Review of secondary literature in English on recent persecutions of Bahá’ís in Iran

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Abstract: This paper examines some accounts published in English on the persecution of Bahá’ís in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Various writers have identified misinformation, perceived favouritism under the Shah's regime, charges of espionage, and theological conflicts with Islam as the main motives for the attacks on the Bahá’ís. The response of certain parts of the international community, such as the United Nations, various national governments, and the Bahá’í community itself, have helped mitigate the persecution in some respects, but have had little impact in other respects.

Introduction

This article draws upon some of the published literature from Bahá’í and non-Bahá’í writers on the persecution of the Bahá’ís of Iran since 1978. It refers to a variety of academic papers, references to the Bahá’í persecution in books about Iranian politics and publications dedicated to the issue from human rights bodies. It aims at introducing the reader directly to a variety of sources and perspectives in English, but it is in no sense exhaustive. The tone of many non-Bahá’í western sources on this subject is generally sympathetic and most defend the Bahá’í case. This contrasts significantly with the core of material written on the early Bábí and Bahá’í persecutions.(1) Perhaps this difference can be attributed mainly to the previous lack of reliable sources of information on the Bábí Faith. In addition, the notable effect of advocacy campaigns of the Bahá’í International Community at the United Nations (UN), and the diplomatic activities of national spiritual assemblies around the world cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, various writers highlight different reasons to explain the main causes of the persecution. These causes will be considered after a brief review of the background to the current wave of persecutions.

Background to the revolutionary persecution

Despite the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi generally being proposed as "a 'Golden Age' for [religious] minorities in modern Iran,"(2) Rahnema and Nomani point to the build-up of anti-Bahá’í political organisations in Iran since the 1950s. They highlight the activities and beliefs of the "Hojatiyeh Mahdaviye Society" (known as the "Anjuman-i-Tablighat-í-Islami" before the revolution) which focussed on minimising the influence of the Bahá’ís in Iran.(3) They claim that the Shah gave this anti-Bahá’í society a "free rein, since it provided a safe outlet for religious activities that could have otherwise become subversive."

(4) In 1955 the Shah wanted to attract the support of the clergy in his anti-communist campaign,(5) and Khomeini wanted the Shah's support in a plan to "seek out and destroy members of the Bahá’í Faith."(6) Hence an uneasy alliance was struck whereby the clergy would undermine the "Tudeh" (Iranian communist party) whilst the Shah would allow their attacks on the Bahá’ís. In fact, "This organisation was recognised by SAVAK, the Shah's secret police, under the condition that it would remain solely a religious institution and not interfere in politics."

The Hojatiyeh aimed to "win back" Bahá’ís to Shi’ism through propaganda, infiltration, persuasion and confrontation. Rejali emphasises how the Pahlavi regime allowed anti-Bahá’í activities in Iran since the 1950s, as "the Hujjatiyeh [sic] served to ensure the loyalty of the religious right to the Pahlavi state."(8) "The anti-Bahá’í campaign by the ulama [clergy] suited the Shah: it diverted public attention away from the problems of the ailing economy. And by identifying with the widely prevalent prejudice against Bahá’ís, the Shah's regime improved its popularity."(9) Such was the popular support of this anti-Bahá’í stance that Rejali claims that the Hojatiyeh had over twelve thousand members by 1977. Other authors have also written about the background to the post-1978 persecution of the Bahá’ís in terms of the Hojatiyeh.(10) Martin, for example, emphasises the links between the SAVAK and...
the Hojatiyeh in outlining the long-standing and formal suppression of the Bahá’ís. He describes the Hojatiyeh organisation as "one of several instruments of social control in the Pahlavi state...a tool of the Pahlavi regime's oppressive policies."[11]

Bahá’ís in post-revolutionary Iran

As far back as 1981, Falk held up the Bahá’í question as a significant challenge for the Islamic government. "Maintaining respect for the Bahá’í religion and people will be one severe test of human rights in an Islamic republic."[12] By 1988 the Encyclopaedia Britannica had concluded that the Bahá’ís had been "the greatest victims of persecution."[13] In 1989, Dowty said of the Bahá’ís in Iran that "they may be the most cruelly persecuted minority in the world today."[14] In the following year Menashri claimed that, "the Bahá’ís suffered most under the new regime,"[15] and, in 1995, Bahá’ís were referred to by Keddie as "the largest...[and] most troubled,"[16] of the religious minorities in Iran and by Simpson as the "most notable group left out in the cold."[17]

