

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 4, 2000

file Iranian Jews

MEETING WITH FAMILIES OF IRANIAN JEWISH PRISONERS

DATE: July 5, 2000
TIME: 11:00 AM
LOCATION: Cabinet Room
FROM: Mary Beth Cahill
Maureen Shea

PURPOSE

To meet with American relatives of the Jewish prisoners convicted in Iran on Saturday.

BACKGROUND

Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, requested this meeting to highlight the situation of the Jews tried for espionage in Iran. We have expanded the list to include Abe Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League and David Harris of the American Jewish Committee, both of whom have been very active on this issue. We also invited the three Iranian Jews you spoke with in Los Angeles but they were not able to attend. Elie Wiesel has also been invited but his attendance has not been confirmed.

The families in this meeting are related to three of the prisoners.

- Javid Beityaccob who received a 9-year sentence.
- Nasser Levihaime, 50, a civil servant, told the court he agreed to cooperate with the Israelis for "ideological reasons" and received an 11-year sentence.
- Asher Zedmehr, 54, an English teacher who was considered a "ringleader" and received a 13-year sentence.

On Saturday, the Iranian judge handed down the verdicts in the trial of the 13 Jews. Three were acquitted and the other ten received sentences of four to thirteen years. There were no death sentences, no life sentences, and no lashings.

The sentences were considerably lighter than we had feared. They almost certainly reflect political intervention by the reformists who heard our message and that of our allies that a negative verdict would have severe repercussions for Iran's relations with the international community. Our demarches to 42 different countries probably had some impact.

Nevertheless, the Jewish community, particularly the Iranian-Jewish community in Los Angeles was disappointed with the results. For reasons unknown, they had convinced themselves that a deal was in the works and all of the defendants would be released. Consequently, the verdicts on Saturday were something of a shock to them.

Your meeting serves two purposes:

- To assure the community we are firmly committed to seeing the 10 convicted receive justice. Along these lines, it will be important to hear their views of how to move forward during the appeals process in a way that helps, rather than hurts, those convicted.
- To determine how much of an impact this will have on our effort to begin a dialogue with the Iranian government.

You should avoid:

- Committing to reverse the modifications to the Iran sanctions that Secretary Albright announced on March 17 or agreeing to walk away from our commitment to dialogue.
- Offering your own judgment on the guilt of the accused or what the sentences should ultimately be. Instead, you should focus on the process and its weaknesses (defendants were not allowed to choose their own counsel, secret proceedings, evidence never made public, judge also served as prosecutor).
- Speaking only about these Iranian Jews – it will be useful to remind the participants that Bahai's, intellectuals, and others have suffered similar persecution.

PARTICIPANTS

The First Lady

Mary Beth Cahill

Samuel Berger

Families of prisoners and leadership of organizations active on their behalf

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- **YOU** will make informal remarks. In order to facilitate the discussion, **YOU** will call upon one family member to speak on behalf of each prisoner represented at the meeting. They will be seated directly across from **YOU**.

Nassin Javaherian for her brother Nasser Levihaime (11 years)

Ruben Beityakov for his brother Javid Beityaccob (9 years)

Shanin Baalness for her brother-in-law Asher Zedmehar (13 years)

PRESS – Photo of meeting for release

ATTACHMENTS

NSC Talking Points

List of participants

**ATTENDEES FOR IRANIAN JEWISH PRISONERS MEETING
JULY 5, 2000**

Ezatollah Delijani, President
Iranian American Jewish Federation

Abraham Foxman, National Director
Anti-Defamation League

David Harris, Executive Vice President
American Jewish Committee

Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman
Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

Dr. Heshmatollah Kerhanshhchi, Chairman
Iranian American Jewish Federation

Ronald Lauder, Chairman
Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

Hamid Sabi
Mr. Sabi is the main contact with the lawyers for the defendants. Now a British citizen, he is a Jewish Iranian lawyer and the closest to the case of all those attending.

Rabbi Reuben Khaver
Khaver is from Shiraz and came to the United States as a student in 1978. He has been working with the families and the State Department since the prisoners were first arrested.

Family of Nasser Levihaïm, sentenced to 11 years in prison:

Sister: Nassrin Javaherian
Brother: Shmuel Levihaïm

Family of Javid Beityaccob, sentenced to 9 years in prison and Asher Zedmehr, sentenced to 13 years in prison.

Nejat Beityaghoob is the brother-in-law of both Javid Beityaccob and Asher Zedmehr
Mahnaz Beityaghoob, the wife of Nejat, is the sister of Javid Beityaccob and the sister-in-law of Asher Zedmehr.

Ruben Beityakov is the brother of Javid Beityaccob and the brother-in-law of Asher Zedmehr.

Rahmat Baalness is the brother-in-law of Javid Beityaccob

Shahin Baalness, Rahmat's wife, is the sister of Javid Beityaccob and the sister-in-law of Asher Zedmehr. Another brother, Ruben Beityakov, is also in this meeting.

