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*The Continued Escalation of
Persecution of
Evangelical Christians in
the Islamic Republic of Iran*

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Iranian Christians International, Inc. (ICI) is a non-profit charitable organization registered under the U.S. International Revenue Code 501(c)(3). It was established in 1980. One of its program-services is to assist Iranian/Afghan Christian refugees. ICI does this by providing documentation which supports their applications, finding sponsors in the U.S., Canada, Australia and some European countries, and assisting in their resettlement.

Although not a registered UN observer for security reasons, ICI has monitored the human rights situation of Christians in the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Muslim countries since 1980. ICI has also monitored the human rights situation of Iranian Christians in Turkey since 1993. (Please refer to the Human Rights Watch World Report 1993.)

During the past 15 years, ICI has assisted more than 500 Iranian Christian refugees/asylees, of whom most were Muslim converts from Islam to Christianity (many of whom converted after leaving Iran), by preparing documentation to support their refugee/asylum applications, appeals, and motions to re-open. ICI has also worked with more than one hundred attorneys in the U.S. and other countries. More than 95% of the cases for which ICI prepared documentation were accepted. ICI has also prepared documentation for Christian minorities from other Muslim countries, the majority being Muslim converts to Christianity, of whom all were accepted.

ICI provides reports of human rights violations of Christian minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Muslim countries to human rights organizations including, but not limited to: UNHCR Geneva and UN Centre for Human Rights, Geneva; U.N. Human Rights Center Branch Office in New York; Amnesty International, London; Human Rights Watch, New York; Christian Solidarity, Geneva; OMCT/SOS Torture, Geneva; U.S. Committee for Refugees, Washington, D.C.; The Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights in Islamic Countries, Illinois; International Red Cross, Geneva; Open Doors, Holland; Jubilee Campaign, London; Zweimer Institute of Muslim Studies, Pasadena, CA, USA; Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, New York, USA; and WEF Religious Liberty Commission, Illinois, USA.

ICI provides reports of human rights violations of Christian minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Muslim countries to the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Resource Information Center, and a number of U.S. Congressional Committees and individual congressmen. ICI also provides reports to governments of other countries such as Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, England, Germany, Norway and Sweden. ICI has provided its documentation to the UNHCR branch offices in a number of countries over the past 15 years.

Introduction

The persecution of Christian minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran first gained the attention of the international community and human rights organizations in 1993. The killings of three Evangelical Protestant pastors in Iran during the first half of 1994 gained worldwide attention and brought more focus to the worsening plight of persecuted Christians, particularly Muslim converts to Christianity and other Evangelical Christians.

In August 1994, Iranian Christians International, Inc. (ICI) released an extensive report about the persecution of Christian minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This report covered the recent response by human rights organizations to the human rights violations against Iranian Christian minorities, and the current news media coverage of the human rights violations against Iranian Christian minorities. It examined the Islamic laws regarding the treatment of Muslim converts to Christianity or "apostates." The report also explored intolerance toward non-Muslims in the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Muslim countries as well as describing the escalation of the anti-Christian campaign by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It then recited a long list of incidents of persecution, arrest, imprisonment, torture, and execution of Iranian Muslim converts to Christianity, other Evangelical Christians and ethnic Armenian and Assyrian Christians. It also included reports of other actions taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ministry of Islamic Guidance against the Christian minorities in Iran.

Since then, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has escalated its persecution of the Iranian Christian minorities. Although all Christian minorities have suffered state-sponsored discrimination, persecution and terrorism, Muslim converts to Christianity and other Evangelical Christians have suffered worse.

In January 1996, ICI published a report The Continued Escalation of Persecution of Christian Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This report presented new reports of persecution of Evangelical Christians in the Islamic Republic of Iran received directly by ICI from contacts in Iran and from fleeing refugees; it also provided an update on the response of the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other human rights organizations to the plight of Iranian Christian minorities in Iran; it recited the "Islamic Ideology of Supremacy," Islamic laws regarding the treatment of "Apostates," and religious minorities, particularly Christians, and new laws and policies affecting Evangelical Christians. The report explained why the government of Iran is attempting to eradicate Christianity in Iran; it also related reports of persecution, arrest, imprisonment and torture of Iranian Christians who returned to Iran after applying for asylum in another country and reports of deportations to Iran. Sample summons and other exhibits were also included. In January 1996, the 1994 report was revised and made available in a more readable format under the title The Status of Human Rights of Evangelical Protestant Christians in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Both reports, The Continued Escalation of Persecution of Christian Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran and The Status of Human Rights of Evangelical Protestant Christians in the Islamic Republic of Iran have been further revised, updated and combined. They are now published under one title, The Continued Escalation of Persecution of Evangelical Christians in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Reports of Persecution of Evangelical Iranian Christians Received by Iranian Christians International, Inc. Since July 1994

According to recent reports received by ICI, persecution of Iranian Muslim converts to Christianity and other Evangelical Christians in Iran is more severe and widespread than previous reports indicated. The persecution is escalating. Muslim converts to Christianity, other Evangelical Christians, pastors and church leaders continue to be arrested, imprisoned, and tortured, simply because of their religion. Some are kept under heavy surveillance, with their phones tapped and letters routinely opened, while others receive written and oral death threats. Some have escaped assassination attempts. Others have lost their jobs or have been refused gainful employment, housing and education. Ethnic Armenian and Assyrian Christians also continue to face officially sanctioned discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment, education, housing, the court system and public accommodations.

Until January 1994, when Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr was killed by Iranian government agents, the Revolutionary Guards, acting under the direction of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, focused mainly on intimidating and harassing churches and church leaders. However after Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr's death, government agents began to focus more on individuals who were Muslim converts and/or who encouraged Muslims to convert to Christianity. At this point, the small home groups and house churches became endangered. Government agents planted informers in these groups, and put identified individuals under heavy surveillance, following them, tapping their phones and opening their mail. The persecution worsened throughout the year and included the killings of Rev. Tateos Michaelian and Rev. Mehdi Dibaj in July 1994.

Because of the structure of the underground church, only the most severe incidents of persecution are reported to pastors and church leaders or to the outside world, and some are reported months or years after the incidents occurred. For example, Mr. Manuchehr Afghani, an Iranian Muslim convert to Christianity, was killed by Iranian government officials in Tehran in 1988, an event which was not reported to ICI until 1995. Some incidents are reported by refugees after they flee Iran.

The fact that most Iranian Evangelical Christians are afraid to give reports of persecution to the outside world makes it difficult to track the persecution of Christian minorities in Iran. Some incidents are reported months or years after the incidents occurred, often by refugees after they flee Iran. Many refugees, however, are afraid to give full details of their persecution because they fear retribution against their families still living in Iran.

Also the fact that many Iranians "disappear" for days, weeks, months or years makes it more difficult to track persecution of Christian minorities in Iran. In its May 1995 publication Iran: Official Secrecy Hides Continuing Repression, Amnesty International reported, "... detainees can spend up to 10 years behind bars before their relatives know where they are."

it is believed therefore that the following reports represent only a fraction of the actual persecution of Iranian Evangelical Christians today.

One must also be reminded that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is desperate to improve relations with Western European countries and is fearful of U.S. style sanctions against companies trading with Iran. Only through improved relations with other countries can there be improved trade ties. Therefore, the Iranian government is making an all out effort to convince the outside world that human rights practices in Iran, particularly those regarding religious minorities, have improved in recent years. However, the facts are the opposite.

Reports received in March 1996 by ICI from our European sources indicate that Iranian diplomats have recently contacted various Members of the British Parliament requesting meetings. To imply that the human rights of Christians in Iran have improved, government-controlled newspapers in Iran have published articles such as "Armenian Pontiff Congratulates Revolutionary Anniversary" and "Tehran to Host Conference on Justice in Int'l Relations" in the February 14, 1996 *Ettela'at International*. The government of Iran has also recently hosted UN officials and other "official visitors," who leave Iran with a false impression of the status of human rights in that country. The following recent examples show how the Iranian government has intentionally misled Western diplomats and official visitors to Iran.

On January 31, 1996, the *Ecumenical News International* carried an article stating that "Catholicos Aram I, a leader of the Armenian¹ Orthodox Church and moderator of the central committee of the World Council of Churches declared during a visit to Iran that the rights of local members of his church are respected by the Iranian authorities . . . [and] expressed 'satisfaction that the rights of our [Armenian Orthodox] community are respected' . . ."

The April/May 1996 *I.S.I.C. Bulletin*,¹ whose editor is personally well known to Iranian Christians International, Inc. (ICI) and whose reports in the past have been very reliable, explains the Orthodox Armenian leaders' motivation for misrepresenting the status of Christians in Iran today:

The Islamic Revolution induced many Christians and other minorities to leave Iran for the West, but also resulted in significant growth of the Protestant (Evangelical) churches. As a result, many Armenian Orthodox leaders saw their influence in the community being reduced day by day, as young Armenians and Muslims became interested in Protestantism. The growth of the Protestant churches in Iran has always been considered by Armenian Orthodox Church leaders a serious threat to the position of the Armenian Orthodox Church.

Ever since the killing of three Protestant church leaders in Iran, two of whom were Armenians in 1994, the head of the Armenian Orthodox Church has been actively involved in a secret dialogue with the Iranian (government) authorities. His primary objectives are:

1. To present the Armenian Orthodox Church as the only representative of the Christian community in Iran.
2. To reduce the influence of Protestant churches in Iran and to encourage their Armenian leaders to come back to the Orthodox Church.

¹Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, a London based non-profit organization.

There are some signs that both parties in the dialogue recently made some significant decisions on how to advance the plan. This will benefit the Iranian authorities more than the Christian community in Iran.

The February 17, 1996 Reuters carried an article about Maurice Copithorne, the new UN Special Representative for Iran, who stated, after a six-day visit to Tehran, that "he felt the Iranian government wanted to cooperate with his probe into the country's human rights situation." The questions must be asked, "Why has the Iranian government allowed Mr. Copithorne to visit Iran, when between 1992 and 1995 they refused to allow Professor Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, the previous special representative for Iran? Why was Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr killed after presenting human rights abuses to Mr. Pohl and requesting that he visit Iran?"

During the fall of 1995, Mr. John Nimrod, who is a past State Senator of Illinois (USA), the director of the AUA Foundation, and an ethnic Assyrian, gave ICI raving reviews of his recent trip to Iran. He stated that Assyrians seemed to be much better off now than they have been during the past several years. He also exclaimed that he was treated very well by government authorities that the Iranian government had asked him to set up an office in Iran to represent Iranian Assyrians. His reports are not consistent with reports received by human rights organizations or the numerous individual reports received directly by ICI from Assyrian and Armenian Christians.

After an "official visit" to Iran in October 1995 which included "interviews with lawyers, journalists, ambassadors, government representatives and even Christian pastors," Swedish diplomats left Iran with the "conclusion that it was quite safe for Iranian Evangelical Christians, including Muslim converts to Christianity" to return.

It is a regular practice of the Islamic Republic of Iran to force the leaders of religious minority groups into making false statements regarding the human rights conditions of the religious minorities. The December 13, 1993 Middle Eastern Concern report stated:

Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr, General Secretary of the Assemblies of God denomination and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, recently met with the Ministry of Islamic Guidance for Minorities requesting that the rights of Christians be protected in the face of, what is seen here as, an unprecedented scale of persecution. His action prompted the Ministry to require all Christian denominations to sign declarations stating that they enjoy full constitutional rights as Christians in Iran. Those who did so, signed these declarations out of indifference or as a result of blandishments or duress."

According to the January 30, 1994 Human Rights Watch News Release:

Representatives of several religious minorities in Iran--notably Eastern Orthodox Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews--have in recent weeks bombarded foreign organizations, including Middle East Watch, with faxed letters proclaiming their well-being in the Islamic Republic. It is noteworthy that the evangelical Christian churches have not gone along with what seems to have been a government-inspired campaign, designed to refute the recent findings of the U.N. Special Representative to Iran, Mr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl. In his November report to the U.N. General Assembly, Mr. Galindo Pohl was critical of the state of religious freedom in Iran.

Two prominent evangelical Christian pastors, who fled Iran in 1994 and 1995, reported to ICI that following the murders of Rev. Dibaj and Rev. Michaelian, the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran

attempted to intimidate them into appearing on government controlled television and radio to condemn the Mujahedeen Khalq Organization for the murders. The pastors feared for their lives and fled Iran.

The Government of the Iranian Republic of Iran continues to deny any involvement in the murders of Rev. Dibaj, Rev. Michaelian and another Evangelical Christian pastor, and continues to blame the Mujahedeen Khalq Organization despite contradictory evidence. The Iranian government even denied that an execution order had ever been issued against Rev. Dibaj, even after the Islamic Revolutionary Court's written execution order had been released to world.

According to ICI's reports received directly from sources in Iran and from fleeing refugees, human rights abuses continue to escalate. The occurrences are not just a few isolated events. Some might say the refugees exaggerate in order to obtain asylum in a third country or gain refugee status. However, from in depth interviews with numerous refugees, ICI has found the opposite to be true. Most underline their cases because they fear retribution against their families and friends left behind in Iran. Also their independent reports corroborate each others. (Most of the refugees who have given reports to ICI do not know each other and contact us after arriving in different countries.)

As another case in point, an Iranian pastor who recently fled Iran reported to ICI that when Mr. Abed Hussein, a Muslim Tunisian national and UN official, interviewed him in late 1995 in Iran, four government officials from four different Iranian government ministries accompanied the UN official. At no time was the pastor left alone with the UN official, thereby not allowing him to give accurate accounts of the imprisonment and other persecution he other Iranian Evangelical Christians had suffered at the hands of the Iranian government.

Also, every time the Superintendent of the Injili (Presbyterian U.S.A. or "Evangelical") Churches or the pastor of the Chavari-ol Saliheh Church in Tehran receive calls from the U.S., they take the first few minutes of each phone call praising the Iranian government for the "freedoms" it has given their churches. These two pastors have been forced to sign statements that they will not evangelize Muslims. Because these churches are not allowed to evangelize, and because many of their members have fled Iran due to persecution, only a handful of people attend the worship services. Therefore, these churches must be considered practically closed.

The senior pastor of the Tehran Central Assembly of God Church has also been intimidated into not reporting the persecution of Evangelical Christians in Iran to the outside world. He has also bowed to government demands not to evangelize Muslims. When asked about the persecution of Evangelical Christians in Iran, he greatly understates the persecution compared to the reports received directly from Iran and from fleeing refugees that ICI has received. He also denied knowledge of the persecution of particular members of his church which have been reported directly to ICI.

For the safety of the informers and their families, many of whom are still residing in Iran, only initials are used in the following reports and some details have been omitted. Signed affidavits, statements and detailed reports are on file at the ICI office.

August 1996-Mr. Shahram Sepehri-Fard-Muslim Convert to Christianity:

Mr. Shahram Sepehri-Fard converted from Islam to Christianity as a child. His father, Reverend Sadeqh Sepehri-Fard, was the Director of the Iran Bible Society until its closure by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and his escape from Iran to Germany in 1990.

In early July 1996, Sepehri-Fard was arrested and imprisoned in Evin Prison in Tehran. He was first interrogated about having "sensitive information" (i.e. espionage) and later interrogated regarding adultery. Under Iranian law, the punishment for espionage or adultery is death. The real reason for his arrest and imprisonment was his and his family's conversion from Islam to Christianity.

Due to international pressure, Sepehri-Fard was found innocent of all charges in a military court in Tehran on August 10, 1996. Upon payment of 200,000 Toumans (approximately \$500), he was released on August 14. He plans to leave Iran as soon as possible.

February 1996—Mrs. R.—Muslim Convert to Christianity:

Mrs. R., a Muslim convert to Christianity, was persecuted by her husband because of her Christian faith. In October 1995, after he discovered her Persian Bible and her church attendance, he raped her and beat her severely with his fists and a radio cable. He also used his government position to secure the services of Revolutionary Guards, local police and local Komitehs to terrorize his wife into submission. He continued to beat her and her five year old son until she escaped Iran in February 1996.

January 1996—Pastor Harnik Torosian—Armenian Evangelical Pastor:

In November 1995, Pastor Harnik Torosian, pastor of the underground Assembly of God Church in Shiraz was arrested, imprisoned and tortured in Shiraz. To date, he is still detained. His mental and physical states are unknown.

January 1996—Ms. P.—Muslim Convert to Christianity:

In November 1995, Ms. P., a Muslim convert to Christianity and member of the underground church in Ahwaz, was arrested, imprisoned and tortured. To date, she is still detained in Ahwaz. Her mental and physical state are unknown.

November 1995—Mr. U.—Evangelical Christian and Ethnic Assyrian Christian:

Mr. U., an Assyrian Evangelical Christian, served as the treasurer of Shahin Shahr Assyrian Association for six years. He also helped distribute news bulletins, collect membership fees, and organize worship services. Because Mr. U. shared his Christian faith with Muslim students in his high school and university, he was persecuted by the local Hezbollah and the Iranian government. From March to May 1995, Mr. U. was imprisoned, threatened and tortured for two months in Isfahan and Shahin Shahr. Mr. U. fled Iran in November 1995. After his escape his father was arrested and imprisoned.

August 1995—Mrs. Sassouni—Assyrian Evangelical Pastor:

Mrs. Sassouni, pastor of the "Princess of Peace" church in Isfahan, Iran, until it was closed by government authorities. Fearing for his life and the safety of his wife and children, he fled from Iran into Turkey. As government authorities refused to issue him a passport, he arrived in Turkey with a false passport. (His wife and children were issued passports.) Three weeks later, in November 1994, he was deported from Turkey to Iran.