Several publications have been written by individual Bahá’ís highlighting the events of the 1980s and 1990s. Accounts include those of eyewitnesses, such as the 1993 publication by Olya Roohizadegan[18] and the 1982 reports of the persecution by William Sears[19] and by Geoffrey Nash.[20] However, one of the earliest and most noteworthy non-Bahá’í publications on the situation was published by the London based charity "The Minority Rights Group." Their first report was published in 1982[21] and was revised and updated in 1985.[22] A four page update to this edition appeared in 1991. The author, Roger Cooper, explains how he came to write the report in a later book and explains how the report had to be reprinted several times and became "something of a best-seller."[23]

"Causes" of persecution discussed in secondary literature

1) Misconceptions

In his 1985 report Cooper explains "Official and unofficial Iranian attitudes towards Bahá’ís are largely (but not exclusively) based on misconceptions."[24] Martin echoes this idea, and explains that few sources of unbiased information have ever existed in Iran on the Bahá’í Faith, leading to "an almost universal ignorance of the religion's nature, teachings, and history. For over a century a curtain of silence has surrounded the subject..."[25] Ignorance is always a fertile ground for the growth of dangerous stereotypes against peoples, and these wide-spread misconceptions of the Bahá’ís were no doubt important to the violence used against them.

Bahá’ís are not alone as troubled religious minorities[26] in the Islamic Republic. Iran has long been homogenous in terms of religion, with non-Muslims accounting only for around 1 per cent of Iran's population, and Sunni Muslims for 10 per cent. About 89 per cent of the population is therefore Shi'i. The mere existence of religious minorities has therefore proven legally and socially problematic, posing a particular challenge for the Islamic Republic. This was especially so in a revolution which was, "presented as an attempt to restore authentic cultural tradition to the masses at the expense of alien ideologies...[and] the creation of an Islamic government, in which Shi'i values...reign supreme."[27] Therefore, as Kazemi and Hart have concluded, "A high price has been paid for the ruthless cultural revolution and the all-encompassing attempt to Islamicize the polity."[28] The situation for all religious minorities is still perilous. They are disadvantaged at every juncture in life, from university entrance,[29] to work in the public or even private[30] sectors, to the legal system where even members of recognised minority religions receive lower awards in injury and death lawsuits.

2) "Beneficiaries" of the Shah's regime?

Cooper suggests that "the most serious political charges against the Bahá’ís are that they co-operated actively with the Shah's regime, and are opposed to the present regime...there is evidence that some prominent beneficiaries of the regime were Bahá’ís or had strong Bahá’í connections...Political power in Iran has almost never been exercised thorough Western style party organisations, so the fact that Bahá’ís have never been involved in partisan or parliamentary politics does not prevent them from being seen as a clandestine political group by most Iranians."[31] Wright claims, "Since many [Bahá'ís] had been put in key posts by the shah [sic], their political loyalties were also suspect."[32] The linkage between public anger after the revolution, and the apparently "privileged" status of the Bahá’ís under the Shah's rule, is made by numerous writers. For example, "The Shah had more Bahá’ís in his entourage than many Muslims thought appropriate."[33] Menashri also makes this link and states that, "under the shah [sic] some Bahá’ís had advanced to top political and economic posts."[34] However, he makes the same mistake as many other writers[35] and much of the Iranian populace in regarding the Shah's last prime minister, Amir 'Abbas Hoveyda, a Bahá’í.[36] Of the claim that many Bahá’ís were also members of the Shah's secret police, the SAVAK, Keddie argues, "There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of Savakis were born Shi'as [sic], and accusations against the Bahá’ís were mainly false pretexts for..."
Kazemzadeh emphasises the hatred of the clergy in the persecution of the Bahá’ís, “Of course, in the clerical republic there would be theological.”

Islamic-Bahá’í conflict and claims that the case, “represents a significant challenge for the task of creating a more tolerant Islamic religious status under strict Muslim law that has rendered them vulnerable.”

The consequences of this lack of legitimacy from which Bahá’ís suffer, “it appears that it is chiefly the Bahá’ís lack of legitimate distinction in the right to religion under Islamic law rest on these two issues. It is clear that Iran's Bahá’ís are disadvantaged on the basis of both issues: recognition and the original religious background of significant numbers of their followers. Keddie emphasises the implications of this lack of legitimacy from which Bahá’ís suffer, “it appears that it is chiefly the Bahá’ís lack of legitimate

no doubt about the shadowy origins of the Bahá’í Faith and Qadianism. He claims, “These are two creeds which were invented by both the Western and Eastern (Russian) Imperialism. Bahá’ism and Qadianism are two deviated faiths...These are two cancerous glands which colonial powers have placed inside the Islamic world.”