TALKING POINTS FOR MEETING WITH AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS
REGARDING VERDICT IN THE TRIAL OF THE 13 IRANIAN JEWS

- Remain very concerned about the 10 Iranian Jews convicted of espionage over the weekend.
- Obviously pleased that three were acquitted and none got death penalty or life sentences. However, this is just not good enough.
- Continue to believe that unjust accusations and an illegitimate trial should not be congratulated under any circumstances. There are still 10 men wrongly imprisoned.
- Our concern is same as yours: want them released as quickly as possible. Everything else is secondary.
- Already have begun the process of moving the international community to press Iran to rectify the verdicts in the appeals/clemency processes.
- Requested EU, Japan, other allies weigh-in with Tehran immediately. Will be asking every other country with whom we have diplomatic relations to do the same
- Secretary Albright has already called Foreign Ministers Fischer, Dini, Axworthy, Vedrine, and Cooke. All have pledged their continued support.
- Want to hear your thoughts about how to move forward from here.
- **(If Elie Wiesel is present and only if asked)** Am aware of your outstanding request for a meeting on the persecution of Christians and animists in Southern Sudan. Regret that we have not managed to schedule a meeting to date. Trying to schedule it now. **(If Wiesel raises bringing others:** I'd like to do a small meeting with you and key members of my Sudan team.)

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UNDER THE CHADOR

by CATHERINE O'NEILL December, 1997

(Report on visit to Iran and meetings with Iranian professionals, journalists, members of Parliament and those with senior government positions, as well as meetings with local officials and students in small villages. Report includes meetings with UNICEF and other UN officials and international diplomatic representatives based in Iran.)

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"Every time I talk to a foreign journalist they waste all their interview time talking about my clothes. We are working to change laws affecting women's status in Iran. The hajib (head scarf) is not our focus."

--- Founder and editor of Iranian magazine focusing on Women's rights.

" I am so happy she is here, I am fighting the tears of happiness in my eyes " --
Founder of National Association in Support of Children's Rights in Iran--speaking of
American visitor at the Seminar on Children's Rights.

"This may seem an odd thing to say, but Iran is enjoying a greater degree of democracy than it has ever had in its history." Senior UN diplomat in Iran.

Table of Contents

1. Brief Summary
2. Overview- including political climate and daily living environment
 - A. 100 Days- Political Victory Over Religious Conservatives
 - B. Conflict Between Religious Factions
 - C. Emerging From Relative Isolation
 - D. Street Life- Tehran
 - E. Public Debate- This is Not " Usual"
 - F. Open Disagreement
 - G. The US Connection- Strong At All Levels
 - H. Economic Situation-Troubled
 - I. Humanitarian Issues- Children- Prisons- Women-
 - J. Under the Chador-Building a Political Movement
 - K. Intellectual Freedom- Fatwa's- The Press
 - L. Host to World's Largest Refugee Population
3. Where do We Go From Here? Observations and Suggestions
4. Meetings held and brief biography of author

NOTE: This report is not meant to take into account military and security issues relating to Iran. It focuses on the humanitarian issues and possible areas of strength in our relatio

SUMMARY

I spent ten days in Iran at the Invitation of UNICEF. With another American woman, a noted physician, I attended a UNICEF sponsored Conference in Tehran which looked at issues affecting women and children. We were the only "foreign" guests at the seminar with the exception of UNICEF staff and representatives from embassies in Iran. The Seminar was attended by several hundred participants, primarily Iranian women, including representatives from Government and the Parliament. It was covered by Iranian journalists and featured debate, disagreement and dialogue about the way in which some of the laws of Iran might be changed to improve the lives of women and children.

We also travelled around the country and met with women and young girls in small villages. We were received in people's homes, we had meetings in professional offices and we discovered many commonalities in the concerns of women in Iran and women in the United States about the problems faced in raising children. We were struck consistently by the warmth with which we were received and by the strong ties that so many Iranians have to the U.S.--either family ties or because they were educated in the U.S.

The following report is my personal impression. It carries with it an awareness that Americans should not be deceived into thinking that because Iranian women are wearing the chador, they are necessarily or fundamentally different from American women. On the contrary, the uniform aspect of the chador, enables women from all backgrounds to work together in Iran to change laws--rather than diluting their strength and their energies into a discussion about clothes.

Time spent in Iran leads to the conclusion that Americans should seek out opportunities to invite Iranians to our professional meetings, our seminars and roundtable conferences and events. They await our invitation. We cannot make peace with this nation of 70 million people if we do not generate greater understanding among our own people.

Time in Iran leads also to the observation that the U.S. is isolated among its allies and among other major nations in not having a level of diplomatic relationship with Iran. It may be time for the U.S. to stop walking out on Iranians when they make speeches in UN forums, and join with our allies in looking for positive ways to enhance our relationship. The U.S. has diplomatic relationships with many nations with which we have serious divergences of views on many issues. It is time to re-evaluate whether 18 years after the hostage crisis, we should adjust an outworn international policy toward Iran.

OVERVIEW

100 Days of President Khatemi

I arrived in Iran at the time of the 100 day Anniversary of the inauguration of President Khatemi. He had won 70 % of the vote despite the fact that the "Leader" Ayatollah Khameni and most of the major clerics had endorsed his opponent, Mr. Noori, who now heads the Iranian Parliament. Even in the Holy City of Qum, where conservative seminary students have their base, the "moderate" Khatemi, had carried the day. Those in Tehran who oppose the government admit surprise that the Leader had released the embarrassing results of the election. Now the question among those who supported him is "Will Khatemi be free to govern in a more moderate manner?". This was the political background during my visit. The internal debate was being played out on the streets and in public meetings.