Back in Iran, government authorities ordered Khodadadi and his family to move from his hometown, Hamadan, to Tehran. They remained in Tehran without any means of support, and he was forced to

report to the local Komieh every other day. In April 1995 government authorities arrested, imprisoned and presumably tortured him. His family did not know of his whereabouts for three weeks and it was many more weeks before he was allowed visits by his wife. He was finally released in June 1995. Because of inordinate surveillance of the family, it has been almost impossible to obtain information on his physical and emotional condition. Government authorities have refused to issue him a legal passport, return his wife's passport to her, or grant them permission to leave Iran.

August 1995—Rev. Edmond Sarkisian—Assyrian Evangelical Pastor:

Rev. Edmond Sarkisian, an Evangelical and ethnic Assyrian, pastored the Injili (Presbyterian) Church in Tabriz until his imprisonment in 1990 and 1991. Since then Rev. Sarkisian repeatedly requested permission for he and his family to leave Iran, but government authorities refused them permission until early 1996.

July 1995—Mrs. S.—Muslim convert to Christianity:

In 1993, Mrs. S converted from Islam to Christianity and became a member of the Central Assembly of God Church in Tehran. Her husband, step-children and other family members persecuted her because of her Christian faith. They considered her a blasphemous heathen, a "kefir" (unclean person) and an "apostate," and pressured her to return to Islam. Her husband repeatedly threatened to turn her over to the Islamic Revolutionary Committee (Komieh), and have her executed for apostasy. In 1994, because of the martyrdom of the three pastors and the increased persecution of Evangelical Christians, he feared that his wife's Christian faith put his own life in danger. With the support of his children and other family members, he expelled her from the family home and warned her never to return. In July 1995, Mrs. S. fled Iran.

July 1995—Pastor Betsayyad—Evangelical Christian and Ethnic Assyrian Christian:

Pastor Betsayyad, an ethnic Assyrian and Injili ("Evangelical," Presbyterian (U.S.A.) pastor, served at the Assyrian Injili (Presbyterian) Church of Hamadan three days a week from January 1993 until June 1995. During this two and a half year period, Islamic authorities summoned him twenty-two times for questioning.

In July 1994, after the martyrdom of three Evangelical pastors, government authorities ordered Pastor Betsayyad to give a media interview to blame the Mojahedin-Khalq, an anti-government organization, for the pastor's murders. He refused, saying the matter was political and none of his business. On another occasion, government authorities warned that he was no longer authorized to visit or to preach at the Hamadan Church. Pastor Betsayyad discussed this with the church leaders in Tehran, who instructed him to go back to Hamadan. On his return, he was arrested and detained for 45 hours. During those hours he was questioned, threatened and ordered to sign a commitment to cooperate with the government and not to evangelize Muslims. Pastor Betsayyad agreed to sign and read the authorities scriptures that teach Christians to submit and cooperate with rulers and earthly authorities. As he read these verses, the authorities' hearts changed momentarily and they apologized for detaining him.

With the help of Open Doors, a Europe-based Christian missions organization, Pastor Betsayyad became involved with smuggling Bibles into Iran. In July 1995, the government discovered and confiscated a shipment of Bibles. Two smugglers were arrested, and Pastor Betsayyad was warned by friends that he would probably be executed. Not wanting to intensify the persecution of the church, Pastor Betsayyad resigned his position and fled Iran immediately.

July 1995—Ms. M. and Family—Muslim Converts to Christianity:

Ms. M. and her siblings were repeatedly interrogated, threatened and refused educational and employment opportunities because of their conversion from Islam to Christianity. Ms. M. was interrogated and threatened by agents of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance in March 1993, December 1994 and February 1995. The agents questioned her about her church attendance, baptism, evangelism, and work in the church library. They told her that the Anglican Church belonged to the British, that she was an agent of foreign governments, and that any Muslim who attends church has betrayed the cause of the Islamic Republic. They also threatened her with severe consequences for attending church and "propagandizing." In December 1994 the agents ordered the church library where she worked to be closed.

In September 1993, following her baptism in June 1993, Ms. M. was expelled from her university and denied the right to participate in another college entrance exam. She was told that she was no longer qualified to continue her college education due to her interest in non-Islamic things. Her sister, Ms. L., was denied university registration in 1994 because of her conversion.

When her siblings, Ms. L. and Mr. G., applied for assistance at the Department of Labor and Social Affairs in November 1993, they were denied assistance and told to repent of their belief in Christianity if they wanted to find employment. Mr. G. was also refused disabled veteran benefits because of his Christian beliefs. In November 1994, when Ms. M. registered at the Department of Labor and Social Affairs, the department told her that they had researched her background and did not assist anyone who takes anti-Islamic action.

Ms. L. and Mr. G. were interrogated by the head of security at their workplace in November 1993 and warned that they cannot abandon Islam, the most perfect religion, for Christianity. In February 1995, after the head of security learned that they had not repented, he fired Ms. L. and Mr. G. and denied them several months of their salaries.

In February 1995, after Ms. M. applied for extension of her passport and stated Christianity as her religion, she was interrogated and threatened and the extension of her passport was delayed. Ms. M. and Ms. L. fled Iran in July 1995, and Mr. G. fled Iran shortly afterwards. Since that time their family has been interrogated and put under surveillance.

May 1995—Mr. Z. and His Wife, Mrs. T.—Evangelical Christians and Ethnic Armenian Christians:

In 1983, Mr. Z., an ethnic Armenian Christian, became an Evangelical Christian. From 1986 to 1995, he was owner and operator of an auto mechanic shop in Tehran where he would share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with his customers. In January 1995, he was placed under surveillance by government officials and received weekly letters filled with insults and threats: unless he became a Muslim, he could expect terrible things for himself and his family. One Friday (the holy day of the week) in February 1995 (the month of Ramadan when Muslims are required to fast), Mr. Z. and his wife took their four year old daughter, T., to a park in north Tehran. While there, T. became thirsty and Mr. Z. took her to a faucet in the park to get a drink of water. Because she was breaking the fast, two Revolutionary Guards slapped Mr. Z.'s face, shouting that it was Ramadan. Mr. Z. became angry and slapped the guard back. Within two minutes, more Revolutionary Guards arrived and started kicking and beating him. He was forced into the patrol car and taken to the local Komiteh office. More Komiteh personnel began insulting and beating him until he passed out and remained unconscious for several hours. For twenty days Mr. Z. was imprisoned in solitary confinement and interrogated over who was behind the Christian propaganda, i.e., evangelism, in Iran, and who was providing the

budget for the effort. In May, after his release, Mr. Z. received a written threat that his daughter would be kidnapped, his wife would be harmed and he would be killed.

In February 1995, a man on a motorcycle attacked Mrs. T., Mr. Z.'s wife, and threatened her while she was walking on Aramaneh, 16 Meter Street, in Majdicheh. Her left leg was injured in the incident. In March 1995, she was again struck and injured by a man riding a motorcycle; her right arm was broken. As a result of the attacks and consequential fear, Mrs. T. miscarried her second child in May 1995 when she was three months pregnant. The family fled Iran in May 1995.

April 1995—Mrs. B.—Evangelical Christian and Ethnic Armenian Christian:

Mrs. B., an ethnic Armenian Christian, became an Evangelical Christian in 1961. She was active in the Assembly of God Church in Tehran, Iran from 1978 until she fled Iran in 1995. In 1976, her daughter, O., was baptized and in March 1982, married an Evangelical pastor.

During the latter part of 1988, O's husband, then Pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Ahwaz, Iran, was arrested, placed in solitary confinement, and beaten often. After 20 days, he was blindfolded and taken to Tehran where he was placed in solitary confinement for another 10 days. After his release, he was ordered to report to the "Komiteh" (the Iranian Revolutionary Committee) once a week. O., her husband and their family fled Iran in 1992 following the murder of Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr.

After O. and her family fled Iran, Mrs. B. received terrorizing phone calls from church opponents every night around midnight. During these phone calls no one spoke, but she could hear horrible laughter and strange murmurings. Many other Evangelical Christians received similar calls. Because of these calls Mrs. B. worried and was unable to sleep. She finally fled Iran in May 1995.

March 1995—Mr. B. and Mr. V.—Evangelical Christians and Ethnic Assyrian Christians:

Mr. B., an Assyrian Evangelical Christian, actively evangelized other students at his university in Isfahan from 1993 to 1995. Because of his evangelism and Christian activities, Mr. B. was beaten up by the family of a Muslim college student and threatened with expulsion by university officials. He was also arrested, interrogated and beaten by the Komiteh. Although he was freed after posting bond, the Komiteh continued to build a case against him.

Mr. B. and Mr. V., another Assyrian Evangelical Christian, participated in Christian activities at Shahr Shahr Assyrian Association near Isfahan. In February 1995 Mr. B. and Mr. V. organized Christian worship and fellowship meetings for the Assyrian Christians of Bandar Abbas. Several Muslims who were interested in Christianity also attended the meetings. Mr. B. and Mr. V. were arrested, accused of proselytizing, interrogated and beaten. Mr. B. learned that formal charges of proselytizing were to be filed against him. A Muslim convert to Christianity who attended the Christian meetings was arrested and charged with apostasy. Fearing for their lives, Mr. B. and Mr. V. posted bond and fled Iran in March 1995. After the Iranian authorities learned of their escape, they invaded and searched Mr. B.'s former residence.

February 1995—Mrs. E.—Muslim Convert to Christianity:

In 1993, while visiting relatives in the U.S., Mrs. E. made a decision to convert from Islam to Christianity. She returned to Iran in early 1994 and began attending the Central Assembly of God Church meetings in Tehran. She had to walk to meetings and began to sense she was being followed. One afternoon a young man propositioned her. After Rev. Mehdi Diba'i was martyred, Mrs. E. attended the funeral on or about July 12, 1994, in Islam Shahr, a suburb of Tehran. Not long after the funeral,

as Mrs. E. was leaving her church, a car pulled up beside her and the occupants ordered her to get into the car. When she refused, three men in the car told her they wanted to see her Bible. They told her they would take it from her forcibly unless she handed it to them. When she gave the Bible to them, they began tearing it into pieces, laughing at her and verbally insulting her. They then threatened her by saying, "We better not see you going to church again, or else. . . ."

Mrs. E tried to attend churches in another city but was told by the pastors that because she was a Muslim convert they were afraid of severe consequences for themselves and Mrs. E, and therefore she could not attend their churches. She returned to Tehran and continued to attend church there. In October 1994, a car pulled up beside Mrs. E. and a man inside pulled out a picture which showed her at the funeral of Rev. Dibaj. The man began insulting her and said, "If we see you going to church again, we will take this (Dibaj) memorial picture that has you in it and then you will be dead." He then hit her face and back with an object he had hidden in his hand. Mrs. E. and her son fled Iran in February 1995.

Shortly after their escape from Iran, Mrs. E.'s husband tried to obtain a letter of reference from the Central Assembly of God Church in Tehran for her refugee application and was severely beaten in the street by revolutionary guards or Basijis upon leaving the church.

February 1995—Mr. H. R. and Family—Muslim Converts to Christianity:

In or about June 1994, five Muslim families filed complaints against Mr. R., a Muslim convert to Christianity. Islamic authorities issued a summons for his arrest and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards tried to arrest him several times, which he escaped by hiding from the authorities. Around midnight in August 1994, Revolutionary Guards severely beat his wife and children until they were unconscious in an attempt to discover Mr. R.'s location. The Revolutionary Guards and Basijis (young men hired by the government to terrorize people) then broke all the windows in the house and threw the family's belongings into the street while shouting, "These people are blasphemers!" They looted the house, set the family car on fire, and stole the remaining household belongings.

In April 1994, Mr. R's daughter Z., a high school freshman, was caught sharing her Christian faith with other students and giving them Christian tracts in Persian. She was detained by school authorities and subsequently expelled from school. T., their 13 year old, and L., their 9 year old, were also expelled from their schools. In September 1994, the children were able to register in other school districts after the family paid bribes. They attended school until mid-November 1994, when the family's Christian background was discovered, and they were again expelled and threatened with death if they ever attempted to return to school. The family fled Iran in February 1995.

January 1995—Mr. M. & His Wife, Mrs. D.—Muslim Converts to Christianity:

In 1979 or early 1980, Mr. M. converted from Islam to Christianity and was driven from his family home in Ahwaz. While in the military, Mr. M. did not hide that he was a Christian. In April 1985, he was made responsible for food distribution until the fasting month began, but as Muslims will not allow an "unclean" person distributing their food, he was transferred to Kerman. There he was arrested, transferred to a village police base and taken to an Ahwaz prison where he was placed in solitary confinement. While in prison, he was allowed to use the bathroom only three times per day and the shower once a week. He suffered from food poisoning and beatings, and could hear the cries and screams of many young men and women being tortured. Mr. M. spent a total of one year and eight days in three prisons.

In March 1986, Mrs. D. converted from Islam to Christianity. As a result of which her family beat her and imprisoned her in their home for one year. She was finally allowed to get a job, but w

ired after her boss asked her to lie, which she refused to do because of her beliefs. In 1987 or 1988, Mrs. D. was arrested and taken to the "Committee Against Vice" headquarters. While waiting, Mrs. D. could hear women screaming. She was physically searched, her New Testament was found, and then she was locked in a small room. A revolutionary guard entered her cell with the intent of raping her. She screamed uncontrollably until the man left the cell. She was released to her parents the next morning. When she arrived at home, her brother beat her severely until she was unconscious. After this beating she couldn't speak for over two months.

Mr. M. and Mrs. D married in October 1990. Because of their religion they were unable to find housing. They were placed under heavy surveillance, and their phones were bugged. Several times Mr. M. and his wife returned home to discover that their home had been searched, their books torn up, their wedding photos taken from a picture album and their money stolen. Threats were left in their home which read, "Stop your apostasy or we will kill you!" Because of their fear, Mr. M and Mrs. D discreetly applied for passports early in 1994. After they received much more harassment and persecution, their passports were granted and they fled Iran in January 1995.

December 1994--Mr. E. and Family--Muslim Converts to Christianity:

In 1986, Mr. E. converted from Islam to Christianity. In July 1990, because of his "religion," he was arrested on the charge of "abandoning Islam." He was imprisoned, interrogated, tortured, and housed in intolerable conditions. Revolutionary Guards interrogated him and told him that he was to be executed. Just before his trial was to begin, government authorities dropped all charges against him because the UN Special Representative, Mr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, was scheduled to visit Iran in November 1990 (please refer to details and copies of charges in the August 1994 ICI report). Mr. E. barely escaped execution; a month after Mr. Pohl's visit government authorities executed Rev. Hossein Soodmand in Mashad on charges of apostasy.

After Mr. E. was released from prison he secretly married his wife, Mrs. A., in the Central Assembly of God Church. As a young Christian, Mrs. A. had previously been threatened by a Revolutionary Guard: "I am here to take you. I warn you not to associate with Christians, and if you don't obey, we will put a lead bullet into your empty head." Mr. E. and Mrs. A. went to Turkey, where they stayed about six months. Upon their return to Iran they were interrogated at the border by government authorities, but were allowed to return to Tehran since they were a married couple. For two and half years after their return from Turkey, they lived in a basement under heavy surveillance. Their phone was tapped and they constantly feared being arrested, imprisoned, interrogated, tortured and/or executed. They finally fled Iran in December 1994.

November 1994--Ms. D.--Evangelical Christian and Ethnic Armenian Christian:

Ms. D., an ethnic Armenian and Evangelical Christian, actively invited her Muslim friends and colleagues to attend an Injili (Presbyterian U.S.A.) church in Tehran. In September 1994, Islamic Revolutionary Guards arrested two of her Muslim guests when they were leaving church. Under the pressure of interrogation and threats, they named Ms. D. as the person who was attempting to convert them from Islam to Christianity. Shortly after their arrest, Revolutionary Guards began to search for her actively and went to her home while she was not there. Ms. D. and her son escaped Iran in November 1994.

November 1994—Mr. B. and Family—Muslim Converts to Christianity:

After Mr. B. converted from Islam to Christianity, he worked full time in the Central Assembly of God Church. He took part in the leadership of the house church meetings, taught Sunday School and instructed new Christians, most of whom were Muslim Converts to Christianity. After three pastors were killed in 1994, Mr. B. and his wife, N., along with other church members, waited fearfully to see what would happen next. They were extremely afraid of being arrested and killed also. In November 1994, the day the Mr. B. and his family fled Iran, his mother received an anonymous phone call telling her that her son's life was in danger by the SAVAMA, Iran's secret police. The local Komiteh have a dossier on Mr. B. and his family.

September 1994—Ms. A. and Family—Evangelical Christians and Ethnic Assyrian Christians:

Ms. A., an Assyrian Evangelical Christian, was employed at the Evangelical Church of Tabriz as a secretary and pianist. She evangelized Muslims by distributing Christian books and tapes and leading Bible studies and prayer meetings. In September 1984 she was summoned by the government and ordered to make an oral commitment not to evangelize Muslims. In August 1992, an agent of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance attempted to trap her by asking her for a New Testament.

In February 1989, Ms. A.'s brother was reported to the school principal because he had witnessed and given Christian books and tapes to his classmates. The principal ordered him to read the Qur'an and to participate in Islamic prayers. On instructions from the principal, some students in his school pressured him to convert to Islam, threatened him and beat him. Since the students continued to threaten and harass him, he was forced to quit school in March 1989.

In August 1994, an official from the Ministry of Islamic Guidance pressured Ms. A. to renounce Christianity and convert to Islam. He told her, "You are a good believer and worker for Christ. I want to do you a favor so you won't go to hell. You can avoid hell by joining Islam, which is the last and the rightful religion." When Ms. A. then thanked him and stated that Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the official became very angry. In fear for her life, Ms. A. and her family fled Iran in September 1994.

