answered as follows:

3. *It is alleged that the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith was an agent of the British government, engaged in "covert activities against the Ottoman Empire" in Palestine; that, during World War I, he was "highly successful to render great services for the British army", including supplying the army with "large supplies of food and grains which he had secretly been storing"; and that the British authorities protected his life and gave him "huge amounts of gold" and a knighthood as a reward for his espionage activities. (See pages 24 and 25 of the report).*

These alleged "facts" are gross distortions of the truth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá (also known as Abbas Effendi), the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was not a British spy. The knighthood conferred upon him by the British government in 1920 was in recognition of his humanitarian services to the poor and needy in Palestine during World War I. To portray these humanitarian services as calculated political acts is totally unjustified. Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá accepted the knighthood, he never used the title, and he never received any financial aid, much less "huge amounts of gold" (p.25 para 6), from the British government.

The intervention of the British government in 1918 to protect the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had nothing whatsoever to do with any supposed covert association between that government and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was inspired by, and in response to, urgent requests from the British Bahá'ís, who

were gravely concerned about the safety of the leader of their faith - just as Bahá'ís in the free world today appeal to their governments, expressing concern about the safety of their fellow-believers in Iran.

The concern of the British Bahá'ís arose from the fact that the leader of the advancing Turkish forces, Jamal Pasha (a fanatical and long-standing enemy of the Bahá'í Faith) had publicly declared his intention of crucifying 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his family on the slopes of Mount Carmel. The British authorities (including those named in the report, p.24 para 3) responded sympathetically to the appeals of the Bahá'ís and alerted the Commander of their forces in Palestine to the potential danger. Having entered Haifa, General Allenby duly cabled a confirmation to London that 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his family were safe.

In order to reinforce the argument that some clandestine connection existed between the British government and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the report (pages 24 to 26) cites the names of many prominent Britons. It should be emphasized, however, that, during his years in the Holy Land, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in contact with prominent personalities in many countries (among them such eminent figures as Dr. Auguste Forel of Switzerland, Leo Tolstoy of Russia, Professor Arminius Vambery of Hungary, Prince Muhammad-Ali Pasha of Egypt); with scholars and leaders in Lebanon and other middle-eastern countries; and with such institutions as the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, in the Netherlands.

Similarly, while the report (p.26 para 1) names the two British officials who attended 'Abdu'l-Bahá's funeral, it omits to mention that, in recognition of his high and unique position, the chiefs of the Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other religious communities in the Holy Land, as well as notables from all strata of Palestinian society, were also present at the obsequies.

4. *It is alleged that the Bahá'í Faith was used by the colonial powers as a tool for colonial expansion into Muslim countries.*

This is a complete fabrication, unsubstantiated even by the "evidence" adduced in its support. The report (p.26 para 5) accurately refers to a passage in the Bahá'í book "God Passes By", recording that the leader of the Bahá'í Faith was invited to "spend a while in India", but omits to cite either the circumstances of the invitation or the response to it - both of which are detailed in the same passage.

At the time of the invitation, news of the martyrdom of the Báb (the Prophet-Herald of the Bahá'í Faith) and the massacre of 20,000 of His followers had spread to the west and had aroused much sympathy and interest among Europeans. Bahá'u'lláh, the most prominent follower of the Báb (who had not yet declared His own mission) was exiled by the Iranian government and imprisoned in Baghdad. His plight attracted the sympathetic attention of the British consul-general in Baghdad, who offered Him the

protection of British citizenship and also offered to arrange residence for Him in India or in any other place agreeable to Him. Bahá'u'lláh declined these offers and chose instead to remain a prisoner in Baghdad.

It was not unusual at that time, nor is it unusual today, for government officials to offer aid and sanctuary to those they perceive as being the victims of oppression in other countries. This kind of intervention is commonly recognized as being humanitarian and non-political in nature. The attempt to portray the humanitarian assistance offered to Bahá'u'lláh as being part of a sinister project of colonial expansion is clearly ridiculous.

The reference (allegedly drawn from the same book, but actually to be found in a letter written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to an individual Bahá'í) to the "anxiety" of the government of France to send Bahá'ís to the French colonies in Muslim Africa is likewise taken out of context and is deliberately misleading. The true facts are that the French Ambassador in Teheran, greatly impressed by the Bahá'í teachings and by their effect upon the people who embraced them, suggested that Bahá'ís might go to Tunisia and teach their faith there. 'Abdu'l-Bahá duly mentioned this suggestion in a letter to one of his followers but, as it happened, nothing ever came of it. Clearly, this incident cannot seriously be used to suggest, or prove, any form of collusion between the Bahá'í Faith and the French government to promote colonial expansion in Africa.

5. *Certain Bahá'ís are alleged to have held high political office during the reign of the late Shah.*

Bahá'ís are forbidden by the laws of their faith from becoming involved in partisan politics or from holding any political post. The report (pp 27/28) accuses the Iranian Bahá'ís of not adhering to this principle of their faith, alleging that certain people identified as Bahá'ís held prominent political positions during the reign of the late Shah. These accusations are refuted below.