B. Conflict Between Religious Factions

"Think of an octopus when you think of power in Iran" Senior International observer.

"Moderate" religious leaders are saying that the "Leader" (Khameni) of the religious body politic in Iran is not necessarily the leader of the entire secular state. Some are also stressing the importance of returning to the basics of Islam, and ridding Islam of some of the practices which have developed but are not essential to the core belief and practice of Islam.

This was not happening without controversy. In Qum, it was reported that Ayatollah Montazeri, once the designated successor to Ayatollah Khomeini, now harshly criticized and under house arrest, has issued a proclamation questioning the right of the "Leader" to govern all aspects of life.

The conservatives responded by storming his house, and in parts of the countryside graffiti appeared on walls saying "Death to Montazeri". Young bands of men were seen marching through the main streets of Isfahan carrying banners condemning Montazeri.

At the same time, important Government ministers, members of Parliament and senior Government officials were appearing on a public platform with a mullah who suggests that some of the practices of Islam and laws of Iran should be changed and adapted to the needs of the times.

C. Emerging From Isolation

Iran, as I visited, seemed like a debutante preparing for her presentation.

Sixty heads of State are expected in Iran on Dec. 9th for the meeting of the Summit of Islamic States. Many of the leaders expected had not visited Iran since the revolution of 1979. Jordan's King Hussein or his brother was expected as well as Mubarak of Egypt, Mahatir of Malaysia and other leaders of most CIS states. The Saudi's, with no history of love lost with the Iranian's were sending a large delegation.

Smog choked Tehran has blocked every hotel room in the city for the arriving delegations. Crews were working around the clock to finish construction on some of the buildings to be used for the meetings. Iranian diplomats were meeting with representatives of Islamic nations as well as with European nations and Japan. The tone of all the announcements was one of looking forward to increased cooperation with Iran.

D. Street Life- Tehran

Shops are full, portraits of young men, "martyrs", who died in the war with Iraq are on every corner wall, men and women fill the streets, and little children (six year old girls with white head scarves and uniforms) come and go from school. In one week in Tehran, I did not see one woman who did not at a minimum wear a head scarf and a loose raincoat in public, often with a glimpse of denim jeans and sneakers underneath. Outside Tehran almost all women and many young girls wear the black chador. In Tehran, traffic is chaotic and old, smog-spewing cars fill streets which seem to have no lights for pedestrians to cross. At one point a chador clad woman, going out of her way took my arm, and guided me across a busy intersection, which I had given up hope of traversing.

Building cranes everywhere in North Tehran as more large "luxury" apartment houses are built. A subway is under construction. However, the infrastructure of this city of ten million needs investment. There is a certain slightly "tattered" quality to many of the larger hotels. Income for most Iranians has dropped and inflation is hurting their buying power. Restaurants in Tehran are patronized mostly by men, but one young Iranian woman told me that she and her friends preferred to eat at each other's houses, where they did not have to keep on their head scarves and coats while eating. I did join a group of Iranian women at a restaurant one evening, learned to smoke a water pipe, and enjoyed the music and food.

E. Public Debate- "This is not Usual"

I was one of two American women who had been invited to attend a UNICEF Seminar on the Rights of the Child. The meeting was organized by prominent Iranian professional women to illustrate ways in which Iran needed to change its laws or customary practices in order to conform to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child which Iran had signed. (Only two nations in the world, the U.S. and Somalia have not signed the Convention)

NOTE: There were no other foreign private citizens at this Conference. UNICEF had sent a representative from New York and embassies based in Iran (Britain, Sweden, Australia etc) had sent representatives to the opening session. The two U.S. visitors were given prominent seating and it seemed as though many of those attending were well aware of our presence.

One interesting aspect of this meeting, attended by several hundred women at a major Tehran hotel, was that it was co-sponsored by an "Unregistered NGO", one which had not received acknowledgement by the Iranian government. Yet a prominent mullah, a Government Minister, a Member of parliament and several representatives from various government ministries all spoke. The Iranian newspapers and TV covered the meeting which featured criticism from both men and women about some of the current practices in Iran relating to children.

F. Open Disagreement

There was open disagreement. Many of the speakers spoke against Iran's practice of considering a girl mature and eligible for marriage at the age of nine. They challenged Iran's custody laws which give the father custody of children at the time of divorce. They criticized Iranian

industries for hiring child labor and for not giving any of their enhanced profits from the children's low scale wages back to the community in the form of improved child care facilities. Women expressed concern about drug use among young people or their parents, about child abuse, about foster care, homeless street children and a host of other concerns. I was struck by the commonality of concerns shared by these women in Iran, and women throughout the U.S.

When some doctors disagreed with some of the government speakers, many in the audience clapped openly and loudly in support of the doctors. (In many ways it was not unlike an American town meeting). Some speakers from the government acknowledged the need to change laws and discussed how far to go at the present. Several also spoke of the desirability of having more meetings where the input of citizens could be part of the process of changing laws.