September 1994—Mr. T. and Family—Muslim Converts to Christianity:

Mr. T. converted from Islam to Christianity in 1983. In February 1988, he was appointed as church treasurer of the Mashad Assembly of God Church by the Pastor, Rev. Soodmand. Mr. T.'s family ridiculed and persecuted him because of his Christian faith. His father often threatened to kill him, and other family members cut all their ties with him. In September 1990, because of family persecution, Mr. T. and his wife were forced to sell their home and move away from his relatives into the first floor of their pastor's home. Mr. T.'s relatives attempted to turn his wife against him, but she refused to leave him and converted from Islam to Christianity in December 1990.

After their pastor, Rev. Soodmand, was executed in December 1990, the government Security Organization, SAVAMA, summoned the T. family into their office each week for questioning. The SAVAMA ordered them to leave the Soodmand family and constantly threatened them with death. (Mr. T.'s wife took care of Rev. Soodmand's children and blind wife after his execution.) The SAVAMA threats of imprisonment or death increased after Christmas services or baptisms. When Mr. T.'s father died in 1993, his relatives continued persecuting and ridiculing him and deprived him of his inheritance.

in July and August 1994, SAVAMA agents demanded that Pastor S. Mr. T., and the other church members take part in a television interview condemning the Mojahedin for the deaths of Rev. Djalal and Rev. Mikaelian. If they had agreed to do this, they all would have been killed and their deaths blamed on the Mojahedin.

In August 1992, Mr. T. was promoted to managing director at his job and maintained this position until July 1994. During that time, he was awarded a commendation medal for good performance. In July 1994, due to pressure from the SAVAMA, he was fired from his job because of his conversion and because he served as assistant pastor of the Assembly of God Church of Mashad. The T. family fled Iran in September 1994.

August 1994—Mr. E.—Muslim Convert to Christianity:

In 1987, Mr. E. converted from Islam to Christianity. Because of his conversion, government authorities imprisoned him twice and prevented from continuing his higher education or obtaining employment. Unable to bear the persecution of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he fled Iran in August 1994.

August 1994—Mrs. A.—Evangelical Christian and Ethnic Armenian Christian:

Mrs. A., an Evangelical Armenian Christian since 1965, was persecuted daily while shopping. Because of her "religion," Muslim shop owners mistreated her and did not allow her to purchase the same food that Muslims purchased. Frequently, after standing in long lines, she was told that the food she requested "was sold out." She was under constant surveillance until she fled Iran in August 1994.

August 1994—Ms. G.—Evangelical Christian and Ethnic Armenian Christian:

Ms. G., an Evangelical Armenian Christian since 1965, was forced to quit her job at the Iran Bible Society in 1985 because of persecution by government authorities. Muslim fanatics in the government threatened to close the Bible Society, churches and other Christian institutions. In June 1989, she found employment as a manuscript proof reader for a U.S. based Bible Translation project. Since printing and publication of the Bible were illegal, the staff of the Bible Translation project had to change their office location frequently. They feared that if they were caught translating and preparing the Bible for printing, they would be arrested, imprisoned, tortured or worse. Much of the time Ms. G. worked secretly at home, where she was under constant surveillance. In June 1993, Revolutionary Guards arrested Ms. G. for not wearing the proper Islamic dress even though she was wearing the thick-black stockings, mono (long dress), and maghna'eh (head covering) required for women in Iran. After her release, she began receiving threatening telephone calls day and night. Whenever she went outside her house, she was followed by Revolutionary Guards who insulted her and harassed her with sexual jokes. She fled Iran in August 1994.

July 1994—Mr. J. and Ms. Z.—Armenian Evangelical Christian and Muslim Convert to Christianity:

Mr. J., an Armenian Evangelical Christian, was denied university admission because of his Christian religion. He fell in love with Ms. Z., who was born and brought up as a Muslim. Although Mr. J. and Ms. Z. wanted to marry, Iranian law forbids a non-Muslim man to marry a Muslim woman. The punishment for this crime is execution.

When Ms. Z. expressed her desire to become a Christian, her father accused Mr. J. of trying to convert his daughter to Christianity. Mr. J. was detained, physically tortured, threatened with execution, and forced to guarantee that he would not influence her toward Christianity.

Mr. J and Ms. Z fled Iran in July 1994. After leaving Iran Mrs. Z converted to Christianity and was baptized. The couple married in November 1995.

June 1994—Mrs. N.—Muslim Convert to Christianity:

Mrs. N. was a nurse with a 17 year record of good employment. When she converted from Islam to Christianity in June 1993, family members told her husband, "Any Muslim recommends that she be killed." One of her brothers-in-law, who was a mullah, another brother-in-law, who was an Islamic Revolutionary Guard and the driver of the Friday Imam of Shiraz, and other in-laws continually insulted and made death threats to Mrs. N. and her children. In December 1993, a co-worker at the hospital where she worked learned that she had converted to Christianity. The co-worker, a member of the local Komitieh (the religious ruling body), reported Mrs. N.'s conversion to the Islamic Association at the hospital, after which she was severely ridiculed, threatened and persecuted. From May 1994 until she fled Iran in June 1994, she was given work as an unskilled person and was not paid any salary or unused vacation time.

May 1994—Mr. R.—Muslim Convert to Christianity:

In 1992, while driving a taxi, Mr. R. was listening to Christian music on the cab's tape player. A fanatic Muslim passenger reported his activity to the government authorities and three days later he was summoned to Court. The judge noticed the cross Mr. R. wore around his neck and condemned him to 70 lashes. The sentence was carried out by Revolutionary Guards who gave him back 70 lashes of a long leather whip, causing bruising, bleeding and permanent scars to his back, pain and weakness in his left arm and shoulder and loss of hearing to his left ear. After the whipping Mr. R. was kept in custody for one week. During this detention, he was forced to sign a statement that he had not converted from Islam to Christianity. When he was released to his family, he was semi-conscious and close to death. He spent the following two weeks in the hospital. On every Friday, the Muslim holy day, government authorities forced him to attend prayer meetings at the local mosque. To protect himself and his family, he complied but continued to hold his Christian beliefs in his heart. In May 1994, when he had saved enough money to pay for a smuggler's services, he fled Iran and applied for asylum in a Western country. His family, also converts from Islam to Christianity, plans to join him soon.

June 1993—Mr. R. T.—Muslim Convert to Christianity:

In 1983, Mr. T. became a Christian. His older brother was opposed to Mr. T.'s new faith and threatened him with bodily harm and death. The brother often beat Mr. T., tore up his New Testament and drove him out of the family home. In 1992, on two separate occasions, the local Komitieh arrested Mr. T. with a Bible in his possession. Each time he was detained, interrogated and beaten for two days and warned to not evangelize. His family members later informed the Ministry of Information of his conversion and a summons was issued for his arrest. In June 1993, he fled the Islamic Republic of Iran.

January 1992—Ms. H. and Family—Evangelical Christians and Ethnic Assyrian Christians:

Ms. H. and her family, Assyrian Evangelical Christians, attended the Urumieh Assembly of God Church. In 1980, when the Iran-Iraq war broke out, Ms. H.'s father worked near the war front. Although many of his Muslim colleagues fled to safer cities, the Islamic Association at his work threatened to pronounce her father "anti-revolutionary" if he left. The stress and discrimination caused him to die from a heart attack in 1983. One year after his death, local religious leaders tried to confiscate the family's house.

from 1983 to 1987, when Ms. H. attended high school in Urumieh. Muslim teachers and students ridiculed Ms. H. and her sister for their Christian faith. In December 1983, Ms. H. was detained, interrogated and beaten by the Islamic Association at her school. In June 1987, her high school principal refused to recommend her for college entrance exams; although her sister obtained the recommendation and passed the entrance exam, college officials told her that they had no room for Christians. Ms. H. and her sister were also denied employment because of their Christian religion.

In May 1991, while Ms. H. was shopping in Urumieh, Revolutionary guards arrested her for talking with a foreigner. They interrogated her intensively and stated, "You Christians in Iran like those foreign Christians. Therefore we want to cleanse our society from you [Christians]." Ms. H. was beaten, fined one hundred thousand Tomans (about five hundred dollars) and required to report to the Komieh once a week for three months.

In September 1991, an influential Mullah moved next door to Ms. H.'s family. His two guards pressured them to attend weekly religious meetings, sent women from the mosque to demand that they convert to Islam, and arrested Ms. H. and her sister for not wearing the Islamic dress code inside their own home. Ms. H. and her sister were forced to sign a paper confessing that they had propagated vice and prostitution and committing themselves to uphold the Islamic laws.

One night when Ms. H. and her sister were home alone, the two guards forced their way inside and threatened that if Ms. H. and her sister did not become Muslims, they would rape them, thereby giving them no choice but to marry them and become Muslims. The next day the Mullah publicized the women's Christianity, proclaimed them *Majlis*, or impure, and forbade the local shopkeepers to sell to them.

In February 1992, Ms. H. and her sister were accused "turning girls away from Islam and toward Christianity." (Two of their Muslim friends had become interested in Christianity and began attending church.) Revolutionary guards raided the family's house, demolished their belongings, and kicked and punched Ms. H. and her sister. Ms. H. and her sister were arrested, detained and interrogated. Zainab Sisters beat them with a whip until they confessed to "deceiving girls into going to church." Believing that the maximum penalty of death awaited them, Ms. H. and her sister fled Iran at once.

January 1991—Mr. S.—Muslim Convert to Christianity:

In November 1979, Mr. S. became a Christian. When his family learned that he would not abandon his Christian faith, they disowned him. After the Revolution, he sold Christian Bibles and literature on sidewalks, in parks, and in people's homes and work places. Islamic government security forces questioned his activities from time to time and identified him as a Monarchist. If the Revolutionaries had discovered that Mr. S was a Muslim convert and a son of a Tahatahai Seyed (descendant of the Islamic Prophet Mohammad), he would have been arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and possibly executed as an "apostate." In January 1991 friends informed him of the government's plans to arrest him and he fled Iran.

September 1988—Mr. M. and Family—Muslim Converts to Christianity:

In 1961, at the age of 11, Mr. M. became a Christian. Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, he tried to share his Christian faith with his fellow employees. After the Revolution, because of his Christian convictions and political opinions, he was unexpectedly expelled from military service in October 1981. Revolutionary Guards then began to interrogate him weekly. In March 1982, Mr. M. and his family moved from their home and tried to rent a place to start a private business, however, government

officials refused the owner of the building permission to rent to him. Two months later, Revolutionary Guards discovered where the family lived and began forced armed searches of their home.

In August 1984, Revolutionary Guards kidnapped and murdered his wife's brother, Mr. S., because Mr. S. verbally defended Mr. M. Mr. M.'s wife, children, father, brother-in-law, mother-in-law, and wife's grandmother all became victims of sinister and inhumane persecution by government officials. Because of this persecution due to his Christian faith and political opinion, Mr. M. fled Iran in September 1988. After the local Komitieh interrogated his wife a number of times to discover Mr. M.'s whereabouts, she fled Iran with the children in 1992.

Reports of Persecution, Arrest, Imprisonment, Torture, and Execution of Evangelical Christians From 1980 through June 1994

A Brief History of Persecution of Iranian Evangelical Christians:

The persecution of Christian minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran first gained attention from the public and some human rights organizations in the early 1990's. However the killings of three Evangelical pastors in Iran during the first half of 1994 gained worldwide attention and brought more focus on the worsening plight of persecuted Christians, particularly that of Muslim converts to Christianity and other Evangelical Christians.

The recent history of human rights of the Christian minority in Iran can be divided into three periods: 1) the late 1970's and early 1980's, 2) the mid and late 1980's, and 3) the 1990's.

Late 1970's and Early 1980's: During and immediately following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Islamic government was preoccupied with political opposition, consolidation of its power and the ongoing Iran-Iraq war, which resulted in relative freedom for and few incidences of persecution against Iranian Evangelical Christians. The publication and sale of Christian books were allowed. Churches evangelized Muslims with little opposition. Nevertheless, the Christian community, especially the Anglican church in Iran, suffered greatly. In February 1979, Rev. Arasoo Sayah was martyred in the city of Shiraz. A short time later there was an attempt on the life of Bishop Dehqani-Tafti, followed by the confiscation of most of the Anglican church property. In May 1980 Bishop Dehqani's son was martyred in Tehran (a detailed account of which can be found in the book titled The Hard Awakening). In 1983 Rev. Mehdi Dibaj, a Muslim convert evangelist, was arrested and imprisoned on charges of apostasy.

Mid to Late 1980's: During the mid and late 1980's governmental interference with the Evangelical Christian Church increased and there was marked persecution of Muslim converts to Christianity. The authorities began demanding lists of Muslim converts from church pastors. There were attempts to limit and/or deny access to the church and evangelistic events for Muslims and Muslim converts. The Garden of Evangelism, a Christian training center, was declared off-limits to Muslims in 1988. Rev. Dibaj continued to be incarcerated without a trial and routinely tortured. Another Muslim convert, Manuchehr Afghani, disappeared in 1988. (The report of his murder was released in 1995.) The government curtailed publication of Christian materials and limited the supply of printing paper to Evangelical churches.

1990's. Persecution drastically increased in the 1990's with seven notable occurrences:

- 1) [REDACTED]
- 2) [REDACTED] was condemned to death by the Islamic court in the city of Mashad in December 1990 and the sentence was carried out shortly thereafter. The charges against him were conversion from Islam, evangelizing Muslims, and pastoring a Muslim convert church.
- 3) Rev. Dibaj was condemned to death by the Islamic court in the city of Sari in December 1993. The court verdict labeled his charges as apostasy from Islam.
- 4) Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr led an international campaign which culminated in the release of Rev. Dibaj in January 1995. An Islamic government official denied that there was a death sentence against Dibaj even as copies of the court order for death sentence were being distributed worldwide. The official stated the death penalty was "too severe," however he did not say what would constitute just penalty for conversion from Islam in the Islamic Republic.
- 5) [REDACTED] disappeared in mid-January 1994 from Tehran. His body was found in late January buried in a Muslim cemetery under suspicious circumstances.
- 6) [REDACTED], another Iranian Evangelical Christian pastor, and Rev. Dibaj disappeared from Tehran in late June 1994. Their bodies were found in early July 1994.
- 7) In July 1994, Mr. Hassan Shabjanali, an Iranian Evangelical Christian from Idaho, was arrested at the Shiraz Airport on a trip to Iran to visit his family. He was detained, interrogated and intimidated for approximately two weeks. He was freed from prison and eventually allowed to leave Iran due to international pressure.

In January 1994 Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr released a list of human rights violations against members of his church that included the beating of Muslim converts, closing of Persian-speaking churches, and arrest, detention, interrogation and torture of Christian pastors and Evangelical Christians. These acts of persecution escalated during 1994 and 1995. Because of the church closings, the number of Persian speaking churches was reduced from over twenty in 1990 to three in 1995. (Persian is the language of 99% of Iranian Muslims.)

Although the negative publicity following the court sentences of Rev. Soodmand and Rev. Dibaj in Iran led the authorities to abandon the use of such formal channels of persecution, Muslim converts to Christianity, other Evangelical Christians, pastors and church leaders continue to be arrested, imprisoned, and tortured because of their religion. Some are kept under heavy surveillance, with their phones tapped and letters routinely opened, while others received written and oral death threats. Some have also escaped assassination attempts. Others have lost their jobs or have been refused gainful employment, housing and education. Since Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr's death in January 1994, government agents are concentrating their persecution more on individuals who are Muslim converts and/or those who encourage Muslims to convert to Christianity. Ethnic Christians such as Armenians and Assyrians also continue to face officially sanctioned discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment, education, housing, public accommodations and the court system.

The following reports are only a portion of the persecution, arrest, imprisonment, torture, and execution of Iranian Muslim converts to Christianity. If not otherwise stated, the information regarding the

accounts below was received in confidential reports from reliable sources in Iran who are close to the events. Although specific names, dates and places are on file, these details are not used to protect the subjects of the reports.

Pastors and Church Leaders Who Work With Muslim Converts:

Rev. Mehdi Dibaj was arrested in 1983 in the city of Babol for his conversion from Islam to Christianity some 45 years ago and was held without cause until the church paid \$20,000 as security for his temporary release. Shortly thereafter, he was again arrested and tortured in attempts to force him to renounce Christianity and embrace Islam. He remained in prison in Sari and Tehran and was systematically tortured from 1983 until he was condemned to death on December 21, 1993 for the crime of apostasy. Two of his eight years in prison were spent in solitary confinement in an unlit cell measuring three yards by three yards. During this time Rev. Dibaj's wife was threatened with death by stoning unless she denied her faith and divorced him. She was also forced to give up her children because they refused to deny their Christian faith. She later married a fundamentalist Muslim.^{2 3 4}

Rev. Dibaj was released from prison in December 1993, at which time a farwa (religious edict) against him appeared in a Tehran newspaper, calling for his execution. About the same time, Rev. Dibaj received formal notification from the Iranian authorities that his case was not closed and that he might be asked to return to prison again for further questioning.

On July 5, 1994 law enforcement officials in Tehran, Iran reported that they had found the body of Rev. Mehdi Dibaj in a recreation forest located in west Tehran. Rev. Dibaj, along with a group of believers, had left Tehran at 8:15 AM on Monday, June 20, to hold a Christian conference in the Sharon Garden in Karaj, a suburb of Tehran. They spent Monday through Friday there. Rev. Dibaj was planning to celebrate his daughter Fereshteh's birthday with her and the family on Friday, June 24. The family had not all gathered together for 10 years because of Rev. Dibaj's previous imprisonment. Rev. Dibaj left Sharon Garden alone, on Friday, to join his family, but never arrived. Inquiries to government authorities about his whereabouts after his disappearance were to no avail until the Iranian government's news release on July 5. Rev. Dibaj's eldest son was summoned to the morgue on July 5, 1994, to identify his father's body. His body was not released to the family for an independent autopsy. He was buried on July 13. * * * * *

Rev. Mikaelian, a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church, was arrested in 1994 and sentenced to 10 years in prison for "inciting to violence against the state." He was released in 1996 and succeeded Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr after he was martyred in January, 1994. Rev. Mikaelian had been threatened with death by the authorities on several different occasions.