Keddie, on the other hand, suggests that the Bahá’ís are not a religion, but a web of espionage activities...[Western powers are] using the human rights issue as a means to pressure other countries...[Iran will] never abandon the application of Islamic law just to please international organisations.” International law allows a state much more extensive rights in protecting itself from subversive terrorist activities, than from curbing the legitimate rights of religious minorities. It is this margin of advantage that Iran has always sought, even under Muhammad Reza Shah, and continues to justify in relation to the Bahá’ís.

4) Incompatibility of religious claims

Whereas Cooper in 1987 questioned the significance of the apparent "Bahá’í opposition to Shi’ism and the Shi’i clergy" to their subjugation, the 1991 Minority Rights Group update claims that the "purely religious character of the persecution [is] unmistakably clear." The main dilemma, however, is that of the existence of a new religion, the Bahá’í Faith, and that those who have converted to it in Iran have largely done so from Islam. Falk explains the problem in this way: "In the background is the Shi’ia view of the Bahá’í religion – founded by Bahá’u’lláh, regarded by adherents as a subsequent and superior prophet to Mohammed – as heretical." Simpson and Shubart state, "although the Bahá’ís teach that all revealed religions are true, they maintain that theirs is the one most suited to the modern age. That in itself is total heresy in Islam...which believes that Mohammed is the 'Seal of the Prophets' and that Islam is the final revelation: to suggest that it can be improved upon is the worst form of spiritual error." Although lack of recognition need not lead to persecution it certainly seriously weakens the foundations of rights that can be anticipated from a theocracy.

Islamic law the rights of non-Muslims can basically be divided into the rights of non-Muslims in a Muslim state that are "People of the Book," (Jews and Christians primarily, and Zoroastrians and Hindus, who have been recognised as having equal rights as the "People of the Book"), and the rights of non-Muslims who are not "People of the Book". A separate but even more fundamental distinction is whether the non-Muslim is an apostate, having converted from being a Muslim to another religion. The legal distinctions in the right to religion under Islamic law rest on these two issues. It is clear that Iran's Bahá’ís are disadvantaged on the basis of both issues: recognition and the original religious background of significant numbers of their followers. Keddie emphasises the consequences of this lack of legitimacy from which Bahá’ís suffer, “it appears that it is chiefly the Bahá’ís lack of legitimate religious status under strict Muslim law that has rendered them vulnerable.” Akhavan also points out this structural basis of the Islamic-Bahá’í conflict and claims that the case, "represents a significant challenge for the task of creating a more tolerant Islamic theology." Kazemzadeh emphasises the hatred of the clergy in the persecution of the Bahá’ís, “Of course, in the clerical republic there would be theological."
be no room for Bahá’ís, hated as renegades and unprotected by the Koranic [sic] injunction to tolerate Christians and Jews...The establishment of the Islamic Republic made it seem possible for the clerical extremists to carry out a final solution of the Bahá’í question.” Dowty argues along similar lines in explaining that, “The outlook for Bahá’ís was, therefore, bleak when fundamentalist Muslim clergymen took over Iran in early 1979...True to their beliefs, the clerical rulers denied legal status to the Bahá’í religion...The ayatollahs aim at nothing less than the total elimination of the Bahá’í faith, whose very existence is regarded as a threat to the truth of Islam,” and Moore refers to the alienation of the, "Iranian Bahá’ís and Jews along with the more liberated women."

Other reasons that have been given for the Bahá’í persecution have included the direct opposition of the teachings of the Bahá’í Faith with the traditionalist agenda of the revolutionary government. Simpson claims that the Bahá’ís "have paid the penalty for being heterodox at a time of fierce religious orthodoxy." Kazemi and Hart concluded "The regime's policies have been particularly detrimental to women and certain religious and ethnic minorities such as the Bahá’ís and the Kurds." In the eyes of the Iranian clergy and leadership the Islamic revolution naturally demanded the eradication, or at least the total exclusion, of the Bahá’ís.