During the tea break one conference attendee told me meetings of this nature were not at all "usual". The Iranian papers fully reported all the proposals for change which had emerged from the Conference. Whether laws will change is not yet known. But it is clear that the new government, at least for this conference, was showing itself, to its own people, open to the kind of public give and take which had not previously taken root. It also demonstrates the important role the UN agencies, in this case, UNICEF, can play in international standard setting. UNICEF serves as an umbrella under which Iranians are able to fight for changes that will improve the lives of children.

G. The US Connection-Strong at all Levels-

"I like American people and appreciate their genuineness. The problems are with governments, not between our people. I want Americans to think the same way about us, to tolerate our different cultural practices and have mutual respect".-- A female member of the Iranian Parliament who had visited the US in the Spring of '97 for a Conference on Fertility.

It is astonishing how close so many Iranians both within and without the government feel toward the people of the United States. At every turn, in Tehran I met people who were educated in the United States, whose family members live in the United States or those who had recently worked or participated in conferences in the United States. Members of Iranian government bureaucracies would smile and say: "My uncle is in New Jersey"... "My whole family is in the U.S."... "I spent two years studying at Harvard and have many good friends there". The woman who started the Children's Rights group has a PhD from the University of Illinois and grown children in California.

The long term former Foreign Minister, Dr. Velayati, mentioned twice that he would like to see "regular contact" between Iranian professional medical groups and U.S. medical groups. He mentioned that eight American physicians attended a recent conference in Iran on pulmonary diseases. The former Health Minister who served two terms since the 1979 Revolution, said that between his two terms as Minister he had practiced medicine in Ohio.

In the rural areas, among young women who had never even been to Tehran, there was openness, curiosity and warmth in talking with American women. The wishes of the women about more contact with American women were always expressed as "Inshallah" (God willing). I realized that many women genuinely believe that women in the Western countries (U.S. and Europe) do not care as much for their families as women in Iran. Certainly more visits by Iranian women to the US would correct that misunderstanding.

Men in the bazaars were very open about hoping to see more Americans. One rug merchant in the bazaar in Isfahan proudly proclaimed that he lived in Knoxville, Tennessee. Another happily showed me Christiane Ammanpour's autograph and told me she spoke excellent Farsi.

One young man complemented me on my accent and when I asked about the compliment, I was told that I speak English with the same accent as on the Voice of America which he listened to regularly to improve his own English.

H. Economic Situation- Troubled

"We have no problem with our commercial relationship with Iran. In fact, it's highly profitable for us" -- Senior British diplomat based in Iran

"I can get any heavy machinery I need. Europe and Japan are happy to supply it. The U.S. economic embargo is not any problem at all to me. If I need a U.S. product, I buy it from a supplier in another country." -- a British educated Iranian factory owner in Tehran

"The middle class has become poor" -- a UN diplomat.

The economic situation is not good. Many believe that the election results were based on a solid desire for improvement in the economic picture.

Inflation has shrunk people's buying power and Iran's primary exports, oil, carpets and agricultural products are limited as a basis for a successful 21st century economy. However, literacy is very high, there is a highly educated professional class, and there are vast relatively untapped gas reserves in Iran. Efforts are underway to develop those resources and refine oil from the Caspian sea. Many believe that Iran's gas will be the future fuel for Europe.

Officials of international financial organizations expect more privatization of government controlled assets (eg hotels, insurance companies, banks etc.) and more transparency in their operations. There is belief that there has been some cronyism and corruption. The "bonyads", government foundations, control about 40% of the economy with little accountability. That too, is expected to undergo some change. The pace of future economic change is still under internal debate.

Gasoline prices are VERY low (about 20 cents a gallon). The government is considering increasing gas prices--and government revenues to increase some government services. There are two rates for conversion of the rupiah with the street rate 50% higher than the Government rate. There is a "gray market" in the economy with people augmenting their official jobs with additional sources of income in order to make ends meet.

The government has electrified almost all the villages, but faces a serious challenge in keeping Iran's young population from swamping the cities, which are sprawling and developing significant pockets of poverty. There is also the challenge of finding jobs for the many young people who are finishing their education. At the same time Iran continues to suffer a brain drain, as some of the educated class who have stayed in their country all these years, are deciding that change may not be as imminent as they hoped -- so they leave.

There is an inefficient tax collection system, with many people believing they should not have to pay tax. At the same time, there appears to be an excitement in the air, a hope that things might be changing for the better as more international economic partnerships get underway.

I. Humanitarian Issues

"Even during the war with Iraq, Iran never cut its expenditures on behalf of children." -- UNICEF official

Iran has a nationwide program for immunization and health care of its children. This was put into place after the Revolution of 1979. However, there is significant malnutrition among young children, and a belief that part of the problem is with education of the parents.