Rev. Mikaelian preached his last message about the Christian Church in the Central Assemblies of God Church in Tehran on Sunday, June 26. He stressed that the Christian church has given martyrs throughout its history; that Iranian Christians should neither be perplexed about or be afraid of martyrdom, but rather be prepared to face it.

On June 29, 1994 Rev. Mikaelian left home at about 4:30 PM after receiving an unexplained telephone call; his whereabouts from that time were unknown until July 2, at 5:00 PM, when government authorities in Tehran called his son, Galo, to come identify his father's body which was being held in the coroner's office. Sixty-two year old Rev. Talaros (Talos) Mikaelian had been killed in an execution style murder; shot three times in the back of the head. There were orders from the SAVAMA (the Iran secret police) not to release his body over to anyone.^{22 23 24 25 26 27} (Please see Exhibits 1 and 2.)

Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr: Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr, age 49, an ethnic Armenian and Superintendent of the Assemblies of God and the Council of Churches in Iran, disappeared in Tehran on Wednesday, January 19, 1994, three days after Rev. Mehdi Dibaj was released following ten years in prison in Sari. Silent for many years over the harassment and persecution endured by the Assemblies of God church in Iran, Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr had finally spoken out during the first two weeks of January, 1994 in an effort to draw international attention to Rev. Dibaj's case. No one claimed responsibility for his abduction.¹⁴ (Please see Exhibit 2.)

Government officials claimed that Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr was found dead by police on January 20, near Shahre Rey, a suburb of Tehran, soon after he was murdered and his body thrown in the street. They also claimed that when they were unable to identify him, they buried him in Behesht-e-Zahra, the largest Islamic cemetery in Iran just outside Tehran. After pressure from the family and from human rights organizations and officials of other governments, the body of Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr was reburied on February 3, 1994 in a Christian cemetery, with more than 2,000 attending the burial service.¹⁵ " " " "

Churches:

Ahwaz Churches:

Nathaniel Bari-Paul, an Assyrian Christian and Assemblies of God layman, was arrested in Ahwaz in early June, 1994, and was released several months later. He was also exiled from there and government authorities forbid him from leaving Iran.¹⁶

The building in Ahwaz used by both Anglican and Presbyterian (Tajili) congregations was shut down in 1993. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

Around winter 1992, Omid Monieshed, age 28, and his wife, Farideh Dadkhah-Farhadi, age 25, an Arab couple who had been Muslim converts to Christianity for six years, and who lived in the city of Ahwaz, were called to the "Komiteh" for Interrogation. Mrs. Dadkhah-Farhadi was later ordered to court. When she refused to go, the "pasdaran" (revolutionary guards) came to her home. When she again refused to go with them, they threatened her. The following day, they accused her of having sexual relations with the pastor of the church and said that they would produce photos to prove this. They then tried to convince her husband of her illicit activities, which he refused to believe.¹⁷

During the Spring of 1989, another Iranian pastor was imprisoned in Ahwaz, in southern Iran, for about one month before he was released on bond. He continues to be harassed and interrogated because of his alleged activities among Iranians from a Muslim background.¹⁸

During the latter part of 1988, the pastor of a church in Ahwaz, Iran, was arrested and placed in solitary confinement for 20 days where he was beaten often. He was then blindfolded and taken to Tehran and placed in solitary confinement for another 10 days. After his release, he was ordered to report to the "Komiteh" (the Iranian Revolutionary Committee) once a week. A short time later, another pastor who had replaced the above-mentioned one was also arrested, imprisoned, and then banished to Tehran. The church was closed by the Ministry of Islamic Guidance and the church property confiscated. Other Christians in Ahwaz, of whom most are Muslim converts to Christianity, have been arrested and imprisoned. Many church members have also been threatened with imprisonment on numerous occasions. One pastor and several church members have found asylum in the West.¹⁹

In 1986, a couple in Ahwaz and an woman in Mashad, who were converts to Christianity from Muslim backgrounds, were forced by Iranian government officials to deny their Christian faith and return to Islam.²⁰

Gorgan Church:

In October 1993, the church was closed and some members badly beaten. One church member, Hassan, was so roughly beaten that his arm was broken and he fled the city in fear of his life. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

The Gorgan church was closed following the arrest and continued detention of Ghassem (a Muslim convert), the son of a church deacon, on charges of adultery. The charges are believed to have been concocted to give Iranian authorities reason for closing the church. His confession was extracted under duress. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

Isfahan Churches:

Since August 1993, the leaders in the Assemblies of God churches have been increasingly pressured to sign documents stating that they will no longer allow Muslims to attend church services or to preach in Farsi. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

On June 25, 1993, the Assembly of God Church congregation was gathered for worship in a private garden when police scaled the walls and surrounded the group. The police demanded to see the identity cards of all worshippers. Pastor George was later questioned and pressured to sign a statement affirming that he would not allow Muslims to enter his church. The pastor politely declined, insisting that no Iranian could be so impolite as to turn away a visitor. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

In June 1993, the Isfahan Church was surrounded by Islamic guards on motorcycles who prohibited any converts or inquirers of Muslim background from entering the church. Since the incident occurred, about 15 Muslim converts who regularly attended services have not been allowed to attend. All have been interrogated and threatened not to attend church.

Muslim converts who are members of the Anglican churches have also been interrogated and threatened. They are not allowed to attend church services.

During the winter of 1993, Rahmat Khadivi, age 35, a Major in the army of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was dismissed when it was learned that he had converted from Islam to Christianity. He had become a Christian in Tehran and became a secret member of the church in Isfahan after returning there. Because of his conversion he was beaten and very badly wounded in his hometown of Shahrza."

In December 1992, Mohammed Ali Maher, age 43, a Muslim convert of 10 years and a standing deacon of the Assembly of God Church in Isfahan, was also persecuted, arrested, imprisoned and mentally tortured. He was ordered to appear before the "Komieh" once a week for a number of weeks and to record all of the pastor's sermons on a cassette recorder. After some weeks of obeying this order he refused to record any more sermons, despite threats from his interrogator. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

Several days later, Mr. Maher was ordered to court. The interrogator questioned him and accused him of apostasy. He was then blindfolded and taken to the "inquisition court," run by several Mullahs (Muslim clergy), where he was condemned to death as an apostate. The court told him that if he did not deny his Christian faith and return to Islam, he and his wife and children would be executed. The next day, he was blindfolded and taken to the gallows. When he felt the rope tighten around his neck and heard a Mullah quote verses from the Qur'an, he became badly frightened for his wife and children. He motioned to the guard and the hanging was stopped. He denied his Christian faith and said that he

as returning to Islam. While still blindfolded, he was forced to sign a paper without reading it. He was then released on bail. He and his family are now afraid to attend church."

In 1988, the land, buildings and equipment of the Assemblies of God church were seized by armed security forces. There was no right of appeal. The property had been used for various social welfare projects run by the church aimed at helping handicapped Muslim children and young adults. One of these buildings now serves as a police headquarters and jail. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

On August 17, 1980, Rev. Iraj Mottahedeh, the pastor in charge of St. Luke's (Anglican) Church in Isfahan, was arrested and imprisoned for seven months."

On October 26, 1979, the home of Bishop Dehqani-Tafti, the Bishop for the Anglican Church in Iran, was attacked and an attempt was made on his life. During the attack his wife, Margaret, was wounded while sleeping in their bedroom.

On October 8, 1979, the sanctity of the church was disregarded, and Bishop Dehqani-Tafti was arrested. On October 3, 1979, the farm for the training of the blind, which belonged to the Church, was confiscated.

On August 19, 1979, Bishop Dehqani-Tafti's house and diocesan offices, containing all his documents and personal effects, were looted and burned.

On August 12, 1979, the Christoffel Blind Mission, belonging to the Anglican Church, was confiscated.

On June 11, 1979, the Christian hospital was confiscated after over a century of service.

Kerman Church:

In or about the summer of 1992, the Anglican church in Kerman was closed by the Ministry of Islamic Guidance."

Kermanshah Church:

In the city of Kermanshah, where Assyrian Pastor Wilson led the Assyrian Pentecostal Assembly, some of the converts were beaten, hung upside down and beaten with thick wires for many hours. The arm of one convert was broken because of the torture. The meetings for the converts have since been closed down and the pastor himself is not permitted to leave the country of Iran. (Please see Exhibit 4.)

In April 1992, Mr. Ebrahim Ebrahimi, a Muslim convert to Christianity, was arrested and imprisoned for one week in the town of Marivan, near Kermanshah (Bakhtaran), after revolutionary guards found Gospels and the Jesus film in his possession. He was not allowed any visitors during his detention "because he was considered an apostate." (Please see Exhibit 5.)

Since on or about 1990, government authorities have forced the Assyrian pastor of the Kermanshah Injili (Presbyterian) Church not to preach in Persian.

Mashad Church:

A Muslim convert was arrested, imprisoned and tortured from 1988 until his release in Spring 1994. He was charged with apostasy and under sentence of death. He had three mock executions, two before

a firing squad and a third by hanging. He was eventually released because many high level officials whom he had helped throughout the years prior to his arrest petitioned for his release. Because of the torture and prison conditions, he suffers from severe permanent health problems including near blindness, heart disease and kidney failure. He fled Iran in 1994.

During the fall of 1993, fifteen converts in Mashad were beaten to prevent them from attending the Assembly of God Church in that city. Some were beaten so severely that they took some time to recover. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

In or about the fall of 1991, Mr. Mohammed Sepehr, an Iranian convert from Islam to Christianity who replaced Rev. Hossein Soodmand after his execution in December 1990, was arrested and imprisoned. He was released several months later. Mr. Sepehr was told by government officials that although he was free at the time, he was still under the sentence of death. He was ordered not to visit any church members or conduct house meetings in the city of Mashad. He was not permitted to leave the city and no church member was permitted to visit him for pastoral counseling."

It was reported in June 1993 that police in Mashad were taking Rev. Mohammed Sepehr and Mr. Hossein Monazami, another church leader, into custody at least once a week to interrogate and then torture them, both mentally and physically. Sometimes they were taken in two or three times a week. Both men are Muslim converts to Christianity. After probing for the names of everyone attending their secret Christian meeting, the police beat them severely. (Please see Exhibit 6.)

During the first week of January 1994, the secret police in Mashad ordered Rev. Sepehr to leave the city of Mashad. They told him, "We are against you Assembly of God people in Iran!" Other church members were also arrested, interrogated and tortured. (Please see Exhibits 4 and 6.)

In July 1993, the leaders of small house churches in Mashad received threatening telephone calls, warning them to discontinue meetings and threatening to kidnap the children of active pastors and lay workers. Instead of discontinuing their meetings, the church leaders simply varied the times and places of their meetings in order to evade detection. (Please see Exhibit 5.) The church building was closed in 1988. Since then, members have met in secret.

In June 1993, an attempt to kidnap a Christian worker's young son was foiled when the boy managed to run away from some men in a car who said they had come to "take him to his daddy." Pastors and Christian workers now say they are accompanying their children to and from school, as a security measure. (Please see Exhibit 7.)

It was reported in July 1993 that thirty months after the Iranian government executed Rev. Hossein Soodmand, a convert from Islam to Christianity, members of his church in the strictly Islamic city of Mashad are still being subjected to state-sponsored religious persecution. Islamic authorities are continuing to systematically arrest, imprison, interrogate, and torture the growing number of Muslims who convert to Christianity. (Please see Exhibit 7.)

Davood Davoodi-Majid, 47, and his wife, Marziyeh, 34, converts from Islam to Christianity, were close associates of the executed Rev. Soodmand and his family. Local Christian leaders counseled them to flee the country overland to Turkey to avoid a court summons in Mashad. In fear for their lives, the Davoodi-Majids fled Iran in late January 1993. Sources indicated that they would have been forced either to recant their Christian faith and return to Islam or to face the death sentence. (Please see Exhibit 6.)

Rev. Hossein Soodmand, an Iranian Muslim convert to Christianity and pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Mashad, was executed by hanging December 3, 1990. The Ministry of Islamic Guidance charged Rev. Soodmand with being an apostate from Islam, converting Muslims to Christianity, opening and operating a Christian bookstore and opening and operating an illegal Christian church in Mashad. Rev. Soodmand had been first arrested in September and had served 28 days in the Mashad prison. His execution followed his re-arrest and torture in November.³¹

When three Christian pastors appealed to the Ministry of Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic of Iran to not carry out Rev. Soodmand's death sentence, they were told, "We intend to execute all Muslim converts to Christianity and Soodmand is the first."³²

The Jama'at-e-Rahbani Church of Mashad (Assembly of God Church) was closed by The Ministry of Islamic Guidance in or about 1988. Since that time, the church members, of which most are Muslim converts to Christianity, meet secretly in small house groups.³³

Sari Church:

In 1990, an informant notified government officials that a certain pastor living in Sari had the names and addresses of all Iranian Muslim converts to Christianity. The pastor's home was raided and searched three times and both he and his wife were interrogated during each raid. The pastor was then arrested and imprisoned. He was released after four interrogation sessions for reasons unknown to him (The human rights violations involved in the interrogations are consistent with Amnesty International reports.) The family escaped from Iran in 1989.³⁴

During the spring of 1989, an Iranian pastor in Sari was blindfolded and questioned for 10 hours by security agents of the Iranian government. He was told the Mazandaran Province "House of Prayer" (chapel) was closed and off limits to any Christian activity, especially that of Iranians from a Muslim background, and that he could no longer hold any home meetings.³⁵

In 1988, the Ministry of Islamic Guidance closed the Chapel (home church) in Sari, in Northern Iran, and the pastor was forced to leave Sari. The pastor continues to be harassed and interrogated because of his alleged activities among Iranians from a Muslim background. Recently, another Muslim convert was forced to leave Sari because of his Christian activity.³⁶

Shiraz Churches:

Mr. Hassan Shahjamali, an Iranian Muslim convert to Christianity, permanent resident of the U.S., and husband of a native born American, went to Iran on May 29, 1994, to visit his family and encourage the Iranian Christians there. He disappeared in Iran on July 1. He was last known to have gone to the Shiraz airport for a plane flight to Tehran, as he was scheduled to return to the U.S. on July 3. He never arrived at the greeting hall of Tehran's Mehrabad Airport and family members learned that he was being detained in Shiraz by government authorities. Mr. Shahjamali was released on July 12 following massive international pressure from diplomats, human rights organizations and the press, but was not allowed to leave Iran on the July 17 flight which had been arranged by government authorities. After more international pressure from diplomats, human rights organizations, and the press, he was allowed to leave Iran on July 20 and return safely to his home in Boise, Idaho. While in Iran, Mr. Shahjamali had met with Rev. Mehdi Dibaj and other church leaders. He had also made copies and distributed the Jesus video. (Please see Exhibit 8.)

Muslim convert members of the Anglican churches in the city of Shiraz have also been interrogated and threatened. They are not allowed to attend church services."

About the end of December 1992, government officials ordered the priest of the Anglican Church of Shiraz to close the church's doors to the public. (Please see Exhibit 4.)

July 12, 1979--The Christian Hospital run by the Anglicans in Shiraz was confiscated and the church property was intruded upon.²

February 1979--Pastor Aristoo Sayyah, a Muslim convert and the pastor in charge of the Anglican churches in the Fars Province, was murdered in his office in Shiraz.³

Tabriz Church:

On July 5, 1991, the Branch One Court of Abhar found that Salman-Ali Kavandi, resident of Abhar, in Northwestern Iran, was not entitled to his inheritance because he converted from Islam to Christianity according to Article 298 or A.D.M. Law. Soghra Kavandi, a family member, was summoned to Branch 5 of the Zanjan Court on March 13, 1989, for investigation of her complaint against Salman-Ali Kavandi. Her complaint stated that he had invited her to embrace the religion of Christianity. She was to appear in court on May 9, 1989. The outcome of the investigation is not known. (Please see Exhibits 9 and 10.)

Rev. Edmond Sarkissian, the pastor of the "Injili" church (Presbyterian church) of Tabriz was arrested, on or about December 7, 1990. He was imprisoned and tortured for two weeks. He suffers from long-term psychological and physical injuries sustained while imprisoned. Until early 1996, government authorities refused to grant him and his family permission to leave the country.⁴ His church secretary was forced by government authorities to inform on Rev. Sarkissian, church members and church activities. Since 1990, all Muslim converts of the Injili Church of Tabriz have left the city after being severely beaten by government authorities.

Tehran Churches:

Rev. Younes Bet-Sayyad, assistant pastor of the Assyrian Language Injili (Presbyterian) Church was arrested on June 30, 1994 by government authorities while in Hamadan on church business. He was released after several days of imprisonment. (Please see update on page 6 and Exhibit 1.)

In mid June 1993, the Iranian Ministry of Guidance summoned two leaders of the Assemblies of God Central Church in downtown Tehran. Officials reportedly ordered the church to cancel its Friday worship meetings and stipulated that worshippers attending the Sunday church services would be required to show their identity cards at the door. Church services on Friday, the weekly day off in Iran, are heavily attended by both members of Christian minority groups and converts from Islam. Requiring ID card checks would automatically expose everyone of Muslim background to police scrutiny. Despite strong threats of "consequences" for disobeying the ultimatum, church leaders refused to comply. (Please see Exhibit 7.)

