

within and without

subsidized surplus agricultural products to Iran until the Iranian authorities call a halt to the persecution.

But this demand, while boisterous, is powerless in action as the European Parliament does not wield that kind of power. As a result the Baha'is in Iran are being persecuted with increasing vehemence because they are seen as the cause of international bad press — they must have imperialist connections — and there is very little the international Baha'i community can do about it.

The history of the Baha'i faith has been marked by persecution and martyrdom since its founding in 1863. The advent of the Ayatollah's regime has simply provided a new license for the Shi'ite theocracy to vent their animosity against the Baha'is. The history begins in 1844 when a merchant from Shiraz, the Bab, claimed to be the twelfth and missing Imam who the Koran prophesies will return before the end of days to save the world. The Bab, while claiming this mantle, prophesied that He Whom God Shall Make Manifest would soon appear to usher in a new age. This mantle was claimed by Baha'u'llah in 1863.

Baha'u'llah taught that he was the latest prophet to appear in a progressively revealed religion which is common to all mankind and that his message, as it were, was the imperative need for the modern world to unite economically, culturally, and in a common religion. It is the last of these unities, the unity of religions, that instills the fanatical rejection and persecution of the Baha'is by Muslims who base Muhammad's authority on his being the last of the prophets.

The Baha'is have no recourse in international law and together with their principle of non-involvement in politics seems to deny the possibility of saving the Baha'is in Iran. But while nothing can be done to save the Baha'is, it is perhaps not the Baha'is in

particular that really count. What counts is the atrocities now occurring in Iran are possible and can be perpetrated with impunity by any fanatical group or regime with a mind to do so.

The Baha'is could, though, provide the issue on which other countries could pressure Iran to conform to the standards of civility which are tacitly held by all international actors. Although they find it hard to put into words or actions, all international actors want international order and are

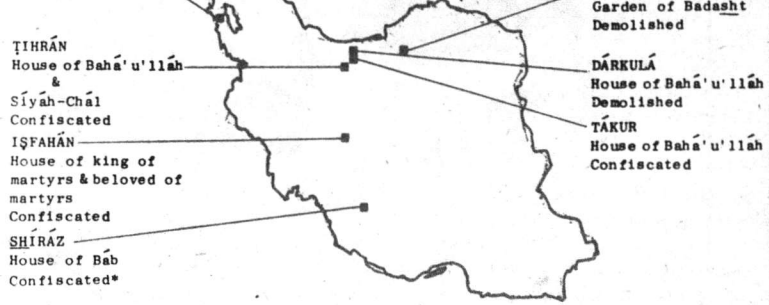
terrified by the precedent which Iran's disregard for international conventions (diplomatic immunity and human rights as examples) could set for the ill-defined and generally precarious international order of today.

The Baha'i situation ought to, and may very well, inspire and facilitate some action to save not only the Baha'is but more importantly the order, however shaky it may be, that has been achieved in international relations.



Bahá'í Holy Places confiscated or destroyed

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RIDÁ'ÍYYIH
Upper room where the Bab stayed
Confiscated



*demolished September 1979

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