Women have access to health care and contraceptives are widely available. The birth rate is going down. Abortion is prohibited in Iran. Schooling among girls has increased exponentially in the last 20 years. There are laws against child labor, but they are ignored by some companies and families who need the money. Micro-enterprise lending is available to women for economic pursuits. While I was in Iran, there was an announcement of an upcoming UNDP supported meeting where the President's wife and the wife of the UN Secretary General, Nanne Anan, would preside at a Conference on lending to women. (As Hillary Clinton has done around the world)

Prisons- There are no international inspectors of Iran's prisons...and there are rumors that "certain people" are in prison. When I was there, some thought that an editor of the Iran News Service was in prison. Others speculated he was in England. There is no prison access by the international community, and stories about prison brutality and injustice circulate widely. There is also concern that there are children in prison with their parents because there is no one else in their family to care for them. UNICEF was consulted, during my visit, about proposals that might benefit the children of adults who were in prison.

Feeling 'Watched"-- People feel that "they " are watching . They are unsure about the consistency of the enforcement of regulations, and they are not sure who to " trust". The President, Khatemi, spoke of the need for a lawful society in his 100 day address. Some moderates thought he might attempt to put a tighter stricture on the Basiji, the young Islamic guards who are on the lookout for " violators".

Women Lawmakers-There are 13 women in the Parliament of 270 members. I was told that even though the women are in two different factions, they work together on laws affecting women. They have pushed through legislation to increase the amount of money a man must pay a woman at the time of divorce and they amended the pension retirement laws so that women only have to work 20 years to receive the same pension benefits as a man who works 30 years. A female legislator told me that although there are only a few women in Parliament, those that won had large victory margins. Now, she noted, many of the men are eager to support the women's proposals to gain favor with their women voters at home. She believed that women won because they are seen as more "peaceful". Women are not judges in courts,(as they were pre-revolution) but legislation recently passed requires Family Court judges to confer with a female counsellor on family issues before the court.

J. Under the Chador--Building a Political Movement

" Despite the Hajib(covering) women today in Iran are more active than in previous regimes.. The clothing has not stopped them. To the contrary it has allowed many families to be more agreeable to women being active in the outside world-- because they are wearing the hajib."-- Leading Iranian woman fighting for legal changes on behalf of Women.

"There are more women participating actively in high level government meetings here than in many countries in the region which are deemed more progressive".-- Senior International Official.

It became clear to me during my time in Iran,(despite the fact that I disliked having to eat my breakfast sitting in my headscarf and raincoat) that the universality of the women's public garb is one way of developing issues around which all the women can unite. There is no symbolic

difference in the public dress of the city ladies and the country ladies. Fighting over clothes at this time would absorb energies that women's leaders want to conserve for profound changes in the law--and with broad support from women in all areas. Extremely well educated, sophisticated and important women in Tehran made absolutely sure that in a public setting--pushing for changes in the law-- they were dressed as conservatively as any deeply religious woman in the heart of the countryside. They were not going to let their dress be used as an issue to divide the women of Iran and sabotage their goal of legal change.

However, many Iranian women and young people would undoubtedly throw off the cumbersome coverings, if given an option.

K. Intellectual Freedom

Fatwas- In visiting Tehran, I explained to a group of people that many in the U.S. , especially those in the writing and intellectual and human rights community were upset about the failure of Iran to withdraw the "Fatwa" in the form of a death sentence against Salmon Rushdie for his book " Satanic Verses". I was told that there was a discussion underway by some in Iran that when an Ayatollah who had issued a fatwa died, (as in the case of Khomeini) the fatwas he had issued were no longer considered operative. However, this is only in the discussion stage. It does however relate to the comment I often heard from both religious and political moderates that Islam in Iran had to be stripped back to its essential component as found in the Koran, and extraneous practices stripped away.

The Press- There is more freedom of the press in Iran than in many countries in the world. There are many papers and they represent many religious and political biases. The Women's Magazine -Zanem_ had a recent cover of a woman with tape being stripped away from her mouth and a cover headline " Political Rights of Women In Iran".

That said, it is not freedom of the press , or of expression, as we know it. Editors self-censor to be sure they do not go over an unseen line. There are no international publications available at Tehran's best hotels. Satellite dishes are banned although they do exist in Tehran. The same can be said of videos of foreign films. Women are not even allowed to sing on records. In a small village library, several young girls had been organized to show us the usage of the library. They sat dutifully reading religious books, and the local library selection seemed somewhat narrowly focused on religious reading. It also contained large photos of the local village martyrs who died fighting Iraq. There was a publication extolling each of the young men and their commitment to Islam.

We did visit an Christian Armenian Church in Isfahan, with beautifully preserved paintings from the New Testament of the crucifixion. We were told that there were 11,000 Christians in that city who practiced their religion at a variety of churches. We did not investigate whether your religious beliefs kept you from actively participating in government, although we were told that several seats in Parliament are reserved for recognized religious "minorities". As is currently controversial in Russia, the Iranian Government only recognizes certain minority religions--- Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians .

The people at the Conference I attended repeatedly said that the Iranian press covered up stories of problems in society that they thought should be getting more attention . They believed that with press focus, the public could be mobilized in support of solutions. Drug abuse was used as one of the example.

L. Hosting Two Million Refugees

Today Iran hosts over two million refugees. The UNHCR provides 15 million dollars to Iran to cover the costs associated with this vast population. This is one of the lowest per capita assistance supports received by any refugee hosting country in the world. It contrasts sharply with the generosity shown to Pakistan for hosting Afghan refugees. Over one million refugees are from Afghanistan and over a half million are escapees from Iraq. In Iran the vast majority of refugees are not confined to camps. As the economic picture in Iran dims, and unemployment rises, the refugees are at risk of becoming scapegoats, since they tend to take the lowest paying jobs on the spectrum. However, at this time, the refugee children are attending public schools, supported by the Government of Iran and refugees have moved into already crowded cities.