Since the October 17, 1993 law requiring people to state their religious affiliation on their identity cards, every government employee attending one Assemblies of God church in Tehran has been fired. One of them who had worked for the state for 15 years was given no notice and no severance pay. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

Since August 1993, the leaders in the Assemblies of God churches in Tehran have been increasingly pressured to sign documents stating that they will no longer preach in Farsi or allow Muslims to attend church services. (Please see Exhibit 3.)

The following Friday, five plainclothes policemen appeared at the church an hour before services were scheduled to begin. They blocked the main entrance and demanded to see identity cards as worshippers began arriving. The pastor intervened and invited the policemen into his office. At that point they demanded that the pastor send his congregation home and cancel the service. The pastor refused. The officers then asked him to sign a statement indicating his refusal, after which the pastor returned to the sanctuary and began the service. The following week the pastor attempted to file a protest with the Interior Ministry but officials denied any knowledge of the incident. They declared the officers had not acted on orders and promised to "fully protect" the church.

In or about September 1991, an Iranian Muslim convert to Christianity who was selling the Persian Living Version of the New Testament on the street in Tehran, unknowingly sold a copy to an underground Revolutionary Guard. He was forced to tell where the 20,000 copies of the New Testament were stored. He was released after being imprisoned for about six months, during which his whereabouts were unknown. (Please see Exhibits 11.)

In or about September 1991, an Iranian convert from Islam to Christianity was re-arrested and imprisoned in Tehran. Sources say the first time he was imprisoned he suffered a near mental breakdown because of the toriture he received.⁴¹

A Muslim convert from a church in Tehran was imprisoned for a month in September and October 1990. Two other converts were imprisoned in September 1990. After several days of torture, both "repented in writing of having become Christians" and "returned" to Islam. They were subsequently released. They confided later that their confession and repentance were made under duress and added that they continue to be followers of Jesus Christ.⁴²

On August 23, 1990, Branch 1 of Karaj, a town near Tehran, found Esmael Ebrahimi guilty of "returning from the religion of Islam and preaching the religion of Christianity." He and his family have since fled Iran.⁴³ (Please see Exhibit 10.)

The meeting where eight pastors from different churches gathered together in the central church of Shahr-Ara was apparently hugged by the Iranian government as portions of the conversations are quoted in the 72 page letter from the Islamic Propaganda Organization of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance to the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1989.⁴⁴

In 1990, another Iranian family, "secret believers" from a Muslim background, were threatened that their conversion to Christianity would be exposed to government officials if they did not pay a large sum of money. The decision of the convert family is not known.⁴⁵

An Iranian soldier fighting in the Iran-Iraq war converted to Christianity several years ago. When his conversion, which carries the death penalty under the Islamic laws of Iran, was discovered by the military, his commanding officers told him to renounce Christianity and embrace Islam or he would be shot. During his incarceration, this young soldier faced two or three mock executions. He was then given a military leave. It was planned that he would be assigned to the front lines, where he would be killed in battle rather than as a Christian martyr. He was informed of this plot by his friends, escaped to Turkey and is now living in Europe.⁴⁶

In 1989, an Iranian from a Muslim background who converted to Christianity was not able to continue his self-employment because of his conversion. An intermediary who purchased the convert's merchandise had learned of his conversion and threatened to report it to the government authorities if the convert did not pay the informer a large sum of money. The convert and his family have since fled from the Islamic Republic of Iran.³¹

Another Muslim convert was imprisoned for 30 days. He was pressured to become an informer for the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, but refused.³²

On August 9, 1980, Mr. Dimitri Belous, the Diocesan Administrator for the Anglicans in Tehran, was arrested and imprisoned for seven months.³³

On May 6, 1980, Bishop Dehqani-Tafti's only son, twenty-four-year-old Bahram, was murdered on the way back from his college to his mother in Tehran. (Bishop Dehqani-Tafti is a Muslim convert.)³⁴

In 1979, Rev. Khalil Razmara, pastor of St. Paul's Anglican Church in Tehran, fled from Iran when he was informed that he would be arrested along with Rev. Sharrifan, Rev. Mottahedeh, and Mr. Dimitri Belous.³⁵

Actions Taken by the Islamic Government of Iran Against Anglican Missionaries Serving in Iran at the Time of the Islamic Revolution:

Below are actions taken Actions Taken by the Islamic Government of Iran against Anglican missionaries serving in Iran at the time of the Islamic Revolution:³⁶

On May 1, 1980, Miss Jean Waddell, the fifty-eight-year-old secretary to the Diocese was attacked and severely wounded in Tehran.

On August 10, 1980, Dr. and Mrs. Coleman were arrested in Tehran.

On August 9, 1980, three women in Tehran, who worked with the blind work in Isfahan, were arrested.

On August 5, 1980, Miss Jean Waddell was called from Tehran to Isfahan and arrested. All the missionaries were later released and expelled from Iran.

In addition, a large amount of money belonging to the church was taken from the banks by force and the rents for seven schools and other church properties went unpaid for a long time.³⁷

Other Human Rights Violations of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Against Iranian Evangelical Christian in Iran

Because of persecution during the first several years of the Islamic Revolution, which began in 1979, many Injili (Presbyterian U.S.A. or "Evangelical"), Osgnofti (Anglican) and Assemblies of God Pastors and church leaders fled Iran. In 1979 and 1980 all expatriate missionaries were expelled from Iran. Other pastors and church leaders left during the mid 1980's and 1990's, leaving only 22 trained pastors to pastor 20,000 Evangelical Christians.

Since 1979, many Evangelical churches have been closed, others have been forced underground and the remaining Armenian or Assyrian speaking Evangelical churches (the Armenian and Assyrian languages are spoken by less than 1% of the Iranian population) have been forced to prevent Muslims and Muslim converts from attending their church services. They have also been forced to sign guarantees that they will not evangelize Muslims or conduct worship services in the Persian language.

The following Evangelical churches have been closed: Tabriz Injili Church (Persian language services 1989), Mashad Injili Church (1985), Sari Jama'at-e Rabbani Home Church (1988), Ahwaz Injili/Osghofi Church (1985), Kerman Osghofi Church (1993), Yazd Osghofi Church (1980), Kermanshah Injili church (1989), Hamadan Injili Church (1984), Rasht Injili Church (1985), Tehran Brethren Church (pastor fled Iran in 1994), Abadan WEC Mission Church (1980) and four Seventh Day Adventist Churches in unspecified locations (1979).²

The following Evangelical churches have been forced to go underground: Urumieh Jama'at-e Rabbani Persian Church (Persian language services, 1993), Urumieh Injili Church (Persian language services, 1990), Hamadan Assyrian Pentecostal (both Persian and Assyrian language services, 1991), Kermanshah Assyrian Pentecostal (both Persian and Assyrian language services, 1991), Ahwaz Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (1988), Shiraz Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (1992), Shiraz Osghofi Church (1981), Isfahan Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (Persian language services, 1992), Isfahan Osghofi (1980), Ghaem-Shahr (formerly Shah) Jama'at-e Rabbani House Church (1985), Gorgan Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (1993), Arak Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (Persian language services, 1985), Tehran-Shahr-Ara Assyrian Pentecostal Church (Persian language services, 1985) and the Mashad Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (1981).

The following Evangelical churches have been allowed to stay open only because they hold their worship services in Armenian or Assyrian and have agreed to the government's demands forbidding Muslims and Muslim converts to attend church services. The pastors have also agreed not to evangelize Muslims: Tabriz Injili Church (Assyrian language), Urumieh Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (Assyrian language--allowed only one meeting per week), Hamadan Injili Church (Armenian language), Kermanshah Injili Church (Assyrian language), Arak Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (Armenian language), Tehran-Amirabad Injili Church (Assyrian language), Tehran Central Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (Armenian language service was added after the Revolution), Tehran-Majdich Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (Armenian language), Tehran-Narmak Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (Armenian language), Tehran Jama'at-e Rabbani Church (Armenian language), Tehran Brethren Church, Isfahan and Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The only two Persian speaking Assemblies of God churches which have been allowed to remain open are Rasht Assembly of God Church and Tehran Central Assembly of God Church. It is thought that the government has allowed the Tehran Central Church (Persian language services) to remain open only because Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr campaigned both internally and world-wide to keep it open. He was martyred in January 1994. Since then his brother, senior pastor of the church, has bowed to the government demands to not evangelize Muslims. He has also been intimidated into not reporting the persecution of Evangelical Christians to the outside world. It is not known why the Rasht Church has been allowed to stay open and hold its worship services in the Persian language, other than the fact that the people of Rasht are known to be more enlightened and tolerant toward other religions and ideas.

²The following expatriate churches have also been closed: East Side Baptist Church (1979), Tehran Bible Church (1979), Jama'at-e Rabbani Expatriate Church (English Service, 1979), Shiraz Osghofi Church (English service, 1979), Isfahan Osghofi Church (English service, 1979) and Tehran Osghofi Church (English service, 1979).

Three other Evangelical churches also remain open; because there are only a handful of Persian speaking Christians remaining in these churches and the churches have agreed not to evangelize Muslims, the government has allowed them to hold Persian language services for propaganda reasons. These three churches cannot evangelize the people of Iran freely and may therefore be considered partially closed: Tehran Injili Ghayom-ol-Salanah Church, Tehran Niloo Emanuel Injili Church, and the Tehran St. Paul's Osghof Church. The effectiveness of these three churches is equivalent to that of one fully open church; thus, one could say that, including Rahti Church and Tehran Central Church, there are only three Persian speaking Evangelical churches open in all of Iran today.

The Iranian government would have the world believe that it has re-opened the Gorgan Assembly of God Church, which went underground in 1993; in reality the believers have been intimidated and scattered. Latest reports indicate that the Gorgan Church has been reduced to a married couple meeting in their home with a pastor from another city twice a month. Before the church went underground in 1993, 95% of the church's 40-some members were Muslim converts to Christianity.

Although the formal membership of the underground church in Iran is about 20,000, reports from reliable individuals in Iran estimate that tens of thousands have converted from Islam to Christianity or become Evangelical Christians. Others state that "perhaps hundreds of thousand are secret believers." Because of the persecution, many believers are afraid to publicly confess their conversions. Ironically, it is because of persecution that this large number has converted. Such conversions in Iran parallel the conversions and growth of the underground church in China following the Communist takeover and the severe persecution of Chinese Christians.

All Christian activities are checked by the Ministry of Islamic Guidance which is responsible for religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. All printing of Christian literature including church bulletins and church newsletters are prohibited. A number of pastors have been falsely accused of crimes they know nothing about. And they have been repeatedly arrested, imprisoned, and interrogated.

In or about September 1991, 20,000 copies of Persian Living New Testament, which were smuggled into Iran, were confiscated by government officials. The books were stored at the Assemblies of God Church camp site in Karaj, Iran.³⁸ (Please see Exhibits 11 and 12.)

All camp meetings and other activities outside the church walls have been stopped by government authorities. The Garden of Evangelism, a Christian training center in north Tehran which has been used by churches for over 45 years for evangelism, and pastoral training, was closed by the Ministry of Islamic Guidance in July, 1989.³⁹

In 1988 the Iran Bible Society was granted permission to print Scriptures, but later government authorities refused permission to the Iranian Bible Society to print or import Scriptures. And, in 1992, the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, in one of its measures of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, shut down the Bible Society. The director, a Muslim convert to Christianity, managed to leave the country. All Christian books have been confiscated, and all Christian bookstores have been closed. The Iran Bible Society had been registered with the government of Iran for 200 years prior to its closing. Churches are also forbidden to use correspondence courses for inquirers and new converts.⁴⁰

Since the closing of the Bible Society in Iran, "there as been a severe shortage of Bibles. ~~There are no Bibles in the country~~" (Please see Exhibit 12.)

A 72 page report which was written in 1989 to the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran from the Islamic Propaganda Organization of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance in Tehran. In an excerpt from the report, after summarizing the activities of the Christian minorities, it warns:

. . . We must remind [you] . . . that the Islamic Republic has been careless about these [religious] groups, that the opposition of these groups to the Islamic Republic government is in line with the superpower strategies to use the religious minorities, fanaticism and anti-Islamic motivations.

. . . These people [the religious minorities] in addition to direct and indirect opposition to the government are attempting to collect and abuse small and large events and to get the news of these events published in the anti-Islamic Revolution press outside of the country.

. . . Much of these churches' propaganda is for the attraction of various individuals to their churches . . . but with the wider plan of world oppression, it seems that they [the churches] will have more activities for attracting people and will expand their organization [organizations of various religious and groups].

. . . Regarding the anti-Islamic efforts of the so-called Christian missions . . . it is necessary for the Islamic government to choose the right methods to confront the above propaganda.⁴⁵

Reports of Death Threats and Assassination Attempts On Iranian Christian Leaders Residing Abroad

Iranian Christians living outside of Iran, particularly Iranian Christian leaders, are not safe either. In the 1996 report on international terrorism, the U.S. State Department said that seven Iranian murders of "dissidents" were confirmed in 1995, an increase from four in 1994. In April 1996, after accusing Iranian diplomats of participating in the assassinations of several Iranian dissidents in Turkey, Turkey temporarily expelled four Iranian diplomats. Numerous human rights reports reveal that over sixty dissidents have been killed outside of Iran since 1980. (Please refer to details in the August 1994 ICI report.) Other reports indicate that Iran now has computer capability to track Iranian dissidents outside the country.

Mr. A., an Iranian Muslim convert to Christianity, resides outside of Iran. In early 1995, a relative who works in a government office in Iran informed him that his name was on an official list of Muslim converts.

Three assassination attempts were made on Mr. E., an Iranian Christian leader, during the past five years while he lived in Europe. He and his family have lived in hiding since the last attempt.

In 1994, Rev. S., another Iranian Christian leader, discovered that three "inquirers" who had been attending his church in Europe were actually Iranian government agents. He went into hiding in another country for several months.

Another Iranian Christian leader, Rev. S., escaped Iran. In 1995 he received a message from a friend that Iranian government agents planned to kill him if he made public his past persecution. In September he received another threat that government agents could kidnap him and forcibly return him to Iran.

Several other Iranian Muslim converts to Christianity in two countries have been forced by government agents to participate in the Friday prayer meetings at the local mosque. They have been threatened that if they tell anyone of this coercion, they risk harm to themselves as well as their families in Iran. (Names are being withheld to protect their identity.)

Reports of Persecution, Arrest, Imprisonment and Torture of Iranian Christians Who Returned to the Islamic Republic of Iran After Applying for Asylum in Another Country and Reports of Other Deportations to Iran

Chapter II, Section B(2)(b)(e) of the UNHCR Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status deals with the "consequences of unlawful departure or unauthorized stay outside country of origin," paragraph 61 stated:⁴

The legislation of certain States imposes severe penalties on nationals who depart from the country in an unlawful manner or remain abroad without authorization. Where there is reason to believe that a person, due to his illegal departure or unauthorized stay abroad, is liable to such severe penalties his recognition as a refugee will be justified if it can be shown that his motives for leaving or remaining outside the country are related to the reasons enumerated in Article 1 A(2) of the 1951 Convention ("for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion").

It is well known that the Islamic Republic of Iran has arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and sometimes killed Iranians who were forcibly returned to Iran if they had unlawfully departed from the Islamic Republic of Iran, had stayed abroad without authorization, and/or had applied for asylum in another country. Below are a number of such reports.

What follows is a report given to ICI about the treatment an Armenian Christian and her son received after being deported to the Islamic Republic of Iran after applying for asylum in a third country. They had left Iran without permission because they were fleeing persecution and they were staying outside of Iran without authorization.

*When I told my mother over the telephone that I have no other choice than to return to Iran, she cried and told me that we should never return to Iran and that if we return we will be arrested, put in prison and tortured as it happened to them when they were deported.

On November 19, 1992, we were deported from Bulgaria to Turkey and then on November 22, 1992, from Turkey to Iran. Since we had return bus tickets, we were returned to from the Iran-Turkey border of Bazargan. At the Iranian border, we were detained 15 days, questioned separately several times, tortured and abused, and were asked about the rest of our family. After being threatened, I (the mother) told the "pasdars" (the Islamic police) that my child was in Austria and had applied for asylum in the U.S. My son was badly tortured since he did not want

to give any information. Then, we were sent to Tehran where we were again questioned and tortured for three more days.

We were released on the condition that we were forbidden to travel out of Iran for five years. We were forbidden to travel outside of Tehran. We were also told that we would have to report to the local Komiteh every month until we were told it was no longer necessary.

My mother ended her phone conversation by saying, "If you are ready to die, then come back to Iran."

Another report of an ethnic Armenian Iranian Christian who returned to the Islamic Republic of Iran of his "own free will," after applying for and being refused asylum in a European country, stated that upon his arrival in Iran, "he was immediately imprisoned and tortured." He was able to contact Father Josef Herget, Marienpfarre; Mariengasse 24 8010 Graz, Austria, by letter. The letter included photographs of his beaten and tortured body.⁴⁶

On June 24, 1994, Turkish officials arrested two Iranian Muslim converts to Christianity, Kourosh Dowlataraei and Mehrdad Rosami and deported them to Iran. They were both arrested and flogged 110 times. It is believed that at least one was executed.⁴⁷

Turkish government authorities arrested Rev. Khosrow Khodadadi, Pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Hamadan, and deported him to Iran in October 1994. Government authorities arrested and imprisoned him from April 19, 1995, until July 1, 1995. His physical and mental condition upon his release is unknown.⁴⁸

The Human Rights Association in Turkey, in its interview with the November 7, 1995 Turkish Daily News stated that out of 800 Iranians refugees who were deported by Turkey to Iran, 400 were arrested. (Please see Exhibit 19.)

