

December 1994

## THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

### ISSUE

The human rights situation in Iran remains a matter of serious concern to the Canadian Government as well as to the rest of the international community.

### BACKGROUND

Iranians enjoyed the democratic features of parliamentary elections in 1992, of presidential elections in 1993, and benefit from a reasonably functional parliament. However, in the field of human rights, in spite of perceived improvement some years ago, this movement came to a halt with the expulsion of members of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1992 and Iran's refusal to allow the UN Special Representative, Mr. Reynaldo Galhindo Pohl, to return to Iran.

In 1994, serious violations of human rights in Iran were again reported. Areas of special concern continue to be: lack of respect for due process of law; detention without charge and notification to next of kin; ill-treatment and torture of detainees; *in camera* trials; lack of defence counsel in trials before revolutionary courts and lack of right of appeal. The death sentence is widely applied (especially for smuggling drugs and for ordinary offenses) and summary, extra-judicial, executions still take place. The international community also expressed its concerns with regard to the assassination of Iranian political opponents in Europe.

Moreover, problems concerning religious minorities have increased. In spite of Iran's disinclination to discriminate on ethnic grounds — refuge has been granted to some 4 to 5 million refugees from the Afghan, the southern Iraqi and the Azeri-Armenian conflicts — and of apparent improvements in 1993, there is continued ground for serious concern about the treatment of the Baha'is and death sentences served against members of that group. In addition, several leaders of Christian groups were killed in circumstances which have not yet been satisfactorily investigated by the Iranian authorities. Furthermore, in March, a 78 year old Iranian Jew was executed in public, bringing to 13 the number of Iranian Jews executed since 1979, half of them for contacts with Israel. This public execution took place few days after the massacre of Hebron.

The punishment to which women are subject for dress code violations and other discriminatory treatment based on gender are also sources of concern.

As in 1993, the Iranian authorities have reiterated in 1994 their apparent desire to enter into a dialogue with Western countries, including Canada. Their officials renewed contacts in various capitals, including those of the European Union but no significant development resulted from these contacts. In November, the authorities invited the press to visit one of