It should be noted in this connection that, during the reign of the Shah, it was common for unscrupulous politicians to attempt to discredit their political opponents by accusing them of being Bahá'ís. Such accusations were either entirely without foundation or were based upon the fact that the fathers or families of the individuals concerned had once been Bahá'ís. It is, however, a basic principle of the Bahá'í 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. A person is a Bahá'í only when he freely declares himself to be a Bahá'í.

It is true that Dr. Ayadi, a Bahá'í, served as personal physician to the late Shah. He was appointed to this non-political position not only because of his skill in medicine but also because of his personal integrity and trustworthiness. It is untrue to state (as does the report) that he was "the man behind the whole pharmaceutical market".

General Khattani, Commander of the Air Force, Mrs. Parsa, Minister of Education, and General Nasiri, Head of SAVAK, were never Bahá'ís and never claimed to be Bahá'ís.

General Sani'i, Minister of War, was once a Bahá'í but was expelled from the Bahá'í community when he accepted ministerial office in the government - in accordance with the Bahá'í law forbidding Bahá'ís to hold political office.

Parviz Sabeti, Director-General of SAVAK, Mansur Ruhani, Minister of Agriculture, and Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveida were never Bahá'ís and never claimed to be Bahá'ís. Their alleged membership in the Bahá'í community was based on the fact that their fathers were, or had once been, Bahá'ís.

6. Bahá'ís are accused of being agents and political supporters of Zionism.

The report (p.27 para 1) cites the well-worn accusation that, since the Bahá'í World Centre is in Israel, the Bahá'í Faith must in some way be identified with Zionism, and also asserts that this means that the Bahá'í Faith is not a religion but is a "political entity created and nourished by anti-Islamic and Colonial Powers."

The Bahá'í World Centre was established in the last century, long before the State of Israel came into existence, and has nothing to do with Zionism. The Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh, was exiled to the Holy Land in compliance with the order of two Islamic governments (Iran and Turkey). He remained in the Holy Land until His death in 1892, His Shrine was raised there, and the Holy Land thus became the world spiritual centre of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh Himself directed that the world spiritual and administrative centres of His faith must always be united in one locality. Accordingly, the world administrative centre of the Bahá'í Faith has always been and must continue to be in the Holy Land. It cannot be relocated for the sake of temporary political expediency.

References are made later in the report (p.28 paras 4 and 8) to the Bahá'ís sending "millions of dollars" to Israel to "support the Zionist regime". This allegation is entirely without foundation. The funds sent by Bahá'ís the world over (including those in Iran) to the Bahá'í World Centre are solely and exclusively for the upkeep of their holy Shrines and historic sites in the Holy Land, and for the administration of their faith.

It should be noted that other religious communities contribute towards the maintenance of their holy places in Israel without attracting the charge that they are financially supporting the government of Israel. Similarly, the Shiite Muslims send financial contributions towards the upkeep of their holy places at Najaf and Karbala in Iraq. Should the fact that Iran and Iraq are at war suddenly draw down the charge upon the Muslim Iranians that they have lent financial aid to the Iraqi government? Yet this is precisely the nature of the spurious allegation being made by the Iranian government against the Bahá'ís.

7. SAVAK documents adduced to support allegations against Bahá'ís.

The report (pp.28/29) summarizes the contents of various documents allegedly extracted from the files of SAVAK, which purport to implicate Bahá'ís (or alleged Bahá'ís) in a variety of anti-Islamic activities.

It is impossible for the Bahá'í International Community to comment upon these documents because it has not seen them. It might, however, be asked how and why - since the present Iranian government has itself discredited SAVAK - the documentation produced by this organization has suddenly become relevant and "authentic" where Bahá'ís are concerned?

The hostility of SAVAK towards the Bahá'ís is well attested. A SAVAK memorandum linking the bureau with the operations of the fanatical anti-Bahá'í organization Tablighat-i-Islami was published in the Iranian daily newspaper *Mujahid* on 9 June 1980, and one of the final acts of SAVAK in 1978, shortly before the fall of the Shah, was to attempt to divert public attention away from disaffection with the regime by mounting violent attacks on the Bahá'ís. During raids organized by SAVAK on Saadi village near Shiraz, 150 Bahá'í homes were looted and burned down. The Bahá'í International Community has in its possession an announcement by Ayatollah Mahallati, the most prominent religious leader in Shiraz, telling Muslims that such attacks against the Bahá'ís were the machinations of SAVAK, and warning them not to participate.

8. Specific cases of accused Bahá'ís.

The report cites the cases of five Bahá'ís, tried in February 1980, who were "proven guilty in the Court of Justice" but whose sentences were commuted (p.31).

These trials actually took place in Shiraz, under very questionable circumstances, and the Bahá'í International Community cannot comment upon the veracity of the evidence or charges. We do, however, have reliable and up-to-date information concerning the fate of these Bahá'ís.

1. Enayatollah Ehsanian - stated in the report to have been released for lack of evidence against him. True.
2. Ja'far Sha'er-zadeh - stated in the report to have been released on compassionate grounds. He was, in fact, re-arrested approximately one month ago and is currently in detention in Shiraz.
3. Sattar Khosh-Khu - stated in the report to have been found guilty of supporting Zionism and to have been given a two-year prison sentence. He was, in fact, summarily executed in Shiraz on 30 April 1981 (approximately 14 months after his trial).
4. Enayatollah Mehdi-zadeh - stated in the report to have been released. He was actually released after spending ten months in prison.