The refugees have brought with them a willingness to work for low wages - and they have brought disease. Iran which had been malaria-free has seen an upsurge in malaria. The caseload at a hospital for pulmonary disorders in Tehran has 40% of its beds occupied by Afghans infected with tuberculosis. The UNHCR runs a Medical facility in Tehran with doctors who assess whether a refugee has a life threatening illness. Only in those cases, will UNHCR allocate funds for medical care. The budget does not allow more.

There are some small Afghan refugee-led groups in Tehran which are organizing to identify the gravest problems affecting vulnerable refugee populations of women headed households and children. They deserve every support (From UN and International agencies) as they do outreach to this long overlooked and underserved refugee group.

Going Home- It is thought that the Iraqi Kurds might soon be able to return. (300,000). They have been plagued by infighting among the Kurdish leadership.

There are 300,000 Iraqi Shias who fled from Saddam Hussein and are not believed likely to return in the near term. There is still not a Peace Agreement between Iran and Iraq governing the return of POWs and refugees following the war. The Afghan refugees face the prospect of a still war torn land, governed by Taliban forces which they do not believe will be sympathetic to the predominantly Shia Afghan population in Iran.

CHAPTER 3

Where Do We Go From Here? Observations and Recommendations

My overriding impression is that Iran wants to be perceived in the world as a "Normal" country, loyal to the principles of Islam, powerful in its region, with a great heritage and living in peace with its neighbors. It does not want to be a "pariah" state.

Yet, in some ways there is a struggle going on for the soul of Iran. It behooves the forces of stability and peace in the world to respect the desire of many Iranians for the "normalcy" they seek, and to not unwittingly provide fodder for the reactionary forces struggling to hold onto power in Iran.

1. Iran is a complex assemblage of power centers fighting for control. The moderates will not be able to wrest power away from the fundamentalist clerics without a struggle. The recent vote gives momentum to the moderates and puts the fundamentalists on the defensive. In that posture, they are always looking for ways to attack moderates for "selling out" the Revolution

RECOMMENDATION- Policy toward Iran should recognize the various factions and should adapt itself so that it does not inadvertently enhance the position of fundamentalist, regressive factions.

2. The U.S. is isolated in its separation from Iran. All other major countries in the world have diplomatic and commercial relations with Iran. As a government we maintain diplomatic relations with many governments who can be legitimately criticized for much more basic violations of democratic principles and women's and children's and human rights. It has been almost two decades since the hostage crisis. You can not make peace with an important nation of 70 million people if you do not allow your diplomats to talk to its people.

RECOMMENDATION- The US should look for opportunities in international forums to begin dialogue on areas of mutual concern and possible agreement with Iran-(eg- Environmental issues: refugee concerns, child labor issues etc.) Our current policy of standing up and walking out when Iranians speak at the UN should be ended.

3. Advantage should be taken of the interest and willingness of the people of Iran, both inside and outside the government to engage with American people. At every turn, I talked to Iranian people who would welcome an invitation from groups in the U.S. to talk about issues of mutual interest. There could also be an increase in contributions to professional journals, as was suggested during my visit.

RECOMMENDATION_ A range of groups in the U.S. -- legal, medical, educational, religious, environmental, women's, business, academic, press associations, etc. -- should invite people from Iran to attend their conferences and to speak on their programs. The U.S. Government should make it possible for Iranians to attend such meetings. Better understanding and respect can only improve the relationship. Groups will find they have much more in common than they might imagine.

4. Much of the Iranian economy operates under a shield of government-controlled foundations called Bonyads. They have little accountability. However, Iran is interested in support from the World Bank and other international financial institutions. No other major U.S. ally would oppose World Bank lending to Iran. The terms of the World Bank lending would normally require much greater transparency about government financial operations than has currently been available.

RECOMMENDATION- The U.S. can achieve some of its diplomatic goals with Iran by deciding not to oppose some World Bank lending programs.

5. United Nations programs are a very important factor in Iran. They set international standards on a whole range of subjects: Health, Literacy, Rights of Girls and Women, Refugees, etc. Iran appears amenable to demonstrating that it is abiding by international conventions. The conference I attended where there was such openness of discussion was prompted by a desire to review what needed to be changed to be in compliance with the UNICEF-implemented Convention on the Rights of the Child.

While I was in Iran, it signed the International Convention Against Chemical Weapons. As an American it was embarrassing that our country is one of only two in the world which has not approved the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, when it is evident that the norms it sets can be used to better opportunities for children around the globe.

RECOMMENDATION - The UN programs for Iran that help bring Iran into compliance with international norms for humanitarian, health, economic and environmental standards should be adequately financially supported. They are improving the lives of Iranians.

In addition, Medcins Sans Frontieres is one of the few international voluntary agencies working in Iran. If opportunities develop for other International NGO's to work with the UN and Iranian NGO's on humanitarian issues, those opportunities should be pursued.