In the past several years, Amnesty International has reported kidnapping and deportations of Iranians in Turkey to Iran. Some of the Iranians who were kidnapped and deported were UNHCR recognized refugees. However, since Iran and Turkey signed an agreement to exchange asylees in early 1994, deportation of Iranians residing in Turkey has reached an appalling dimension. Since June, both Turkey and Iran returned a large number of the "opposition to the governments of Iran and Turkey" who had sought asylum in the other's country. (Please see Exhibit 20.)

Recent Response to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran's

Continued Escalation of Persecution of Christians Minorities

On March 14, 1996, the European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on human rights in Iran. It expresses once again its solidarity with those Iranian citizens being persecuted by the Tehran government for belonging to religious minorities, on account of their sex or ethnic origin, or because of their political opposition to that government.

calls on the Iranian government to restore the freedom of worship to all individuals and communities in Iran, regardless of creed or ethnic origin, to allow them the right to follow their religious practice and belief, and to allow them the right to share their faith with other people.

The 1996 U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1995: Iran stated:

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to be a major abuser of human rights. There was no evidence of improvement in 1995. . . . It continues to repress freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion. In March (1995) the UN Human Rights Commission extended for another year, the mandate of its Special Representative on Human Rights in Iran. In August (1995), the UN' Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities approved a resolution condemning the "extensive and continuing human rights abuses" by the Government. . . . It denies the universality of human rights, conceals its abuses of human rights, and obstructs the activities of human rights monitors.

On October 4, 1995, the United States Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, issued a Travel Warning which stated, "Former Muslims who have converted to other religions, as well as persons who encourage Muslims to convert, are subject to arrest and possible execution." (Please see Exhibit 21.)

The Human Rights Watch World Report 1995 (Events of 1994) stated:

The human rights situation in Iran showed no improvement in 1994. A picture emerged of new obstacles to the rule of law, a marked worsening in the situation of religious minorities, heightened enforcement of intrusive restrictions on every day life, limitations on basic freedoms of expression, thought, opinion and the press, and discrimination against women. The government generally excluded independent human rights monitors.

In a population of sixty-two million, Iran's religious minorities include 3.5 million Sunni Muslims, 350,000 followers of the Bahai faith, 80,000 Christians and 30,000 Jews. Tens of thousands of Christians, Jews and Bahais have fled Iran in the past fifteen years. During 1994 the government mounted a fierce campaign against the small Christian minority. Churches have been shut down, scores of young Christians--many of them converts from Islam--have been imprisoned and tortured, especially in the cities of Gorgan and Kermanshah. Three leading Evangelical Christians were killed in suspicious circumstances.

There is no evidence of a thorough official investigation into the killings, and Christian sources held the government responsible for the deaths. Iranian officials claim that evangelical churches have political agendas besides worship. (Please see Exhibit 4.)

The 1995 U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994: Iran, pages 1176-1184, stated:

Systematic abuses include arbitrary arrests and detention, widespread use of torture, lack of fair trials, summary executions, and repression of the freedoms of speech, press and association. . . . The Government failed to provide adequate protection for three

Evangelical Christian leaders who were murdered in 1994 . . . by unknown assailants. The Government had accused them of seeking converts among Muslims.

Pages 1082 - 1083 regarding "Religious Minorities," stated:

The Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Baha'i minorities suffer varying degrees of officially sanctioned discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment, education, and public accommodations. Muslims who convert to Christianity also suffer discrimination.

Religious minorities suffer discrimination in the legal system, receiving lower awards in injury and death lawsuits, and incurring heavier punishments than Muslims.

Amnesty International, in its May 1995 Iran: Official Secrecy Hides Continuing Repression, stated:

Over the past 18 months four prominent leaders of religious minority groups—three Christians and a Sunni Muslim—were found dead in suspicious circumstances. They were all known to be critics of government policies.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by the continuing gross human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Sixteen years after the creation of the Islamic Republic, critics of the government are still facing imprisonment after unfair trial before Islamic Revolutionary Courts, torture and execution.

Human rights violations are shrouded in secrecy. Procedures governing arrest, detention and trial are rarely made public. No information is given to detainees about the reasons for arrest and they are not notified of the charges against them until months, and sometimes years, later. Access to lawyers is almost always denied and detainees can spend up to 10 years behind bars before their relatives know where they are. People who speak out against the government or try to publicize human rights violations face severe punishments.

Amnesty International Report 1995: Iran stated:

There were continuing reports of political arrests, torture, unfair trials and summary executions. Among the thousands of political prisoners held during the year were prisoners of conscience, some were detained without charge or trial, others were serving long prison sentences imposed after unfair trials. Judicial punishments of flogging and amputation of fingers continued to be implemented. . . . Religious minority figures were victims of possible extrajudicial executions.

Amnesty International appealed for immediate, thorough and independent investigations into the deaths of the four religious leaders killed in suspicious circumstances. (The fourth was Haji Mohammad Ziaie, a Sunni Muslim leader from Bandar-Abbas.)

Amnesty International Report 1994, page 164, stated:

Other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, some arrested many years before, remained in prison. They included Mehdi Diba, a prisoner of conscience held since 1984, apparently for converting from Islam to Christianity. He was reportedly

sentenced to death on charges of apostasy in 1986. After the case was examined by other courts it was referred to Criminal Court No. 1 in Sari, which reportedly confirmed the death sentence for apostasy in December 1993. He was given 20 days in which to appeal against the sentence.

The Human Rights Watch World Report, 1993, Iran, page 302, stated, "The persecution of evangelical Christians, particularly those who proselytize or have themselves converted from Islam, showed no signs of abating in 1992."

The U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993, Iran, pages 1179 - 1182 stated:

The state religion is Islam, and religion is almost inseparable from government in Iran. The President and many other top officials are mullahs (Islamic clergymen). . . . Nevertheless, official harassment is commonplace. In June, the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights observed that the U.N. Special Representative's report "confirmed) the broad consensus that there has been practically no progress in ensuring greater respect and protection for the rights of the non-Muslim religious communities" in Iran. Mehdi Dehadi, a Christian convert from Islam arrested in 1983, was held in prison until December 1993, when Christian missionary groups reported that a court in Sari sentenced him to death for apostasy. Following international appeals on his behalf, Dehadi was released in January 1994. According to the Government, his case is still "under investigation."

Page 1182, on Religious Minorities, stated:

The Christian . . . minorities suffer various degrees of officially sanctioned discrimination in a number of areas, particularly with respect to employment, education, public accommodations, and property ownership. Muslims who have converted to Christianity are similarly discriminated against.

In Iran, 1994: The Year of Assassinations, the London based Middle East Concern wrote concerning the killing of the three pastors: "MEC's (Middle East Concern's) own sources state categorically that they believe the murders were carried out by a death-squad operating from within the Iranian state security structures sanctioned by orders from the highest political levels."

The report continued, "institutionalized discrimination against non-Muslims has become so prevalent in Iran that it can only be described as 'religious apartheid.'"

- 1) Only Muslims may handle food for consumption by others Muslims.
- 2) A non-Muslim handling food "will pollute it. Therefore, by law, restaurants and food stores owned by non-Muslims must display a sign stating that it is a "religious minority" shop.
- 3) The military's "Religious Control Unit" has demoted some Christian conscripts because "no Muslim should salute a Christian" and "no Christian should be in a position where he may have access to confidential information."
- 4) No government department nor state-owned company employs non-Muslims.

- 5) Materials for religious instruction for minority faiths are written by Muslims from an Islamic perspective which contradicts the actual beliefs of the religion being described.
- 6) Non-Islamic faiths are publicly denigrated, e.g. a sermon by the leading cleric Ayatollah Ahmed Jannati broadcasted by Tehran radio on Friday, December 2, 1994 described Christianity as "truly lacking in divine and religious spirituality, and an arid and useless movement . . . it is a lifeless corpse."

Why is there an unprecedented wave of persecution of the Christian minorities, particularly Evangelicals, in Iran today?

In his book A Fragrance of Oppression: The Church and its Persecutors, Herbert Schlossberg stated:

For Muslims, religion cannot be separated from other aspects of society because of the all encompassing, integrated nature of its concept of life. The division between public and private, state and society, that has become common in the West is unknown to Islam. As one scholar put it, "The state is only the political expression of an Islamic society." Samuel Zwerner, the great missionary scholar of Islam, also emphasized this point. He described the word *Islam* as standing for unity "in religious conception, in political theory, and in the ideals of a civilization." Thus, for another religion to exist in that society or worse yet, for someone to commit apostasy from his Islamic heritage is not just a religious matter, but "strikes at the very heart of their whole society and destroys its organic unity." This is why when a Muslim becomes a Christian, it is not only a religious act, but also political, inasmuch as a Muslim cannot conceive of separating the two.⁴⁷

The writer of Middle East Concerns's Iran 1994, The Year of Assassinations, also explains this point: anything that diverts the energies of the Iranian Republic weakens the revolution and is, therefore, anti-revolutionary (i.e. opposed to the Islamic revolution inspired by Ayatollah Khomeini). Anyone accused of being a counter-revolutionary faces the death penalty. Conversion from Islam, which is viewed by the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a political act, weakens Islam. Because of this, Evangelical Christians, by virtue of their beliefs, are deemed to be "weakening the revolution" and thereby politically motivated.

In the face of mounting persecution and the threat of assassination, Iran's Evangelical churches remain committed to maintaining a viable, indigenous Christian witness to fellow Iranians regardless of their ethnic or religious background. To them this is a crucial and non-negotiable determinant of what it means to be a Christian. By way of contrast, the Iranian government's scheme seems to be that the Christian church should wither and perish or be violently eliminated.

Commission at its 1995-1996 session, in his report to the February/March 1995

"There must also be an end to acts of surveillance, hostility and discrimination against Christians, particularly converts from Islam; permission should be given for the re-opening of churches, chapels, libraries, book shops and other Christian premises that have been closed down and for the construction of new premises; and the right to hold services in Farsi without being kept under surveillance by agents of the security forces should be guaranteed."

Reynaldo Galindo Pohl described the treatment than an Iranian Christian could receive while incarcerated in paragraphs 83, 84, 87, 109, 126, and 241 of the February 2, 1994 United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Fiftieth Session, Final Report on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

(83) Torture of prisoners was reported to remain common throughout the country, in spite of the prohibition contained in Article 38 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to former prisoners, the most frequently used methods were beatings with cables and rifle butts on the back and the soles of the feet, suspension for long periods in contorted positions and burning with cigarettes.

(84) The specific cases of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment mentioned below were reported to the Special Representative. On 15 December 1992, an Islamic revolutionary court sentenced an Afghan accused of multiple thefts to have his fingers cut off. The sentence was carried out in a public square using an electric saw.

(87) It was alleged that political detainees continue to be subjected to torture following arrest to force them to confess or give statements. It was said that prolonged incommunicado detention facilitates the torture of detainees.

(109) It was reported that detention and arrests were made by the State Security Police; the Police Force; the Gendarmerie; the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (Pasdaran); the Revolutionary committees; the Basijis, irregular paramilitary forces of volunteers who seek to uphold revolutionary ideals; the numerous patrols, such as the patrol to remove street vendors and that to combat improper veiling. It was reported that tens of thousands of Basijis had been ordered to prowl about every factory, office and school to ensure that everyone adhered to the Islamic code. The Basij organization was originally created during the Iran-Iraq war to provide volunteers for the front. After the summer 1992 riots, Basij units were revived, rearmed and sent out into the streets to help enforce Islamic law. The Basijis are reportedly under the control of local mosques. It was further said that the Basijis set up checkpoints around the cities and stopped cars to sniff their occupant's breath for alcohol and check for women wearing make-up or travelling with a man not their close relative or husband. It was reported that the Law of Judicial Support for the Basijis, published in the Official Gazette No. 13946 of 8, 10, 1371 (December A.D. 1992), provided no redress against arbitrary detention by the Basijis.

At the conclusion of the February/March 1995 Commission at its Fifty-first Session in Geneva, member nations adopted a resolution that expressed:

Its deep concern at continued violations of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including those highlighted by the Special Representative in his report, namely the continued high number of executions, cases of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the failure to meet international standards with regard to the administration of justice, the absence of guarantees of due process of law, the discriminatory treatment of minorities by reason of their religious beliefs, notably the Baha'is, whose existence as a viable religious community in the Islamic Republic of Iran is threatened, lack of adequate protection for the Christian minorities, some of which have been the target of intimidations and assassinations, restrictions on the freedoms of expression, including the use of excessive force in suppressing demonstrations, thought, opinion and the press, and continued widespread discrimination against women,

The U.S. Department of State, in its Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 1995, which went into effect on October 1, 1994, grants Iranian religious minorities Priority I Status, as follows:

Refugees who have served in positions of leadership or played a conspicuous role within a religious denomination whose members are subjected to discrimination, including the clergy, prominent laymen, those who have served in denominational assemblies, governing bodies or councils; refugees who because of their minority religious affiliations have been deprived of employment, have been driven from their homes, have had their business confiscated or looted, have been denied educational opportunities available to others similarly situated in the same area, or have been denied pensions that would otherwise be available.

At the beginning of its 1995/96 fiscal year in October 1995, the U.S. Department of State continued to classify Iranian religious minorities, including Iranian Christians, as a "Group of Special Concern." (Please see Exhibits 22 and 23.)

New Laws and Policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran Under Which Iranian Christians Are Governed

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has passed new laws and escalated its campaign against the Christian minority in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Its primary targets include Evangelical Christian churches and Muslim converts to Christianity.

1. Mawdudi, a prominent Pakistani Muslim scholar, stated, "An Islamic state is essentially an ideological state, and is thus radically different from a national state," and this lays the basic foundation for the political, economic, social, and religious system of all Islamic countries which impose the Islamic law. This ideological system intentionally discriminates between people according to their religious affiliations, between Muslims and non-Muslims.
2. According to the October 30, 1993 Gazette Telegraph, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran ordered non-Muslim shopkeepers to put up notices announcing their religious affiliation in May 1993. Human rights organizations see this as a further step toward "apartheid" based on "religion."
3. According to the September 1993 World Christian News, in June 1993 the Iranian government ordered all Christian churches to sign a statement declaring they will not evangelize Muslims. Many believe this is part of a crackdown aimed at churches attended by Muslims.
4. According to the October 30, 1993 Gazette Telegraph, on October 17, 1993, with the assent by the "Supreme Guide," Ali Khamenehi, the Islamic Majlis (parliament) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, passed a law that requires people to state on their identity cards their religious affiliation. In Iran, one must show his identity card before doing any business. This, according to Mr. Hashem Nahidi, former Iranian ambassador to the United Nations and now head of an Iranian human rights think-tank, will make it easy for government authorities to target non-Muslims.
5. According to the December 1993 Middle East Concern, since August 1993, government authorities have pressured churches to sign documents saying that they will no longer preach in

the Persian (Farsi) language, or allow Muslims to attend church services. This means that Muslims who choose to attend (and do not understand the Armenian or Assyrian languages) will not, in effect, be able to participate in the services.

6. According to the January 19, 1994 report, "Islam Against the Church," prepared by the Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, U.S. House Republican Research Committee, in December 1993, the Friday Prayer Imam of Tehran met with leaders of the Christian community, including Armenians, Assyrians, Anglicans and 5, concerning both Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations. The Imam greeted the Christian representatives but then warned them of the dire ramifications of Vatican City's planned recognition of Israel. He then delivered an implied warning that this year might be the last Christmas celebrated in Tehran.

Islam's Ideology of Supremacy

The Doctrine of Supremacy: "Dhimmi"

The basic Islamic attitude toward people from other religious centers on the concept of the *dhimmi*, which defined the relationship for many centuries. *Dhimma* is defined in the Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam. It stated, "According to Muslim canon law on the conquest of a non-Muslim country by Muslims, the population which does not embrace Islam and which is not enslaved, is guaranteed life, liberty and, in a modified sense, property. They are, therefore, called *Ahl al-dhimma*, 'people of the covenant or obligation.'"⁴⁸

Dhimmi status came from contracts between Mohammed and the Jewish and Christian tribes in Arabia in the seventh century. But the voluntary nature of the relationship ended after the prophet's death. The concept then became a framework for the subjugation and persecution of the non-Muslim peoples in areas where Islam dominated.

Islamic or "Sharia" law is the core of Islamic thought. Non-Muslims do not belong to the House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*); therefore they belong to the House of War (*Dar al-Harb*). Although interpreters of Islamic laws differ on the method for implementing this law, there are only three alternatives for dealing with non-Muslims under the Islamic legal system: (1) they must be converted; (2) they must be subjugated; or (3) they must be eliminated (except for women, children, and slaves).⁴⁹

Islamic law, however, differentiates between types of non-Muslims. Christians and Jews, for example, are in different categories from the rest. Thus, some Muslim states will permit the "infidel" to enter a formal agreement or treaty that will spare the unbeliever's life and property. In that case, the non-Muslim becomes the *dhimmi* and is subjugated in various ways. According to Islamic law a *dhimmi* must wear identifiable clothing and live in a clearly marked house. He must not ride a horse or bear arms. He must yield the right-of-way to Muslims. The *dhimmi* cannot be a witness in a legal court except in matters relating to other *dhimmis*. He cannot be the guardian of a Muslim child, the owner of a Muslim slave, or a judge in a Muslim court.

This concept of *dhimmi* is of great importance because fundamentalists, in interpreting the Qur'an and Islamic law, often take minor concepts and institute major practices affecting Islamic society and economic and political policy based on them. Since Muslims believe Islamic superiority is demonstrated

by humiliating the non-Muslim, they must find ways to control and dominate the unbeliever or "infidel."⁹

Since the seventh century, this practice became the means whereby military conquest was converted into civil domination and repression. To the dominating Muslim, the reason this was necessary was because of two assumptions. The first assumption was that Islam was the only true religion. Secondly, it required a merging of all aspects of life. There was no distinction between religious and secular. This status of the inferiority of the *dhimmi* was a given, even though the practical implications might vary in different countries over the centuries.