5. Mohammad-Reza Hesami - stated in the report to have been fined and released. He is, in fact, still in prison and has not at any time been released.

The stated purpose of including these details in the report was to make it "crystal clear" that "not a single person in the Islamic Republic of Iran is tried and punished merely because of his/her particular ideology or set of principles." (p.30 para 7).

Even if it were to be assumed, for the sake of argument, that the details of the cases cited in the report were true, it is difficult to see how isolated cases such as these could justify the pervasive and continuing persecution of the entire Bahá'í community of Iran.

Despite the repeated denials of the Iranian government, it is clear that the persecution of the Bahá'ís is based solely upon their religious beliefs.

During the past four years, one hundred and eighteen Bahá'ís have died for their faith in Iran. No evidence exists to support any of the charges brought against those who were executed. In the very few cases in which a Bahá'í has been willing to recant his faith, he has immediately been released and all charges against him dropped - while his fellow believers who refused to recant have been executed.

Two Bahá'ís very recently executed in Shiraz - Mr. Habibu'llah Awji on 16 November and Mr. Ziya'u'llah Ahrari on 21 November - were offered their freedom by the trial judge if they would agree to recant their religion. In the case of Mr. Ahrari, the court verdict - published in the Teheran daily newspaper Kayhan on 22 November - clearly stated that the principal charge against him was his membership in the Bahá'í community.

Membership in the Bahá'í community was first recognized by the courts as a capital offence in March 1981, when Mr. Mihdi Anvari and Mr. Hidayatu'llah Dihqani were tried and executed in Shiraz. In the case of Mr. 'Azizu'llah Gulshani, executed by hanging on 29 April 1982, the charges against him related solely to his Bahá'í activities. (These charges were detailed in Kayhan on 29 April 1982).

All the Bahá'ís executed during the past two years were prominent believers whose executions were intended to intimidate the rank and file of the Bahá'í community into recanting their faith. Most compelling is the fact that the authorities have twice eliminated the membership of the national governing body of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran. On 21 August 1980, all nine members of this body were arrested by revolutionary guards and have since disappeared without trace. On 27 December 1981, eight members of the national governing body that replaced them were secretly executed in Teheran. Their execution, initially denied by the authorities, was finally admitted by the President of the Supreme Court of Iran, Ayatollah Musavi Ardibili, at a press conference on 5 January 1982.

The executions and disappearances are part of a systematic campaign to eradicate the Iranian Bahá'í community and obliterate all traces of the Bahá'í Faith from Iran.

The other elements of the campaign are the confiscation and destruction of all Bahá'í community properties and holy places in Iran (now accomplished) and the denial of the most basic human rights to thousands upon thousands of innocent Bahá'ís. This denial has been expressed in many dehumanizing ways, such as dismissal from employment, denial of pensions, confiscation of private property and denial of schooling to children. (An article in the newspaper Kayhan on 25 November 1981 reported the expulsion of 43 students from the University of Shiraz because of their membership in the "misguided Bahá'í group").

Many of the notices dismissing Bahá'ís from their jobs have clearly stated that membership in the Bahá'í community is the reason for the dismissal, and many of the notices have stated that the individual concerned will be given back his job if he will publicly recant his faith. In a communique published in Kayhan on 8 December 1981, the Ministry of Labour stated that dismissal for life from government service had been decreed by the Islamic Parliament as "the punishment for anyone who is a member of the misguided Bahá'í group".

It is clear to the Bahá'í International Community that the allegations contained in the report circulated by Iran in the General Assembly represent an attempt to conceal, and to divert international attention from, the fanatically religious motivation of the persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran, and to undermine the good reputation which the Bahá'í community enjoys throughout the world.

The Bahá'í International Community emphatically refutes all the charges levelled against the Bahá'ís by the Iranian government and its spokesmen, most particularly the charges of political involvement and espionage, and strongly appeals for the establishment of an independent body to investigate the entire situation.

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August 1983

A COMMENTARY
ON THE DOCUMENT
"BAHAISM - ITS ORIGINS AND ITS ROLE"
PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

As part of its continuing campaign to discredit the Bahá'í Faith, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran recently published a document entitled "Bahaism - its origins and its role".

The alleged purpose of this publication is to set out the "facts" concerning the Bahá'í Faith. It is clear, however, from the intemperate language of the document, from the patent inaccuracies and contradictions it contains, and from the unconvincing nature of the "evidence" it presents, that this publication is not concerned with facts or with the truth but is simply an exercise in defamation.

The real purpose of the document is to support the Iranian Government's allegation that the Bahá'í Faith is a seditious political entity; to justify, on this pretext, the persecution and execution of Bahá'ís in Iran; and - most important of all - to conceal the true motive underlying the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'í community. That motive is, quite simply, primitive religious prejudice.