MEETINGS HELD IN IRAN

International Meetings

UNICEF_ Country Director and Officers-
UNDP- Country Director and Officer
UNHCR- Country Director and Officers
World Bank- Director Middle East region
Representative from the Australian Embassy
Representative from the British Embassy

Meetings and Conversations with Iranians (partial list)

Member of Iranian Parliament and Chair - Committee on Children
President- Women's Solidarity Association of Iran
Former Foreign Minister and Chair, Research Institute on Pulmonary Disorders
President - Iranian Psychologists Association
Founder- National Association in Support of the Rights of Children in Iran
Editor- Magazine on Women's Rights
Attorney, Working to Change Iran's Custody Laws
Female- Former candidate for President of Iran- refused credentials
Business Owner- Exporter of light industry products
Local Village officials and Education Officials- Isfahan Province
Vocational teachers, and librarians - Village in Isfahan province
Many doctors, (male and female), business consultants , columnist and publisher of opinion
Journal
Members of Iranian Bureaucracies -Foreign Policy, Welfare, Education, Health

BIOGRAPHY

Catherine O'Neill is the founder of the Womens Commission for Women and Children Refugees and the recipient of honors for her humanitarian leadership. She holds Graduate Degrees in International Relations and Social Welfare. She has travelled widely assessing humanitarian issues .She has written numerous articles and columns for the Los Angeles Times and for the International Herald Tribune and the Washington Post. Ms. O'Neill has held executive positions with the International Monetary Fund, the Foreign Policy Association and the Atlantic Institute for International Affairs. She serves on the Board of Directors of several humanitarian organizations.

EXCERPTS OF SELECTED NEWS HEADLINES Iranian Newspapers-November, 1997

Kazakhstan to Export Oil via Iran- Agreement to be Signed at OIC Summit

President of Turkmenistan Looks Forward to Broadening Present Relations with Iran--To Expand Co-operation in Oil and Gas Fields

Russia's Gazprom to Carry out Commitment to Iran's Gas Field

Iran to Announce Export Proposal for Caspian Oil

Italy and Iran have 2.6 billion dollars in Trade . Italy for Broadening Relations with Iran

Iran and Australia Football Match to be Shown on TV Throughout Europe

Iran and Yemen have decided to Upgrade Economic Ties

Japan Keen to Expand Ties With Iran. Iran is Japan's Third Largest Energy supplier.

Egypt and Iran to Cooperate in Medicine Production

Malaysia's Prime Minister to Attend Tehran Summit

Iran and Yemen have decided to Upgrade Economic Ties

"Environment Issues Are Not Marginal" (said Iran's First Woman Vice President)"Whenever we talk about development policies, we should consider the impact they have on the environment".

Bulgarian Foreign Minister calls for Further Expansion of Bi-Lateral Cooperation with Iran.

Ukrainian Legislative Leader Calls for Cooperation between the Parliaments of Iran and Ukraine in Fighting Drug Offenses.

Iran Blasts Luxor Massacre as Inhuman Act "Phenomenon of Terrorism and Killing Innocent People is a Base Act which should be Condemned".

Islamists Hold First Public Meeting in Morocco

Kinkel(German Foreign Minister) Wants to Resurrect Critical Dialogue with Iran."The new government of Iran has extended a hand to us and after prolonged reflection, we are willing to take it".

US Academic Calls for Dialogue With Iran

Syrian Foreign Minister says Iran- Syria Ties Will Produce Good Results for the Arabs and Islamic Countries as a Whole.

Anti- Iran sanctions Slammed at London Conference

Iran Building Bridges to Persian Gulf Arabs

Iran- Azerbaijan Seek to Expand Ties

file Iranian
Jews

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July 5, 2000, Wednesday

SECTION: International news

LENGTH: 496 words

HEADLINE: Hardline Iranian daily calls for death penalty for Jews

DATELINE: TEHRAN, July 5

BODY:

Iran's hardline fundamentalist daily Jomhuri-Eslami called Wednesday for the death penalty for 10 Iranian Jews convicted of spying for Israel.

In an open letter to the heads of the Iranian judiciary, the paper said experience had shown that each time Iran failed to implement what is known in the Islamic regime as "the divine verdict" it had suffered harm.

It singled out for criticism a statement by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan supporting the Jews, who were sentenced Saturday to jail terms of between four and 13 years.

"This statement like those of leaders of other countries who have come out in favour of the members of the spy ring has no value and Iran must in now way show weakness," the daily said.

The 10 jailed were among 13 Jews tried for spying for Israel, of whom three were acquitted. Two Muslims were also convicted and sentenced to two years in jail, and two others were acquitted.

Lawyers for the convicted Jews have said they will appeal.

kd/mb

President Bill Clinton told US Jewish leaders Wednesday that he would work to win the release of 10 Iranian Jews, imprisoned on charges of spying for Israel, the community leaders said after a White House meeting.

Clinton said he would "try to mobilize leaders in Europe, Russia, Japan and other countries that have closer ties with Iran to work together with the United States to secure the release of these innocent people," said Malcolm Hoenlein, of the Conference of Presidents of major American Jewish organizations.