Aspects of the *dhimmi* status included discriminatory land taxation, which was intended to show that the *dhimmi* were no longer freeholders of land, but rather tenants. Also there was the *jizya* or poll tax. Sometimes this was paid with a humiliating ceremony in which the *dhimmi*, while paying the tax, were struck on the head or neck. These taxes sometimes led to a wave of conversions to Islam. The *jizya* itself was a piece of parchment worn on the wrist or another part of the body which served as a tax receipt and allowed the *dhimmi* to move to a different location. Without it they could be arrested and imprisoned. The *Dhimmi* could not ride a "noble" animal like a horse or camel, but only a donkey. These restrictions were found in some countries such as Iran, as late as the 1940's. At times the *dhimmi* had to have houses with roofs lower than those of the Muslims in town, or shorter doors, so that they were forced to stoop to enter the house. Their houses were not protected against raiding and pillaging like the Muslims' were. There were strict limitations on where they could live and on what clothes they could wear. They were forced to bow to Muslims, to speak in low voices, to move out of the way when Muslims passed them in the street."¹⁰

One must look at the precepts of Islam to understand why there is so little religious freedom found in Muslim countries. Islam regards itself as the fulfillment or completion of Christianity and Judaism. God's final message to mankind. Whoever does not submit to Islam is not submissive to God's will and is therefore liable to lawful subjection. At times, Muslim conquerors have allowed Jews or Christians to keep their faith. The Qur'an gives Jews and Christians a special place as "people of the book." However, this privilege does not extend to anyone who desires to leave Islam. Apostasy is a grievous sin, punishable by death."¹¹

For Muslims, religion cannot be separated from other aspects of society because of the all encompassing, integrated nature of its concept of life. The division between public and private, state and society, that has become common in the West is unknown to Islam. As one scholar put it, "The state is only the political expression of an Islamic society." Samuel Zwemer, the great missionary scholar of Islam, also emphasized this point. He described the word *Islam* as standing for unity "in religious conception, in political theory, and in the ideals of a civilization." Thus, for another religion to exist in that society or worse yet, for someone to commit apostasy from his Islamic heritage is not just a religious matter, but strikes at the very heart of their whole society and destroys its organic unity. "This is why when a Muslim becomes a Christian, it is not only a religious act, but also political, inasmuch as a Muslim cannot conceive of separating the two."¹²

A philosophy of history lies behind the Fundamentalist Islamic hostility to non-Muslims. Muslims believe that a golden age in the past compares and condemns other societies, including present-day Islamic societies with all their shortcomings. For Islam the model for the good was the perfect society established by the Prophet Mohammed. Everything that has occurred since is tainted, and this affects their view of social change. In Islam the only legitimate change is change which results in the moral betterment of the Muslim community. The validity and quality of any structural variation of Muslim life is measured by

its conformity to God's law and by the degree to which it is believed to direct the community back to that perfect model of existence created by the Prophet.³⁹

The Islamic Doctrine of Holy War: "Jihad."

Terrorism is rooted deep in the modern expression of Islam and is openly practiced. Sheikh Abdul'ah Ghoshah, Supreme Judge of the Kingdom of Jordan, stated in 1968:

Jihad is legislated in order to be the means of propagating Islam. Consequently non-Muslims ought to embrace Islam either willingly or through wisdom and good advice or unwillingly through fight and jihad. War is the basis of the relationship between Muslims and their opponents unless there are justifiable reasons for peace, such as adopting Islam as their faith or making an agreement with them to keep peaceful. It is unlawful to give up jihad and adopt peace and weakness, unless the purpose of giving up is for preparation for further action whenever there is something weak among Muslims and their opponents are strong.⁴⁰

Below was Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini's vision of Holy war:

Holy war means the conquest of all non-Muslim countries. Such a war may well be declared after the formation of an Islamic government worthy of that name, at the direction of the Imam . . . or under his orders. It will then be the duty of every able-bodied adult male to volunteer for this war of conquest, the final aim of which is to put Koranic (Qur'anic) law in power from one end of the earth to the other.⁴¹

The Islamic Doctrine of No Separation of Church and State:

A concept that one must understand is the fact that Islam has no doctrine of separation of church and state. Because of close identification with one culture and the need to maintain that culture as an expression of Islam, religion and society are merged. Such an ideology grows from the desire of Mohammed himself to create a society in which religion encompasses everything. Muslim extremists demand a worldwide society established, controlled, pervaded, and purged by religion. They are willing to use every imaginable force to achieve their "Divine objective."

In his book, Passionate Believing, Bill A. Musk demonstrates the difference between the Islamic state and the secular state.⁴²

Islamic State	Secular State
Governed in accordance with the laws of God as revealed in Qur'an and Sunna	Governed by laws made through human reason
Ultimate sovereignty belongs only to God	The state must itself be fully sovereign
Umma comprises the community of the faithful; allegiances reach beyond national barriers	The state must be national; individuals' allegiance is to the nation
Aspires to become a universal state	The state must have a well defined territory
Executive and judicial authorities alone are required; some minor matters justify legislature	Requires legislative, executive, and judicial authorities
Guarantees the rights of all citizens but some hold only dhimmi (non-Muslim minority) status	All citizens are equal before the law
All public life is religious	Religion is part of the private domain
Modelled on Muhammad's leadership in Medina	Modelled (originally) on the Greek concept of nation state

Islamic Laws Regarding the Treatment of Apostates Under Which the Islamic Republic of Iran is Governed

According to the Islamic laws under which the Islamic Republic of Iran is governed, the penalty for a Muslim who converts to Christianity is death. A convert from Islam (an *apostate* or "*Murtadd*") is defined as: "One who turns back, especially from Islam, an apostate. Apostasy is called 'irtidād' or 'ridda'; it may be committed verbally by denying a principle of belief or by an action, for example treating a copy of the Kor'an [Qur'an] (the holy book of Islam) with disrespect."²⁹

According to Ayatollah Khomeini:

In *The Explanation of Problems*, Ayatollah Khomeini stated in Problem 2447:

The Muslim who denies God and the Prophet, or denies an essential law of religion, that is a law which Muslims consider to be part of the religion of Islam, such as the compulsoriness of prayer and fasting, whereas the denial of that law entails the denial of God or the Prophet, is an apostate."³⁰

The term "national apostate" used by Khomeini seems to mean that the category of apostate in Islamic law is covered by the national law of the Islamic Republic of Iran.³¹

According to Ayatollah Mohammed Gilani, Islamic Judge of the Central Islamic Revolutionary Courts:

Ayatollah Mohammed Gilani, Islamic Judge of the Central Islamic Revolutionary Courts of the Islamic Republic of Iran, stated:

As for any Muslim whatsoever who rejects the religion of Islam and denies the prophetic message of the Prophet of Islam, the spilling of his blood is permissible for anyone who hears of it, and from the day of his apostasy, his wife is forbidden to him and must be separated from him, and it is forbidden for him to sleep with her, and his property should be divided among his heirs, and his wife should perform the yaddah of death (observe the period required after a divorce or death of a husband), and it is for the Imam to slay him and give him no opportunity of repentance. (An Imam is a Muslim religious leader.)⁴¹

According to Islamic Religious Jurisprudence:

In the Islamic religious jurisprudence (Fiqh), the punishment for an apostate is spelled out, and this includes torture and death:

In the Fiqh there is unanimity that the male apostate must be put to death, but only if he is grown up (baligh) and compos mentis (akil) and has not acted under compulsion (*mubtalar*). A woman on the other hand is imprisoned, according to Hanafi and Shi'i teaching, until she again adopts Islam, while according to al-Awza'i, Ibn Hanbal (Tirmidhi, Hujjad, Bab 25), the Malikis and Shafi'is (cf *Umm*, I, 131, where Shafi'i vigorously attacks Abu Yusuf who is not mentioned by name) she also is put to death (a pregnant woman however only after her confinement; *Umm*, VI., 149). Although this punishment is not properly *hadd* (cf. thereon Shafi'i, *Umm*, VII, 330) it is regarded as such by some jurists, as it is a question of a *hadd Allah* (cf. e.g. Sarakhsi, *Siyaq*, IV, 162), therefore the execution of the punishment lies with the imam (Muslim clergy); in the case of a slave, however, the *mawla* can carry it out as with any other *hadd* punishment. Execution should be by the sword. According to the above traditions, apostates must sometimes have been tortured to death.⁴²

According to Judge Sadeghi, Religious Judge of the Punitive Court I of Branch 7 of Sari, Iran, issued on December 12, 1993:

With reference to Islamic regulations and Farwah's of Islamic Jurists, Tahiri-al-wasileh, volume 2, Problem 4, page 495, [which stated:] . . . and accordingly the apostate was born a Muslim before his apostasy and as per the Islamic law, if he reaches maturity and voluntarily chose blasphemy (non-Islamic religion or discards Islam) and so on, he should be given the opportunity to repent or be killed. And [according to] the book of Jawaher-al-Kalam (Jewels of the Word), volume 41, book of Althodood Fi Hokm-al-Mortad-al-Fetri (The manual of Islamic punishment for the apostates born as Muslims) and the Famous Farwabs of the Islamic Jurists, because in [of] adulthood and [his] choice of Kofr (blasphemy) and non-repentance, and [his] insistence on the choice of non-Islam, which the accused is the best example of, and he insists [his assistance] on his belief on non-Islam, with reliance on the document of the above mentioned Farwah and documents in the primary opinion, he is sentenced to execution.⁴³

According to the Qur'an:

The Qur'an, is quite clear about the punishment of an apostate: "Whosoever shall apostatize from his religion, let him die for it, an he is an infidel." (Surah 2:214)⁴⁴

The Qur'an removes the responsibility for the harsh punishment of an apostate from the punisher and thus condones any torture and death of any apostate at the hand of any Muslim. "It is Allah who assumes the responsibility when infidels are beheaded." The Qur'an also stated, "It was not you who slew them, but Allah." (The Spoils, 8:17) "Fight (kill) them; God torment them on your hand." (Surah 9:14)⁴⁵

Islam's intolerance of other religions is quite clear in the Qur'an. "The Table," verses 62-66 and 72 say: "May they (the Jews) be cursed". The Qur'an constantly exhorts the "faithful" to "kill off" Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims. In the "Book of Repentance" alone there are fifteen such directives: 9:5, 15, 20, 24, 29, 36, 41, 44, 73, 81, 86, 88, 111 and 123.⁴⁶

In "The Table" 5:33, Muslims are instructed that "Those who fight Allah and his apostle (the Prophet, Muhammad), and spread disorder in the land shall be put to death or [be] crucified, or have their hand and feet cut off on alternate sides, or be banished from the country..." "Disorder" can be interpreted as "criticism of Islam."⁴⁷

Savagery is enjoined by the Muslim: "Allah says, 'I shall be with you. Give courage to the believers. I shall cast terror into the hearts of the infidels. Strike off their heads, maim them in every limb.... It was not you who slew them but Allah' ("The Spoils" 8:17ff). "Any atrocity appears to be justified as long as it is thought to be the will of Allah."⁴⁸

According to the Hadith (Muslim Traditions):

The Islamic Hadith (Muslim Traditions) also confirms Islam's severe punishment of an apostate:

There is little echo of these punishments in the next world (burning in the fires of hell) in the Traditions (cf. Ibn Madja, Hudud, Bab 2; Ibn Hanbal, I, 409, 430, 464 sq.; v. 4, 5).

Instead we have in many traditions a new element, the death penalty. Thus Ibn Abbas transmits an utterance of the Prophet (Muhammad): "Slay him who changes his religion" or "behead him" (Ibn Madja, Hudud, Bab 2; Nasa'i, Tahrim al-dam, Bab 14; Tayaasi, No. 2689; Malik, Akdliya, iv. 15; cf. also Bukhari, Murtaddin, Bab 2; Tirmidhi, Hudud, Bab 25; Abu Dawud, Hudud, Bab 1; Ibn Hanbal, I, 217, 282, 322). According to another tradition of Ibn Abbas and A'isha, the Prophet is said to have permitted the blood to be shed of him "who abandons his religion (i.e. Islam) and separates himself from the community (*djama'a*)" (Bukhari, Daya, Bab 1; Abu Dawud, Hudud, Bab 1; Tirmidhi, Daya, Bab 10; Fitan, Bab 1; Ibn Hanbal, I, 382, 444)....According to a tradition of A'isha, apostates are to be slain, crucified or banished (Nasa'i, Tahrim al-dam, Bab 11; Kasama, Bab 13; Abu Dawud, Hudud, Bab 1)."

The legal system of the Islamic Republic of Iran is clearly built on the Qur'anic Law. In regard to how to deal with a Muslim who has rejected the religion of Islam, the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book, stated: "Whosoever shall apostatize from his religion, let him die for it, and he is an infidel." (Surah 2:214) Another verse in the Qur'an also stated, "Slay the polytheists wherever you find them." (Surah 9:5)

Surah 5:72-73 stated, "They do blaspheme who say, 'Allah is one of three' [the Christian belief in the Trinity]. They will be sternly punished." (Please see Exhibit 15.)

Observance of the Christian festivals, participation in the Christian sacraments and the embracing of Christian beliefs, as stated above, by a Muslim convert to Christianity, in themselves constitutes his "denial of Islam not only mentally, but by words and actions which are incompatible with the [Muslim] faith." He is denouncing "Islam by deed" by considering lawful those things which are strictly forbidden by Islamic Law, and by refraining from doing an act (acts) which Islamic Law requires."⁷⁰

A Muslim convert to Christianity publicly celebrates the festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, and participates in the taking of the Christian sacraments such as baptism and communion. He believes in the Christian teachings that the Bible is God's Word, that Jesus is the Son of God, that He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended, and that He will return to rule the earth. He also embraces the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the Christian teaching that the primary task of all Christians in all lands is to give Christ's message to all people and to invite them to accept Christianity.

Apostasy, which carries the penalty of death, consists of not only observing Christian practices, but also of believing in the Christian faith and refusing to participate in compulsory Islamic practices such as the Muslim prayer and fasting.

Islamic Laws Regarding the Treatment of Religious Minorities, Particularly Christians Under Which the Islamic Republic of Iran is Governed

Mawdudi, a prominent Pakistani Muslim scholar, stated, "An Islamic state is essentially an ideological state, and is thus radically different from a national state," and this lays the basic foundation for the political, economic, social, and religious system of all Islamic countries which impose the Islamic law. This ideological system intentionally discriminates between people according to their religious affiliations, between Muslims and non-Muslims.

According to the Qur'an:

It is Allah who assumes the responsibility when infidels are beheaded. "It was not you who slew them, but Allah."⁷¹

"Fight (kill) them; God torment them on your hand."⁷²

Islam's intolerance of other religions is quite clear in the Qur'an. "The Table Spread," verses 62-66 and 72 say: "May they (the Jews) be cursed!"⁷³

Muslims are instructed that "Those who fight Allah and his apostle (the Prophet, Muhammad), and spread disorder in the land shall be put to death or [be] crucified, or have their hand and feet cut off on alternate sides, or be banished from the country..." "Disorder" can be interpreted as "criticism of Islam."⁷⁴

Savagery is enjoined by the Muslim: "Allah says, 'I shall be with you. Give courage to the believers. I shall cast terror into the hearts of the infidels. Strike off their heads, maim them in every limb.... It was

not you who slew them but Allah" ("The Spoils" 8.17ff). Any atrocity appears to be justified as long as it is thought to be the will of Allah.