In the early days of the Bahá'í Faith, which originated in Iran in the middle of the last century, the religious leaders of the country did not trouble to conceal the true reasons for their hostility towards the new religion. The very notion that any religion could appear after Islam was anathema to the Shiite Muslim fundamentalists, who viewed the Bahá'í Faith as a dangerous heresy and its followers as apostates who deserved death. In the pogroms that ensued, over 20,000 men, women and children were brutally slaughtered. However, as times changed, so rationalizations and slogans changed. In the twentieth century, modern notions of religious toleration penetrated Iran and the fundamentalist religious leaders found that they could no longer win public support by attacking the Bahá'í Faith on purely theological grounds. Secularism had influenced the educated classes, who embraced nationalism as a surrogate religion. In order to turn them against their Bahá'í fellow-citizens, it was necessary to accuse the Bahá'ís of being unpatriotic and politically-motivated. Spurious accusations to this effect were duly invented and disseminated by the religious leaders as a means of inflaming public opinion against the Bahá'ís who, as a result, suffered

severe discrimination and repeated pogroms throughout the Pahlavi regime. The Iranian Revolution, which brought to power those very elements most bitterly opposed to the Bahá'í Faith, witnessed the resurgence of primitive religious fanaticism and signalled the start of a campaign of persecution against the Bahá'í community of an intensity and ferocity unparalleled since the early days of the Faith.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, piqued at the many protests it has received from Governments the world over concerning the treatment of the Bahá'ís, and unwilling publicly to admit that it is engaged in a systematic campaign of religious persecution, is now attempting to convince the international community - particularly non-Western Governments - that the Bahá'í Faith is a political organization and that its followers worldwide are engaged in subversive activities.

The Bahá'í International Community categorically denies these allegations. The Bahá'í Faith is an independent world religion and its followers are forbidden by the laws of their faith from becoming involved in partisan politics or in any form of subversive activity.

Bahá'í communities exist in countries throughout the world and their activities are known to the Governments of those countries to be non-political, non-partisan and peaceful. The activities of Bahá'í communities in every part of the world are open to scrutiny and the Bahá'í International Community would welcome the establishment of an impartial body of inquiry to mount a thorough investigation into these activities, particularly into the charges of political involvement and subversion, in order to disprove once and for all the false and malicious accusations propagated by the Government of Iran.

The Bahá'í International Community does not propose, in this brief commentary, to examine and rebut in exhaustive detail every mis-statement contained in the new Iranian document but has the following general comments to make concerning the main arguments put forward in this publication.

Introduction (page 3). The introduction to the report asserts that Western Governments and the Western media are solely responsible for drawing world attention to the "Bahá'í issue" and that this issue is being cynically exploited by the West as a vehicle for propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The human rights organs of the United Nations are accused of complicity in this process. The authors of the report conveniently omit to mention that Governments and the media in Africa, Asia, Australasia and Latin America have also condemned and publicized the Iranian Government's treatment of the Bahá'ís and that human rights experts from a number of Muslim nations have deplored the persecution of the Bahá'ís as being contrary to the teachings of Islam.

Origin of the Bahá'í Faith (pages 3 to 6, 8 and 9). The proposition that the Bahá'í Faith is a product of Russian imperialism and that it owes its very existence to the activities of a Russian spy masquerading as a mullah is so

foolish that Muslim scholars themselves have ridiculed it. The whole argument is based upon the fact that, in the early days of the Faith, various Russian diplomats intervened with the Iranian authorities in an attempt to halt the religious persecution of Bahá'ís. Yet the "Russian connection" is solemnly presented as a fact in the Iranian document, and quotations from "history books" are presented in support of the argument.

It should be noted in this connection that, for over a century, the enemies of the Bahá'í Faith have produced numerous books and tracts denouncing the Faith and its followers and deliberately distorting and misrepresenting its history and its teachings. Typically, in such publications, the Founders of the Bahá'í Faith are portrayed as moral degenerates, its teachings are distorted in such a way that they appear either ludicrous or anti-Islamic, and historical incidents involving the victimization of Bahá'ís are depicted as bloodthirsty assaults carried out by Bahá'ís.

The Iranian document contains numerous examples of this kind of distortion, all supported by quotations. Assuming that these quotations were not invented specifically for the purposes of the report, it must be concluded that the compilers are quoting heavily from anti-Bahá'í "history books" - thereby using one falsehood to support another.

In addition to these distortions, the report contains major errors concerning readily-verifiable facts. Since they add nothing to the report's anti-Bahá'í arguments, such errors of fact may be presumed to be unintentional - but their mere presence in the report indicates very clearly the compilers' total disregard for accuracy.

Alleged relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and colonialism (pages 6 to 11).

The compilers of the Iranian document have assiduously sought to find in authentic Bahá'í publications (most notably in the book "God Passes By") any reference to Western Governments or government officials. Where any such reference is found, it is solemnly presented as evidence of some kind of illicit relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Western Governments. The reader who studies this "evidence" will find, however, that it is totally innocuous. Throughout the history of the Bahá'í Faith, numerous diplomats - both Eastern and Western - have, for purely humanitarian reasons, offered assistance to the Bahá'í victims of persecution and intervened with the Iranian authorities in an attempt to halt the persecution. Such actions - which were not uncommon in the past, just as they are not uncommon today - are duly noted with gratitude in Bahá'í books. Similarly, Bahá'í books record instances in which Governments throughout the world (not just Western Governments) have, through their official actions, expressed their recognition of and respect for the Bahá'í Faith and its teachings. References such as these, while testifying eloquently to the humanitarian and non-discriminatory attitudes of many Governments, can hardly be said to constitute evidence of political collusion between these Governments and the Bahá'í Faith.

