

Baha'i Protest Hits Arab Religious Persecution

The Baha'i International Community, a non-governmental organization accredited to the United Nations, has appealed to the United Nations for help in stopping the persecution of the members of the Baha'i religion in Morocco.

A telegram has been sent to United Nations Secretary-General U Thant, urging him to explore the recent Moroccan Government's court case against 14 Baha'is. The case was concluded on December 17, and three of the defendants were sentenced to death, five others were sentenced to life imprisonment and another faces a term of 14 years imprisonment at hard labor. The other defendants were acquitted.

The Baha'i International Community states that the charges leveled against the Baha'is at the December 10 trial in Nador, Morocco were unfounded.

The Moroccan Government claims that the defendants were conspiring against the Government by winning converts to the Baha'i World Faith among the Moslem populous. The charges also included the accusation that the Baha'is are part of a political plot to overthrow the Government, and that they attacked Islam (Morocco is a Moslem church state).

SHUNS POLITICS

"The Baha'i World Faith is a religion of peace. It shuns all things political," H. B. Kavelin, chairman of the Baha'i International Community states. "In fact one of our basic tenets is strict observance of the laws of all just governments. A Baha'i would be unfaithful to his religion if he worked against his

country's interests or engaged in any subversive act." Mr. Kavelin adds: "Baha'is live in 258 countries, territories and dependencies throughout the world and strive to contribute to the welfare and peace of their countries."

"The Baha'is all over the world are stunned and grieved over this miscarriage of justice by the Moroccan court that tried and sentenced our coreligionists; that persons should be persecuted, worse still, put to death for practicing their religion is in this day of enlightenment, a set back to mankind's quest for individual justice," Mr. Kavelin said.

He also said: "Baha'is everywhere appeal to King Hassan of Morocco, a just Sovereign, to reverse the unjust court decision against our Baha'i brothers."

CITES GENOCIDE CLAUSE

The Baha'i International Community bases its appeal to the United Nations on Articles II, IV and VIII of the Convention of Genocide, to which the Moroccan Government is a signatory.

Article II states: "In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such:

(a) killing members of the

group;

- (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part. . . ."

Article IV states: "persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article III shall be punished whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals."

Article VIII states: "any contracting party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such actions under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article III."