"Slay the polytheists wherever you find them."⁹⁸

"They do blaspheme who say, 'Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary...' They are unbelievers who say, 'Allah is one of three' [the Christian belief in the Trinity]. They will be sternly punished."⁹⁹

"Make war upon those who believe not...even if they be People of the Book [that is, Christians and Jews] until they have willingly agreed to pay the *jizya* (tax) in recognition of their submissive state."¹⁰⁰

"...So wrong not yourselves in them. And wage war on all the idolaters [Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims] as they are waging war on all of you..."¹⁰¹

"O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and hypocrites! [Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims] Be harsh with them. Their ultimate abode is hell, a hapless journey's end."¹⁰²

"O ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers [Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims] who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty (unto Him)."¹⁰³

"Believers, take neither Jews nor Christians for your friends. They are friends with one another. Whoever of you seeks their friendship shall become one of their number. Allah does not guide the wrongdoers. . . . You see the faint-hearted hastening to woo them. . . . Believers, do not seek the friendship of infidels and those who were given the Book before you. . . [that is, the Old and New Testaments]."¹⁰⁴

"Some of those who are Jews change words from their context and say: 'We hear and disobey; hear thou as one who heareth not' and 'Listen to us; distort with their tongues and slandering religion. If they had said: 'We hear and we obey; hear thou, and look at us' it had been better for them, and more upright. But Allah hath cursed them for their disbelief, so they believe not, save a few."¹⁰⁵

"The only reward of those who make war upon Allah and His messenger and strive after corruption in the land [Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims] will be that they will be killed or crucified, or have their hands and feet on alternate sides cut off, or will be expelled out of the land. Such will be their degradation in the world, and in the Hereafter theirs will be an awful doom; Save those who repent before ye overpower them. . . ."¹⁰⁶

"O Messenger (i.e. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam)! Let not them grieve thee who vie one with another in the race to disbelief, of such as say with their mouths: 'We believe,' but in their hearts believe not, and of the Jews: listeners for the sake of falsehood, listeners on behalf of other folk who come not unto thee, changing words from their context and saying: 'If this be given unto you, receive it, but if this be not given unto you, then beware! He whom Allah doometh unto sin, thou (by thine efforts) wilt avail him naught against Allah. Those are they for whom the will of Allah is that He cleanse not their hearts, Theirs in the world will be ignominy, and in the Hereafter an awful doom.'"¹⁰⁷

"The Jews say: 'Allah's hand is fettered. Their hands are fettered and they are accursed for saying so. Nay, but both His hands are spread out wide in bounty. He bestoweth as He will. That which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord is certain to increase the contumacy and disbelief of many of them, and We have cast among them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection. As often as they light a fire

for war. Allah extinguisheth it. Their effort is for corruption in the land, and Allah loveth not corrupter. ⁻¹⁰⁸

"They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers. ⁻¹⁰⁹

"They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the One God. If they desist not from so saying a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve. ⁻¹¹⁰ "Thou wilt find the most vehement of mankind in hostility to those who believe (to be) the Jews and idolaters. And thou wilt find the nearest of them in affection to those who believe (to be) those who say: Lo! We are Christians. That is because there are among them priests and monks, and because they are not proud. ⁻¹¹¹

"The likeness of those who are entrusted with the Law of Moses, yet apply it not, is as the likeness of the ass carrying books. Wretched is the likeness of folk who deny the revelations of Allah. And Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk. Say (O Muhammad): O ye who are Jews! If ye claim that ye are favored of Allah apart from (all) mankind, then long for death if ye are truthful. But they will never long for it because of all that their own hands have sent before, and Allah is Aware of evil-doers. ⁻¹¹²

"Lo! those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Muhammad), and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaeans -- whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day and doeth right -- surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. ⁻¹¹³

"Lo! those who believe (this Revelation), and those who are Jews, and the Sabaeans and the Christians and the Magians [Magus or Zoroastrians] and the idolaters -- Lo! Allah will decide between them on the Day of Resurrection. Lo! Allah is Witness over all things. ⁻¹¹⁴

"The day will surely come when the unbelievers will wish that they were Muslims. ⁻¹¹⁵

"Believers, do not make friends with any men other than your own people. They will spare no pains to corrupt you. They desire nothing but your ruin. Their hatred is clear from what they say, but more violent is the hatred which their breasts conceal. ⁻¹¹⁶

"Do not be subject to such. ⁻¹¹⁷ [i.e. non-Muslims.] ⁻¹¹⁸

"May they [the Jews] be cursed. ⁻¹¹⁹

According to Ayatollah Khomeini:

"The Islamic movement met its first saboteur in the Jewish people, who are at the source of all the anti-Islamic libels and intrigues current today. ⁻¹²⁰

"We see today that the Jews--may God bring them down!--have manipulated the editions of the Koran published in their occupied zones. We have to protest, to make everyone understand that these Jews are bent upon the destruction of Islam and the establishment of a universal Jewish government. ⁻¹²¹

"There are eleven things which are impure: urine, excrement, sperm, bones, blood, dogs, pigs, non-Moslem men and women, wine, beer, and the sweat of the excrement-eating camel. ⁻¹²²

"Every part of the body of a non-Muslim individual is impure, even the hair on his hand and his body hair, his nails, and all the secretions of his body."¹¹⁹

"Any man or woman who denies the existence of God, or believes in His partners [the Christian Trinity], or else does not believe in His Prophet Mohammed, is impure (in the same way as are excrement, urine, dog, and wine). He is so even if he doubts any one of these principles."¹²⁰

"A child who has not reached puberty is impure if his parents and grandparents are not Moslems, but if he has one Moslem in his ancestry he is pure."¹²¹

"One must avoid giving the Koran to an infidel; it is even recommended that it be forcibly taken away from him if he already has it in his hands."¹²²

"A non-Muslim man or woman who becomes a convert to Islam automatically has a pure body, and pure saliva, nasal secretions, and perspiration. As for converts' clothing, if it has been in contact with their sweating bodies before they became converted, it remains impure."¹²³

"The remains of the food of dogs, pigs, and non-Muslim men and women are impure; the remains of the food of animals the flesh of which may be eaten are not impure, but it is nevertheless better to abstain therefrom."¹²⁴

"A Moslem woman may not marry a non-Muslim man; nor may a Moslem man marry a non-Muslim woman in continuing marriage, but he may take a Jewish or Christian woman in temporary marriage."¹²⁵

"A Moslem is allowed to require payment by an infidel of interest on money that he has lent him."¹²⁶

"No Moslem is permitted to work in a Jewish concern, if he knows, or has the slightest suspicion, that this concern gives support to Israel. Money thus earned is impure."¹²⁷

"It is not strictly forbidden for Moslems to work for a concern managed by a Moslem which also employs Jews, provided the work does not serve Israel in any manner whatsoever. However, it is shameful to do one's work under the orders of a Jewish foreman."¹²⁸

"Any meat imported from the countries of the infidels is strictly impure, and considered the same as the flesh of a corpse, unless it is proven that the cattle was slaughtered according to Moslem ritual."¹²⁹

"The missionaries, those other agents of imperialism, are also busy throughout the Moslem world in perverting our youth, not by converting them to their own religion, but by corrupting them. And that is the very thing the imperialists are after. In Teheran itself, propaganda centers for Christianity, Zionism, and Baha'ism, have been set up for the sole purpose of luring the faithful away from the commandments of Islam. Is it not our duty to destroy all these hotbeds of danger to Islam?"¹³⁰

According to Islamic Religious Jurisprudence:

The Friday, December 24, 1982, *International Iran Times* (Volume XII, No. 41, p. 5) carried an article which was written by Mousavi Tabrizi, the Islamic Revolutionary Prosecutor General of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This article discussed the conditions under which religious minorities in Iran could remain "secure."¹³¹

In this regard he indicated six conditions under the title "Conditions of Obligation"¹ and wrote that the religious minorities pay as a "tribute" the tax, which the "ruler of the Muslims" fixes, and that they must never do anything which is inconsistent with "the security" (established) by the governor of the Muslims such as fighting against the Islamic government, must not "in any way" bring distress upon Muslims, must not drink alcoholic beverages openly, must not eat pork in public places, must not build new temples, synagogues or churches other than those they already have, and must accept the enforcement of social, legal, criminal and economic decrees of Islam concerning themselves.

Mousavi Tabrizi added: "They must not commit adultery with Muslim women or enter into marriages with them under their own faith, nor should they lead Muslims astray from Islam by deceit or propaganda or conspiracy" and that "the judge and governor of the Muslims and Islamic government have the right to exile them or in case they resist to deal with them as infidel enemies² and to execute on them the judgement of an enemy (of God)."

In other words, the penalty for a Christian, who is a member of a religious minority who does anything which is "inconsistent with the security of Muslims" or "in any way brings distress upon Muslims"^{1,2} or builds or participates in a church which builds a new church, or who cannot, because of the beliefs and practices of Christianity, accept the "enforcement of social, legal, criminal and economic decrees of Islam concerning themselves" is execution as an enemy of God.^{1,2} ¹⁰

In more recent publications, Dr. Samuel Shahid, in his booklet The Rights of Non-Muslims in An Islamic State and his article, "Rights of Non-Muslims in an Islamic State," which appeared in the April, 1992, Reach Out describes the legal ordinances which must be "enforced on "Zimmis" or religious minorities, including Christians."¹¹

Reearrdine Religious Practices:

Christians are not allowed to build new churches, temples, or synagogues. They are allowed to renovate old churches or houses of worship provided they do not add any new construction. Muslims, if they wish, are permitted to demolish all non-Muslim houses of worship in any land they conquer.

Christians are not allowed to pray or read their sacred books out loud at home or in churches, lest Muslims hear their prayers.

Christians are not allowed to print their religious books or sell them in public places and markets.

Christians are not allowed to install the cross on their houses or churches since it is a symbol of infidelity.

"The Farsi term translated "obligation" is zameh. Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians are referred to as Ahl-e-zameh, that is the "people of obligation." They are also sometimes called "people of the book."

"There is the special tribute or tax which the Ahl-e-zameh were formerly required to pay to the Islamic ruler. There are indications that Iran expects to revive this levy.

"Those who are properly known as kafar, that is "infidel," are idolaters and pagans, whom it was always lawful to kill and destroy. The point here is that if the "people of the book," that is Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians, violate any of the restrictions laid down and persist or resist, they may also be treated as "enemies" who "fight against God" and may, therefore, be killed.

Christians are not permitted to broadcast or display their ceremonial religious rituals on radio or television or to publish any picture of their religious ceremonies in newspapers and magazines.

Christians are not allowed to congregate in the streets during their religious festivals; rather, each must quietly make his way to his church or temple.¹⁶

Regarding Civic Laws:

They must be punished in accordance with the Islamic law regardless of their religious affiliation. They are subject to Islamic laws in matters of civic business, financial transactions such as sales, leases, firms, establishment of companies, farms, securities, mortgages, and contracts. However, when it comes to privileges, the Christians do not enjoy the same treatment.¹⁷

Marriage and Children:

A Muslim man can marry a Christian girl, but a Christian man is not allowed to marry a Muslim girl.

If one parent is a Muslim, children must be raised as Muslims. If the father is a Christian, and his wife converts to Islam, she must get a divorce, then she will have the right of custody of her child. Some fundamentalist schools indicate that a Muslim husband has the right to confine his Christian wife to her home and restrain her from going to her own house of worship.¹⁸

Capital Punishment:

The Hanafites believe that both Christians and Muslims must suffer the same penalty for similar crimes. If a Muslim kills a Christian intentionally, he must be killed in return. The same applies to a Christian who kills a Muslim. But other schools of Law have different interpretations of Islamic law. The Shafi'ites declare that a Muslim who assassinates a Christian must not be killed, because it is not reasonable to equate a Muslim with a Polytheist (Mushrik.)¹⁹

The Witness of a Christian:

Christians cannot testify against Muslims. They can only testify against other Christians or non-Muslims. Their oaths are not considered valid in an Islamic court. According to the Shari'a law, a Christian is not even qualified to be under oath. Muraghi stated, "The testimony of a Zimmi (such as a Christian) is not accepted because Allah - may He be exalted - said: 'God will not let the infidels (kafars) have an upper hand over the believers'. "²⁰

Personal Law:

Christians are denied the right to appeal to an Islamic court in family matters, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The must appeal to their own courts. However, in the event that a Muslim judge agrees to take such a case, the court must apply Islamic law.²¹

Freedom of Expression:

Mawdudi emphasized that in an Islamic state, "all non-Muslims will have the freedom of conscience, opinion, expression, and association, as enjoyed by Muslims themselves, subject to the same limitations as are imposed by law on Muslims." However, through the course of history, except in rare cases, not

even Muslims have been given freedom to criticize Islam without being persecuted or sentenced to death. It is far less likely for a Christian to get away with criticizing Islam.¹⁰²

Relationships Between Muslims and Christians:

A Muslim is not allowed to: 1) emulate the Christian in their dress or behavior; 2) attend Christian festivals or support them in any way which may give them any power over Muslims; 3) lease his house or sell his land for the construction of a church, temple, liquor store, or anything that may benefit the Christian's faith; 4) work for Christians in any job that might promote their faith such as constructing a church; 5) make any endowment to churches or temples; 6) carry any vessel that contains wine, work in wine production, or transport pigs; 7) address Christians with any title such as "my master," or "my lord."

A Muslim is allowed to: 1) financially assist Christians, provided that the money is not used in violation of Islamic law; 2) give the rights of preemption (priority in buying property) to his Christian neighbor (the Hanbalites disapprove of this); 3) eat food prepared by Christians (People of the Book); 4) console Christians in an illness or in the loss of a loved one. It is also permissible for a Muslim to escort a funeral to the cemetery, but he has to walk in front of the coffin not behind it, and he must depart before the deceased is buried; 5) congratulate a Christian for a wedding, birth of a child, return from a long trip, or recovery from illness. However, Muslims are warned not to utter any word which may suggest approval of the Christian's faith such as "May Allah exalt you," "May Allah honor you," or "May Allah give your religion victory."¹⁰³

According to Sheikh Manna' K. Al-Qubian and Other Islamic Scholars:

In answer to the question, "is it permissible for a Muslim owner (of a company) to confer authorities on a Christian over other Muslims?" which appeared in the February 5, 1993 *Al-Muslim Weekly*, Sheikh Manna' K. Al-Qubian, professor of Higher Studies at the School of Islamic Law in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, wrote:

Basically, the command of non-Muslims over Muslims is not admissible, because God almighty said: "Allah will not give access to the infidels (i.e. Christians) to have authority over believers (Muslims)." [Qur'an 4:141] For God - Glory be to Him - has elevated Muslims to the highest rank (over all man) and foreordained to them the might, by virtue of the Qur'anic text in which god the Almighty said: "Might and strength be to Allah, the Prophet (Muhammad) and the believers (Muslims)" [Qur'an 63:8].

Thus the authority of [a] non-Muslim over [a] Muslim is incompatible with these two verses, since the Muslim has to submit to and obey whoever is in charge over him. The Muslim, therefore becomes inferior to him, and this should not be the case with the Muslim.¹⁰⁴

Dr. Salih Al-Sadlan, professor of Shari'a at the School of Islamic Law, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, cites the same verses and asserts that it is not permissible for an infidel, in this case a Christian, to be in charge over Muslims whether in the private or public sector. Such an act:

entails the humiliation of the Muslim and the exaltation of the infidel (Christian.) This infidel may exploit his position to humiliate and insult the Muslims who work under his administration. It is advisable to the company owner to fear god Almighty and to authorize only a Muslim over the Muslims. Also, the injunctions issued by the ruler, provide that an infidel should not be in charge when there is a Muslim available to assume the command.

Our advice to the company owner is to remove this infidel and to replace him with a Muslim.¹⁰

Dr. Fahd Al-'Usaymi, professor of Islamic studies at the Teachers' College in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia also replied that "it is not permissible for a Christian to be in charge of Muslims by the virtue of the general evidence which denote the superiority of the Muslim over others." Then he quoted the Qur'an chapter 63 verse 8 as written above and cited verse 22 of chapter 58: "Though wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last day, loving those who resist Allah and His Apostle (Muhammed), even though they were their fathers or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred."¹¹

Conclusion

Anyone concerned with human rights or religious liberty must not be lulled into believing that the persecution of Christians in Iran has eased. Although Western diplomats and "official visitors" may conclude that from official visits that the human rights situation has improved, their account does not represent the true picture. As stated by the 1996 U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1995, Iran,

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to be a major abuser of human rights. There was no evidence of improvement in 1995. . . . It continues to repress freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion. In March (1995) the UN Human Rights Commission extended for another year the mandate of its Special Representative on Human Rights in Iran. In August (1995), the UN's Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities approved a resolution condemning the "extensive and continuing human rights abuses" by the Government. . . . It denies the universality of human rights, conceals its abuses of human rights, and obstructs the activities of human rights monitors.

For economic reasons, the Iranian government is making an all out effort to demonstrate that human rights practices in Iran, particularly those regarding religious minorities, have improved in recent years. Most, if not all, of the "official visits" are staged, thus intentionally misleading diplomats and official visitors.

Furthermore, it has been a regular practice of the Islamic Republic of Iran to force the leaders of religious minority groups into making false statements regarding the human rights conditions of the religious minorities there. Based on recent reports received directly from Christians in Iran and fleeing refugees, ICI believes that this practice continues. Most Iranian Christians, including priests and pastors, have been intimidated into understating or denying to official visitors that persecution exists.

Finally, reports given directly to ICI, the UN Human Rights Commission and other human rights organizations, by individuals in Iran and the large number of refugees who continue to flee Iran, give overwhelming evidence of the persecution of Christians. It is believed that these reports represent only a fraction of the actual persecution of ethnic Evangelical Christians today. The reports demonstrate that persecution not only continues, but is also becoming more severe and widespread.

Moreover, ICI received reports from two people who attended Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr's and/or Rev. Mehdi Dibaj's funeral/burial services. These reports indicated that photographers took pictures of all of the 3,000-5000 people who attended the services; the people who reported this information were

put under surveillance by government authorities and received death threats until they fled Iran in fear for their lives. While ICI has received reports from only two of the 3,000-5,000 people, the probable persecution of the other 3,000-5,000 has gone unreported.

Perhaps persecution has lessened to a small extent for a few ethnic Armenian and Assyrian Christians—but it has not diminished for Iranian Evangelical Christians. The following questions should be asked:

Has the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- 1) opened all of the closed churches and allowed underground churches to reopen and worship in church buildings?
- 2) allowed Muslims and Muslim converts to attend church services and to conduct their worship services in Persian, the language of 99% of the people?
- 3) rescinded its order that "all non-Muslim shopkeepers must display a notice announcing their religious affiliation or that they serve 'non-Muslims'?"
- 4) given written permission to the Christian churches to evangelize Muslims, and to allow Muslims and Muslim converts to attend their worship services?
- 5) allowed churches to repair their existing facilities or build new ones?
- 6) reopened Christian bookstores and the Iran Bible Society; allowed the printing of Christian books and the Bible?
- 7) allowed Christians to broadcast or display their ceremonial religious rituals and religious festivals on radio and television, and to congregate in the streets during their religious festivals?
- 8) made changes in the Justice System so that Muslims and Christians receive the same punishment for crimes?
- 9) returned all property confiscated from Christians to them or their families?
- 10) allowed Christians in the military and the public sector to hold positions over Muslims?
- 11) opened all closed Christian schools; appointed Christians as principals and teachers; allowed Christians to write their own textbooks; discontinued forcing Christians to study Islam in school; allowed Christians to attend college based on their academic merit, not their "commitment to Islam?"
- 12) punished Muslims for refusing to rent or sell property to Christians?
- 13) halted the arrest, imprisonment and torture of Christians?

If the answer to these questions is "yes," one can conclude that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran no longer persecutes the Christian minority in Iran. If these questions can not be answered with a definite "yes," the persecution of Christians by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran continues.

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