In a further attempt to provide evidence of some "colonial connection", the Iranian report refers to events in Palestine during World War I (which is redefined as being, in essence, a conflict between Islamic and imperial powers). The report alleges that 'Abdu'l-Bahá (also known as Abbas Effendi), the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, acted as an agent of the British Government in Palestine, stockpiled wheat for the British army while the local population was starving, and that he was protected, financially rewarded and knighted by the British Government, in recognition of his services.

These alleged "facts" are gross distortions of the truth. 'Abdu'l-Bahá never received any money from the British Government and the knighthood conferred upon him was in recognition of his humanitarian services to the poor and needy in Palestine during World War I. The claim (page 10 paragraph 4) that 'Abdu'l-Bahá hoarded wheat for the British army while the local population starved is flatly contradicted by the very evidence which is used to support it (i.e. Exhibit 4, page 27 of the report). As this exhibit makes clear, the wheat cultivated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá was used for the relief of the famine-stricken local population throughout the war years 1914-1918. Also clear from this exhibit is the fact that the British army had access to the wheat only once, towards the very end of the war.

The intervention of the British Government to protect the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was inspired by and in response to appeals from the British Bahá'ís, who had learned that the Commander of the Turkish forces had publicly vowed to crucify him on Mount Carmel. Similar situations exist today, when Bahá'ís in different countries appeal to their respective Governments on behalf of their co-religionists in Iran.

The report cites the names of various British officials who attended 'Abdu'l-Bahá's funeral, but omits to mention that his funeral was also attended by the chiefs of the Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other religious communities in the Holy Land, and by notables from all strata of Palestinian society.

Alleged relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Zionism (pages 11 to 14).

In an attempt to concoct some political relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Zionism, the Iranian document quotes extensively from Bahá'í publications which describe the status of the Bahá'í Faith and its World Centre in the Holy Land. Once again, the reader will find that the material is wholly innocuous. It is totally devoid of political content and simply records various incidents pertaining to the relationship which must inevitably exist between the headquarters of an international non-governmental organization and its host government.

As the Bahá'í International Community has explained on many previous occasions, the Bahá'í World Centre was established in the last century, long before the State of Israel came into existence, and has nothing to do with Zionism. The

Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh, was exiled to the Holy Land in compliance with the orders of two Islamic governments (Iran and Turkey). He remained in the Holy Land until His death in 1892, His Shrine was raised there, and the Holy Land thus became the world spiritual centre of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh Himself directed that the world spiritual and administrative centres of His faith must always be united in one locality. Accordingly, the world administrative centre of the Bahá'í Faith has always been and must continue to be in the Holy Land. It cannot be re-located for the sake of temporary political expediency.

References are made in the report to the Bahá'ís sending funds to Israel "to support international Zionism". In fact, the funds sent by Bahá'ís the world over to the Bahá'í World Centre are solely and exclusively for the upkeep of their holy Shrines and historic sites in the Holy Land and for the administration of their Faith. It will be noted that other religious communities (including the Muslim and Christian communities) also send money for the upkeep of their holy places in Israel without being accused by the Iranian Government of giving financial support to the Government of Israel.

Allegation that the Bahá'í Faith is a political party and not a religion (pages 14 and 15). Most of the arguments marshalled in support of this false allegation (viz. the "Russian connection", the "colonial connection" and the "Zionist connection", complete with the usual references to "history books") have been discussed and discredited earlier in the commentary and do not merit further consideration. The only new allegation - namely, that the Bahá'ís were political supporters of the late Shah - is fully discussed on pages 6 and 7 of this commentary.

Alleged examples of Bahá'í teachings (pages 15 to 17). In this section of the Iranian report, the compilers have quoted Bahá'í laws out of context and misrepresented them or, in other instances, have simply invented them. This commentary would be unduly lengthened if corrections on such ideological issues were included in it.

Contrary to what is implied in the report, there is no hidden or sinister meaning in any of the Bahá'í teachings and the whole body of Bahá'í law is open to scrutiny and to question by any person who cares to enquire into it.

The allegation that the Bahá'ís lack loyalty to their homeland or to their country of residence is a deliberate distortion of the Bahá'í teachings, which exhort all Bahá'ís to be loyal citizens of their country and commend a "sane and intelligent patriotism", but condemn arrogant and aggressive nationalism and hold that, in this age, the goal of mankind should be the establishment of the unity of all nations rather than the promotion of purely national interests.

As stated in the report, "non-participation in political parties" is, indeed, a fundamental principle of Bahá'í belief, but the assertion that "this provides

a cover for operations of sabotage" is as false as it is ingenuous. As noted earlier in this commentary, Bahá'ís are prohibited by the law of their faith from becoming involved in any form of subversive activity.

