

secret Iranian government document signed by Ayatollah Khamenei in 1991 and published by the United Nations in 1993.

International Response

Since 1985, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted resolutions critical of Iran's human rights abuses. These resolutions have made specific mention of the situation of the Bahá'is in Iran, and in 1997 and 1998 called for the implementation of the recommendations made by Special Rapporteur with respect to the restoration of the rights of the Bahá'is in Iran leading to the full emancipation of the Bahá'is and other religious minorities in that country. Special Representative Maurice Copithorne in his most recent report to the United Nations, while noting some improvements in some human rights areas, commented that the situation of the Bahá'is in Iran had not improved, and perhaps it had worsened.

With the attention of the International Community increasingly focused on areas where there has been some improvement in the human rights situation in Iran, there is the risk that its commitment to continue bring forward and support an Iran Resolution and to call upon that country to implement Professor Amor's recommendations may weaken.

Canada's Actions

Canada was the first country in the world to draw attention to the severe persecutions suffered by the Bahá'í Community of Iran when, in June 1981, the House of Commons of the federal government passed a strongly worded resolution condemning the persecution occurring in Iran under the Islamic Revolution.

Canada's Department of Immigration led the world in admitting and resettling Bahá'í refugees who were able to escape from Iran during the early years of the Islamic Revolution. Several other countries followed Canada's lead, and together they welcomed more than 10,000 Bahá'is from Iran.

Over the past several years the Canadian Government, through its Department of Foreign Affairs, has been an outspoken defender of the human rights of the Bahá'is of Iran, voting for strong resolutions both at the General Assembly of the United Nations and at the annual sessions of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, often drawing attention to the plight of the Bahá'is in verbal statements. On October 7th, 1998, Members of Parliament unanimously adopted an all-party motion calling upon the "government of Iran to end their oppression of the Bahá'í community". This action, following quickly on the heels of press releases from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy calling for an "end to Iran's oppression of the Bahá'is" demonstrated, once again, Canada's moral leadership.

Partnership

Bahá'í communities around the world have made efforts to provide accurate and timely information to their respective governments and to international agencies to assist them in their responsibility to implement, monitor and bring about State compliance with universal human rights standards - including the right to freedom of religion and belief.