### Revolutionary fervour or official policy?

In 1988 writers were still not certain of the relationship between the attacks on the Bahá’ís and government policy in Iran. Simpson claimed, "As with so many other things in Iran the persecution is neither officially sponsored nor officially condemned; the initiative is left with the more violent of the mullahs and the local komitehs and nothing is done to curb their excesses." Cooper raises the question of how systematic and co-ordinated the Bahá’í persecution actually was by 1985, and as to whether this amounted to "official policy?" The Minority Rights Group update to this report of 1991, however, diverged in its assessment and, in relating the economic and social disadvantages faced by the Bahá’ís, emphasised, "It is important to note that this evidence consists of documents originating with judicial and administrative agencies of the Iranian government itself..."

Further evidence for this perspective, of direct governmental backing, came in 1993. A document that had been leaked was exposed by the Bahá’ís as further evidence of the claim that the persecution of the Bahá’ís in Iran was sponsored from the highest echelons of the Iranian regime. The government policy directive on the Bahá’ís was reported in the UN Special Representative's 1993 report. According to the directive, the supreme revolutionary council reportedly instructed government agencies to block the progress and development of the Bahá’ís community, expel Bahá’í students from universities, cut their links with groups outside Iran, restrict their employment and deny them "positions of influence." The government claims that the directive is a forgery. However, it appears to be an accurate reflection of current government practice and was acknowledged as such in UN circles and by various governments such as the United States. Most unbiased observers welcomed the uncovering of this document as an explicit piece of evidence of the continued government position on the Bahá’ís. Iran had learnt to become a little more subtle in attacks on Bahá’ís, in order not to attract international criticism and economic sanctions, but its position on the Bahá’ís had not changed and there was no intention of toleration. Even in March 1996, the non-governmental human rights organisation Human Rights Watch-Middle East concluded that, "Members of the Bahá’í faith are forbidden to practice their religion." Therefore, as Simpson has stated, "The regime as such may not have instituted this pogrom against the Bahá’ís, but it has taken administrative measures against them which amount to full-scale persecution." The recent survey of Iran in The Economist confirmed this perspective in its statement that, "the regime remains unremittingly savage towards the unhappy Bahá’ís who, charged with apostasy, face the death sentence and often receive it."

### Genocide?

In 1985 Cooper did not recognise the Bahá’í situation as genocide, and asserted, "Those who speak of genocide should remember that even at its highest estimate the number of Bahá’ís killed is only a tiny fraction of the whole community, though none the more excusable for that." Several later writers rejected this analysis and did use the contentious term for the Bahá’í case. Such writers included Leo Kuper, Helen Fein, Alex Schmid and Paul Allen. In 1982 Kazemzadeh claimed that "The threat of genocide hangs over the Bahá’ís of Iran," and Akhavan referred to "the genocidal campaign against the Bahá’ís in Iran. None of the United Nations bodies, however, have ever used the term in relation to the Bahá’ís, as there is a “psychological reluctance within the United Nations to use the term genocide,” as, "charges of genocide immediately close off the possibility of discourse." The Bahá’í International Community did, however, use the term, in a somewhat milder form in 1990 when its representative stated that the institutionalised persecution from which the Bahá’ís had suffered, "would have assumed the proportions of genocide had the international community not intervened."
Prospects for recourse

The Minority Rights Group report of 1985 had stated that “Although the best that can realistically be hoped for is the removal of the grosser elements of the present persecution, pessimism about the prospects should not deter efforts to end it completely.” But the 1991 update demanded more. Referring to the significant successes of the international intervention, it continued, “Unfortunately, these welcome changes do not fully address the basic problems.” These problems included, and still include, the discrimination Bahá’í students faced in relation to the primary and secondary education, their inability to continue their tertiary education, the added barriers they faced in obtaining passports and exit permits, the enduring confiscation of Bahá’í holy places, properties and funds in Iran, severe restrictions on community worship and the continued ban on the functioning of the Bahá’í administration in Iran.

Cooper's report had rejected as futile the potential success of any direct intervention in Iran as a means of ending the Bahá’í persecution. He compared the Bahá’í persecution to that of the US embassy hostage taking early on in the revolution and states "The lesson to be learned from the hostage crisis is that patient negotiating, however frustrating at times, is more effective than direct political or military action." Paul Allen, however, analysed the international legal mechanisms for the enforcement of international human rights standards, and concluded that the Bahá’í case "represents an extreme example of post-Charter human rights violations." He therefore proposed that the General Assembly or Security Council create a new human rights procedure that would enable the use of economic sanctions mandatory on all UN members, followed by the exercise of "military force to compel the recalcitrant government to protect its citizens' human rights." The aim would be to give "oppressive governments ample time to improve their human rights record. Yet its provisions do not allow oppressed groups to suffer indefinitely."