The allegation that the Bahá'í Faith preaches "collaboration with oppressive, instrumental rulers" is a distortion of the Bahá'í law which requires all Bahá'ís to show loyalty and obedience to the government of the country in which they live, whatever its form or political orientation.

Finally, there is no shred of truth in the allegation that the Bahá'í Faith preaches "obstinate enmity with Muslims and belief in the annihilation of all Muslims throughout the world". Nothing in the Bahá'í teachings could possibly be construed as conveying these sentiments and it is quite clear that this inflammatory accusation has been inserted in the report for the specific purpose of arousing the hostility and mistrust of Muslim readers and Muslim Governments.

The Bahá'í Faith, in fact, advocates religious unity and teaches that all forms of religious intolerance and discrimination must be abolished. The Bahá'í attitude towards all religions can briefly be summarized as follows. Whereas the followers of other religions believe that divine revelation ended with their Prophet, the Bahá'í Faith teaches that religious revelation is continuous and progressive and that Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, is the latest - but not the last - of the Divine Educators sent by God to guide mankind. Accordingly, Bahá'ís believe in the essential oneness of all the major religions of the world and honour and revere their Founders as divinely-inspired Prophets. (Indeed, the Bahá'í Faith is the only independent world religion, apart from Islam itself, which recognizes the Holy Qur'án as a divinely-revealed Book). For a Bahá'í to oppose, belittle or seek to destroy other religions and their followers would thus be a denial of one of the most fundamental Bahá'í principles.

Alleged collaboration between the Bahá'ís and Pahlavi regime and between the Bahá'ís and SAVAK (pages 18 to 21). The allegation that the Bahá'ís collaborated with and supported the regime of the late Shah springs from the fact that, in accordance with the teachings of their faith, Bahá'ís are loyal to the Governments of their countries and that, consequently, the Iranian Bahá'ís did not affiliate themselves with political parties or subversive organizations opposed to the regime. The same principle is observed by Bahá'ís at the present time, under Iran's new regime. The allegation that the Bahá'ís collaborated with SAVAK is equally false. SAVAK officials such as Parvız Sabeti, who have been described as Bahá'ís, were not Bahá'ís.

Ignoring the fact (of which they must be well aware) that, short of being executed for their religion, the entire Bahá'í community in Iran suffered persecution and discrimination throughout the Pahlavi regime, and that SAVAK was one of the principal agencies used against them, the compilers

of the Iranian report illogically assert (page 18) that "the major part of the organization of the Shah's damned rule, particularly SAVAK, was managed by Bahá'is".

The report goes on to list thirteen people whom it identifies as Bahá'is. In common with the rest of the material contained in the report, this list is half innocuous fact and half damaging fiction. None of the political figures named in the list (Hoveyda, Rohani, Parsa, Sabeti) is or was a Bahá'í; nor is (or was) Lili Amir-Arjomand. General Sani'i was once a Bahá'í but was expelled from the Bahá'í community when he accepted a political post. None of the others (who truly are Bahá'ís) was ever in any way associated with the political or security operations of the Shah's regime. Doctor Ayadi was one of the Shah's physicians; Mr. Khademi was head of the national civil airline. Shapour Rasekh, a distinguished economist and educationalist, served on the planning commission for development projects in Iran. His wife Mehri, an eminent psychologist, was sometimes consulted in her professional capacity by official bodies responsible for implementing Iran's educational development programme. Messrs. Sabet and Yazdani are private businessmen. Hossein Amanat is a distinguished architect whose name was no doubt included in the list because he designed the recently-completed Permanent Seat of the Universal House of Justice (the supreme administrative body of the Bahá'í Faith).

Alleged SAVAK documents (pages 18 to 21). Two very pertinent questions arise in connection with these documents:

If (as falsely alleged in the report) SAVAK was "managed" by Bahá'is, why was this organization spying on Bahá'is and producing reports damaging to the Bahá'í community?

Since the compilers of the report have chosen to ignore this blatant incongruity, the following question arises:

Bearing in mind that the present Iranian Government has totally discredited SAVAK and all its works, why are SAVAK documents now being held up as reliable and authentic as far as Bahá'is are concerned?

Turning to the documents themselves, the dates of various Bahá'is meetings and the names of those attending them might possibly be genuine (the Bahá'is were constantly under surveillance by SAVAK) but the statements purported to have been made by Bahá'is are so ludicrous that they have obviously been fabricated. Significantly, these fabricated statements contrive to serve the ends both of SAVAK itself (which attacked the Bahá'is on political grounds) and of SAVAK's arch-collaborator, the fanatical Tablighat-i-Islami organization (which attacked the Bahá'is on religious grounds). Evidence of collaboration between these two organizations in "attacking Bahá'is in a scientific and logical way" was published in the Iranian newspaper Mojahed on 9 June 1980. (For full text, see "The Bahá'is in Iran: A Report on the

Persecution of a Religious Minority", page 83 of the 1982 edition).