This suggestion was not considered in any of the UN bodies who continued to act on behalf of the Bahá’ís in Iran, nor was it taken up in any of the interventions of the Bahá’í International Community. Its proposals are indeed highly controversial in the field of international law, and other states would have been unlikely to support such extensive measures, for fear of reprisals against themselves at some future date. Nevertheless, it represents how the clarity and the almost universal support for the innocence of the Bahá’ís of Iran galvanised actors on many different levels to try to protect a minority group. It is ironic that the protection of the Bahá’ís fell outside UN Chapter VII protection because of their refusal to take up arms and "because their passivity prevents threats to or breaches of the peace."

Conclusion

Most references to the recent persecution of the Bahá’ís in Iran come from: political studies of Iran's revolutionary years, debates about political Islam and, more recently, studies in the public international law field concerning religion and human rights. Few authors have attempted to get in touch with Bahá’ís either outside the country or inside Iran, with the notable exception of Simpson, UN investigators and Kuper. Few non-Bahá’ís even refer to the very extensive UN documentation on the issue. The problem of misinformation therefore continues. This lack of careful analysis is reflected most strikingly in the frequency of incorrect spellings of the word "Bahá’í" and in the wildly varying estimates of the number of Bahá’ís remaining in Iran.

Publications about the present condition of the community in Iran, sociological studies about those who emigrated in the aftermath of the revolution and the pattern of their resettlement, up-to-date historical studies about the community, comparisons with the fate of other minorities in Iran and legal studies about the pattern followed by the refugees, would fill a void in the existing literature.

Whilst Bahá’í information agencies and national spiritual assemblies have focussed their attentions on regularly updating relevant international bodies, the diplomatic community, and governmental agencies who intervene on behalf of the Bahá’ís in Iran and the media, much less attention seems to have been concentrated on the equally crucial task of informing the academic community. This, of course, is a much more decentralised and diffuse task, but might be attempted through more academic studies and expansion of present international Bahá’í web sites to include information on the circumstances of the community in Iran.

The case of the Bahá’ís of Iran is distinct enough not only to continue to gain government and academic support world-wide, but also to help clarify and advance international human rights law for minorities, to confirm the illegality of cultural genocide, to confirm the right to freedom of religion and to curtail governmental abuses of human rights. The dreadful precedent to this experience can be seen in the tremendous spirit released by the massacre of Jews during the second World War, into the codification of the norms of modern human rights. It is therefore critical to ensure not only that this case is successfully resolved, but also to channel the support that has arisen into galvanising the general development of international human rights law and solidifying its painful lessons into greater judicial guarantees for the future.

End Notes


3. "As Islamic purists, Hujjat-iyyah [sic] members advocated the complete purification of Iranian Muslim society, starting with the elimination of the (heretic) Bahá'í and the (godless) Communist[s] Hujjat-iyyah's [sic] main function was to harass the Bahá'ís, while attempting to convert them to Shi'i Islam" (Mansoor Moaddel, Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution [New York: Columbia University Press, 1993] 250).


6. Taheri describes this "Halabi" Plan in this way, "...a national register of Bahá'ís would be compiled, enabling the mullahs to contact each follower of the faith and try to bring him back onto the right path; if they failed, the Bahá’í in question would be put on a black list and boycotted by the Muslims. In some cases, the adamant Bahá’í would be put to death" (Taheri The Spirit 113-114). After the revolution, however, the Halabi group's (called the Hujjat-iyyeh) policy changed. "After the revolution, as the suppression of Bahá'ísm became the general clerical policy, the society turned to Marxism as the archenemy to be eradicated" (Claire Arjomand, The Turban for the Crown [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988] 157).

7. Mansoor Moaddel, Class 250.


15. Menashri, Iran 237.


19. William Sears, A Cry From the Heart - The Bahá'ís in Iran (Oxford: George Ronald, 1982).

20. Geoffrey Nash, Iran's Secret Pogrom - The Conspiracy to Wipe Out the Bahá'ís (Suffolk: Neville Spearman, 1982).


24. Cooper, Death 200, emphasis added.


26. Whilst the situation of cultural or ethnically based religious groups, such as the Armenians and Assyrians, in Iran has gradually improved, much less tolerance has been shown towards evangelical Protestants and Bahá’ís.


29. Applicants have to pass an examination in Islamic theology, except for Bahá’ís who are denied access to university anyway.

30. All religious minorities need to display religious minority status in plaques in front of shops that sell foodstuffs, except for Bahá’ís who don't even qualify for this status.


32. Robin Wright, In the Name of God - The Khomeini Decade (London: Bloomsbury, 1989) 106 footnote, emphasis added. Also see footnote on 181 where the mistaken claim is made that, "At least four hundred [Bahá’ís] have reportedly been executed since 1979."


34. David Menashri, Iran 237.

35. Although Simpson regards the claim of the Bahá’í links with the British as, "fictitious," he also presents Hoveyda as, "always regarded as a Bahá’í because his father had been one" (Simpson, Behind Iranian Lines [London: Robson Books Ltd., 1988] 215). See also Hiro, Iran 78, and Ali Farazmand, The State, Bureaucracy, and Revolution in Modern Iran - Agrarian Reforms and Regime Politics (New York and London: Praeger, 1989) 31. Martin explains that it was Hoveyda's paternal grandfather who had been a Bahá’í and that his father had returned to Islam after being expelled from the Bahá’í community ("Persecution") 24. Shawcross is one of the few non-Bahá’í writers who acknowledges this fact in his book. See William Shawcross, The Shah’s 205.

36. The Tehran Times of 24 January 1982 also claimed that Hoveyda had also used his influence to plant other Bahá’ís in administrative posts and claimed, "The West must know that every single agent of theirs [the Bahá’ís] will ultimately be arrested and executed...even if their number were to total 111,000." Hoveyda himself was not a Bahá’í. See footnote above.

37. Keddie, Iran 151.


40. Ayatollah Allameh Yahya Noori, *Finality of Prophethood - and a critical analysis of Babism, Bahá'ísm, Qadiyanism* (Glasgow: Royston Ltd., n.d.) preface page (iii). "Qadianism" was found by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani in 1889 and is better known as the Ahmadiyya movement. Its followers are known as Ahmadis.


42. See Keddie, *Iran 152*.

43. Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, statement made in Qom, Iran on 14 May 1996, quoted by the Iranian News Agency IRNA and announced on the BBC World Service Persian service on the same day.

44. Keddie, *Iran 9*.


46. Falk, *Human 212*.


49. Keddie, *Iran 152*.


53. Janice M. Moore, "The Iranian" 98.


56. i.e. revolutionary committees.


58. Wright, *In the Name 12*.


64. *The Bahá'ís of Iran* (1991) 12. According to the Special Rapporteur Mr Abdelfattah Amor's report on Iran, (Economic and Social Council, dated 9 February 1996, 52nd session, item 18 of the provisional agenda of the Commission on Human Rights, UN Docs. E/CN.4/1996/95/Add.2). The membership of the Bahá’í community of Iran is estimated at 300,000. Since 1979, 201 Bahá’ís have been assassinated and 15 have been missing and are presumed dead (para. 69) and at least 10,000 Bahá’ís have been dismissed from posts in administration and teaching posts (para. 64). The percentage of the Bahá’ís killed, compared to the total Bahá’í population in Iran, therefore is 0.072%, and the percentage thrown out of civil service posts is 3.33%.


73. Allen, "The Bahá’ís" 360.

74. Allen, "The Bahá’ís" 360.

75. Allen, "The Bahá’ís" 358.


77. For example the UN Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance or the UN Special Representative on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Bahá’í community in Iran has now been virtually annihilated.*


80. Numerous sites exist on the situation of the Protestant community in Iran. For examples refer to: or .

English. Using faith to reinforce human rights of Bahá’ís in Iran. Nazila Ghanea 20th May 2014. Religion. The persecution of the Bahá’ís in Iran is one such case. With over 300,000 followers, the Bahá’ís are Iran’s largest non-Muslim religious minority. They have no legal protection or recognition as a minority, however, because unlike Jews, Zoroastrians and Christians, the Iranian constitution does not recognize their faith. For decades, they have been arbitrarily detained, executed, refused education and livelihood. Recent statements by Shia clerics favoring coexistence with the Bahá’ís offer room for hope. Ayatollah Masoumi-Tehrani is no stranger to calling for religious coexistence in Iran. Recently, however, he included a call to respect Iran’s Bahá’ís. Baha’is are prevented from going to university and their socio-cultural activities are restricted. In the early days of the Islamic State, all of their holy sites were demolished, some of their houses set on fire while hundreds faced execution and imprisonment. Since President Ahmadinejad came to power in 2006, the situation has worsened for the Bahá’i community in Iran. Recently, more shocking news surfaced about the demolition of Baha’i houses in the village of Lvel in the province of Mazandran in the north of Iran. But this was not an isolated event. In 2007, six Baha’i houses were set on f