Contrary to what is alleged in the Iranian report, no Bahá'í has ever "confessed" to any of the charges brought against the Bahá'í community and the purported "confession" referred to on page 18 is simply a quotation from one of the SAVAK documents. No shred of evidence has ever been produced to support any of the charges brought against Bahá'is and the numerous "Exhibits", masquerading as documentary evidence, which occupy the final 21 pages of the Iranian report will be found to be either innocuous quotations (Exhibits 1 to 16) or crude and very obvious fabrications (Exhibits 17 to 36 - alleged SAVAK documents).

The inability of the Iranian authorities to produce any convincing evidence against the Bahá'is is not at all surprising. The Bahá'í principles of loyalty and obedience to government, and of abstention from political or subversive activities, are absolutely fundamental: they do not change with changing governments or with changing circumstances.

Attitude of the Iranian Government towards the Bahá'is (pages 21 to 24). The final sections of the Iranian report contain (among a mass of political diatribe) various false assertions concerning the attitude of the Iranian Government towards the followers of the Bahá'í Faith.

It is alleged (page 22 paragraph 3) that many Bahá'is have "recognized the imperialist nature" of their faith and have therefore renounced it and "returned to the bosom of the people and Islam". The truth is that the 300,000 members of the Iranian Bahá'í community (the largest religious minority in Iran) have resisted remorseless social, financial, psychological and physical pressure rather than deny their beliefs; that 142 Bahá'is have suffered death when they could have saved themselves by recanting; and that the very small number of Bahá'is who have actually recanted their faith did so only under extreme physical pressure.

The report (page 22 paragraph 5) duly takes up the official stance of the Iranian Government and asserts that no Bahá'í has ever been executed in Iran because of his religious beliefs and that any Bahá'í who has been imprisoned or sentenced to death has been found guilty of crimes against the State.

This argument does not explain the pervasive and continuing persecution of the entire Bahá'í community in Iran. It ignores the fact that no evidence has ever been produced to support any of the charges brought against those Bahá'is who were executed, and also ignores the fact that, in the very few cases in which a Bahá'í has been willing to recant his faith, he has immediately been released and all the charges against him dropped - while his fellow believers, who refused to recant, have been executed on identical charges. The argument does not explain the disappearance, following their arrest, of all nine members of the national governing body of the Bahá'í

Faith in Iran, nor the secret execution (initially denied by the authorities) of eight of their successors. It does not explain why over 200 Bahá'ís, including women and juveniles, are currently being held without charges in Iranian prisons.

The argument that there is no large-scale persecution of the Bahá'í community on religious grounds is singularly unconvincing in the light of the fact that all Bahá'í community properties and holy places in Iran have been confiscated and/or destroyed, and that thousands of innocent Bahá'ís have been deprived of their fundamental human rights in a variety of dehumanizing ways, including dismissal from employment, denial of pensions, confiscation of private property, deprivation of means of livelihood and denial of education to children.

The contention (page 23 paragraphs 2 and 5 of the report) that the Bahá'ís are protected by the Iranian Constitution provided that they do not engage in anti-State activities is also false. The Bahá'ís are not recognized as a religious minority in the Iranian Constitution and thus (according to the Islamic law upon which the Constitution is based) they have no status, rights or protection under the Constitution. Under the present legal system, they will be granted constitutional rights only if they are willing to recant their faith and embrace Islam.

Despite the repeated denials of the Iranian Government, it is clear that the persecution of the Bahá'ís is based solely upon their religious beliefs. It is equally clear that the allegations contained in the document "Bahaism - its origins and its role" represent an attempt by the Iranian Government to divert international attention from the fanatically religious motivation underlying the persecution and to undermine the good reputation which the Bahá'í community enjoys throughout the world.

(The current plight of the Bahá'í community in Iran, and the false accusations levelled against the Bahá'ís by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, are more fully discussed in the Bahá'í International Community publication "The Bahá'ís in Iran: A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority," first published in June 1981, revised and updated in July 1982).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Person: Anthony A. Lee
213-208-8559REPLIES SOUGHT TO CIRCLE OF UNITY

Kalimát Press is actively seeking replies to the essays in the recently published volume Circle of Unity: Bahá'í Approaches to Current Social Issues. The replies are to be published as a small book which will contain letters and short essays in support of or in rebuttal to the ideas and approaches found in the first book.

"We see Circle of Unity as the beginning of a process, not the end of one," explained Anthony A. Lee, the editor of the volume. "The whole idea of the book was to begin constructive discussion and debate within the Bahá'í community on the most pressing social issues of our time." Kalimát Press plans to take this process one step further by publishing a sequel to Circle of Unity which will contain different points of view.

The initial book is a collection of ten essays plus an introduction. The essays address such issues as the peace movement, the women's movement, poverty, racism, human rights and Marxism. But the articles represent only the views of the respective authors. They are not intended to be authoritative statements of the Bahá'í positions on the questions addressed. Rather, it was hoped that the book would only open the door to discussion and dialogue within the Bahá'í community.

Contributions to the sequel volume should be sent directly to Kalimát Press, 10889 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

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The Universal House of Justice
Ridván 1971

NEW ERA PRESS is a Bahá'í-owned private publishing company recently established in Cyprus, dedicated to the goal of fulfilling the above wishes of the House of Justice.

This we cannot achieve without the participation of interested individuals all around the world, be they authors, illustrators, graphic designers, or simply people with suggestions and ideas who can identify areas in the existing body of Bahá'í literature needing greater attention.

In order to familiarise you with our work and aspirations, we set out below areas which are of particular interest to us:

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Although there are several excellent introductory books for non-Bahá'ís, many people will have found that in a teaching context they present certain limitations. Not everyone interested in discussing the Bahá'í view of a certain subject would eagerly welcome a text book on the Faith itself, whether written in a simple or intellectual manner. Consequently, it is difficult to cater for the individual needs of the seeker, as we are exhorted to do, when using the existing written material.

Therefore, in order to increase the teacher's flexibility in this important area of service, we propose to commission books and booklets which present Bahá'í viewpoints on individual subjects and topical issues. To attract the independent inquirer as well as to provide a comprehensive back-up service to personal teaching, each publication will be designed specifically — in its written content, artwork and high standard of finish — for presentation to non-Bahá'ís and sale through non-Bahá'í outlets.

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As publishers, it is our intention to devote a considerable amount of time and money to the task of securing inroads into the non-Bahá'í markets, such as bookshops, libraries, schools and universities, in order to ensure that our books are more effective at reaching the people for whom they are intended — the general public!

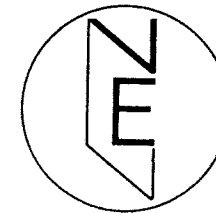
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The formative years of youth may be considered critical in terms of spiritual development, and never more so than in this decadent age which witnesses the progressive disintegration of the old world order.

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We would like to take this opportunity to invite your comments and ideas. Those wishing to be placed on our mailing list or to become involved in this new venture may contact us at the address below:

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Edited by Anthony A. Lee

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'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN AMERICA: MAHMÚD'S DIARY. Translation corrected and annotated by Sammi Anwar Smith. An eye-witness account of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's trip in America.

Susan Sundback (1980) New religious movements in Finland Temenos
16: 132-39.

Sundback reports on a number of papers presented at a conference on new religious movements in Finland which was arranged by the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion and held in Tvärminne on 9-10 November 1979. Two waves of movements were identified. The first wave, which included Theosophy (1907-) and Anthroposophy (1913-), occurred during the critical period of Finnish political and cultural turmoil at the beginning of the century. Finnish Theosophy at least was now culturally isolated and slowly disintegrating as a movement. The second wave, which included both neo-Pentecostalist and eastern groups, reflected wider trends in Western society during the late 1960s and 1970s. At least in Helsinki, this period was characterized by declining participation in the established churches (Lutheran, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic). By contrast, after an initial gradual diffusion into Lutheranism, neo-Pentecostalism underwent a significant expansion, particularly after 1977, when it assumed a popular and distinctively Finnish form. Older forms of evangelical revivalism also prospered at this time, as did the Jehovah's witnesses and Mormonism. There was also a wave of charismatic Catholicism as part of an international trend (1967-), but in Finland this declined after about 1973 and was confined to members of the urban middle-class. As to the eastern groups, with the exception of Transcendental Meditation (c.1976-), no large scale expansion appears to have occurred. Indeed, the Friends of the World Buddhist Order (1973-) had only about sixty members and supporters. TM, by contrast had perhaps

96.
5,000 active meditators (?), a further 5,000 having undergone some instruction. The presence of the Divine Light Mission (1973-) and the Baha'i Faith (1963-) was also noted.

The paper on the Baha'i religion was presented by Harri Peltola who described the international developments of the religion since 1921; noted its expansion of membership in and around 1970; and attributed this growth to a natural interest stemming from the youth culture of the 1960s and to massive educational campaigns in the Third World.

Peter Smith

February 1984

Baha'i Studies Register

BAHA'I STUDIES REGISTER: QUESTIONNAIRE

Due to unforeseen circumstances the Register of Academic work in Baha'i Studies has been much delayed-- the Register is designed to provide information on work accomplished or in progress connected with "Baha'i Studies", as well as a convenient means of increasing communication between scholars working in this field. It is hoped that the Register will be published in a future issue of this Bulletin.

Anyone wishing to submit information for the Register should supply the details indicated in the 'Baha'i Studies Register: Questionnaire' (see opposite [p.93]). If you can please send your entry to Dr. Peter Smith (new address below), ideally by 30th July 1985.

Change of Address

Dr. Peter & Sammi Smith's new address, from 28th April-- 30th September (1985) will be,

40/5 Sukhumvit Soi 46

Bangkok 10110

THAILAND

After September 1985 they may be contacted c/o

KALIMAT PRESS (Address on p. 88 [below]).

All this information may be published.

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5. ACADEMIC INSTITUTION TO WHICH YOU ARE AFFILIATED
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7. (A) PUBLICATIONS ON BAHAI STUDIES (Continue on back if necessary and include unpublished higher degree dissertations)
-
- (B) It would be appreciated if short abstracts (c.200 words) of publications could be included on a separate piece of paper.
8. RESEARCH IN PROGRESS:
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10. DO YOU WANT ME TO SEND YOU A COPY OF THE REGISTER (AT COST)?

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