Clinton met at the White House for about one hour with relatives of the jailed Iranian Jews and with US Jewish leaders, including Hoenlein, Ronald Lauder, chairman of the Conference of Presidents; David Harris, the national executive director of the American Jewish Committee; and Abe Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

First Lady Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and national security adviser Samuel Berger also attended the meeting.

Hoenlein said the first lady asked many questions and that those at the meeting discussed the conditions of the prisoners, possibilities of appeal, and ways to ensure the security of the 27,000 Jews in Iran.

Relatives of the 10 imprisoned Jews told the Clintons that Iranian authorities harass the Jewish community, and that authorities had physically and psychologically tortured the prisoners until they confessed to spying for Israel.

"Their concern is that these people would not survive the kind of lengthy prison terms that some of them received," Hoenlein said.

The United States, Canada and a number of European countries have condemned Saturday's verdict, which saw 10 out of 13 Jews on trial sentenced to terms of between four and 13 years in jail.

Two Muslims were given two-year sentences, and three Jews and two other Muslims on trial were acquitted in the closed-door hearing by a revolutionary court in the Iranian city of Shiraz.

phd/gs/sba

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 5, 2000

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United Press International

July 5, 2000, Wednesday

SECTION: GENERAL NEWS

LENGTH: 649 words

HEADLINE: Clinton offers assistance to Iranian Jews

BYLINE: By PAUL SINGER

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, July 5

BODY:

President Clinton has promised to help secure the freedom of 10 Jews convicted of espionage in Iran last weekend, according to White House officials and Jewish leaders who met with the President Wednesday.

American and Iranian Jewish leaders came to the White House Wednesday to appeal to the president for help in the cases, which the leaders fear may lead to broader persecution of Iranian Jews.

After an hour-long meeting with President Clinton, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Jewish leaders told reporters the White House has promised to work with other nations to pressure Iran to overturn the convictions.

White House spokesman P.J. Crowley said Clinton, "pledged that he will do all he can to get the 10 convicted released from prison."

A revolutionary court in the southern city of Shiraz on Saturday sentenced 10 out of 13 Iranian Jews to between four and 13 years in prison for their activities in an alleged Israeli spy ring. The other three were acquitted. Two Muslims—a military officer and a defense contractor—were sentenced to two years in prison for collaboration, while another two were acquitted. Defense attorneys plan to appeal the sentences.

Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice-Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said the president "recognized and stated that all of the sentences were unjust." In addition, Clinton said "he would work and try to mobilize leaders in Europe, Russia, Japan and other countries that have closer ties with Iran to work together with the United States to secure the release of these innocent people," according to Hoenlein.

Clinton issued a statement Saturday saying, "We call upon the government of Iran to remedy the failings of these procedures immediately and overturn these unjust sentences. We will continue to engage with other interested governments and organizations as part of our broader concern for the treatment of minority groups and human rights in Iran."

Immediately after the verdicts were announced, Manouchehr Elyasi, a Jewish former member of the Iranian Parliament, termed the verdicts "grave." Elyasi, without giving reasons in support of his belief that the case was not of "espionage" nature, was quoted by the Persian daily IRAN as saying that he "still could not agree that they (the Jews convicted) are spies."

The ex-MP criticized the idea of calling the Jewish community a religious minority. "We are Jewish Iranians (rather than Iranian Jews)", Elyasi said.

The Jewish leaders who met with Clinton said they had made no specific request of the White House, but Hoenlein added that the United States "is the leader of the free world and as such has tremendous moral suasion."

"The United States can play a leading role in establishing the climate in which the appeals and the next steps in this process will take place," he said.

Jewish leaders in the United States have expressed concern that the trial has lead to broader persecution of the 27,000 Jews in Iran.

But Tehran's Jewish Society, in a strong statement Tuesday, blasted Israel and pledged loyalty to Iran's Islamic regime, Iranian media reported.

"We love our country because the Iranian Jews have their roots deep in Iran.... We continue to have faith in Iran's Judiciary and we are sure there will be reduced sentences in later phases of the process," said the statement, signed by the Society head Harun Yashayay and Jewish MP Maurice Motamed.

The Society, which represents virtually all of Tehran's 10,000 Jews, also accused Israel of trying to launch a campaign of "denigration against Iran to provoke a migration of (Iranian) Jews."

"The strategy was aimed at forcing Iran's Jews to share the same fate as the thousands of Ethiopian Jews who were airlifted to Israel in the 1980s but it was doomed to fail," the statement said.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 6, 2000

July 5, 2000; Wednesday

SECTION: Washington - general news

LENGTH: 302 words

HEADLINE: Clinton Discusses Iranian Jews

BYLINE: LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

American Jewish leaders explored with President Clinton on Wednesday how to pressure Iran to release 10 Jewish men sentenced to prison on espionage charges.

"This was an hourlong exploration of the facts; to talk about possible pressure points," said Malcolm I. Hoenlein, executive chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"The purpose was to declare to the world that the United States is determined to bring about the release of these innocent men."

Clinton did not appear before reporters after the meeting. Hoenlein said Clinton called the charges against the 10 Iranian-Jewish men unjust and the process used to convict them unfair.

Also attending the White House meeting were first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate in New York, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright,

Family members of three of the 10 convicted Iranian-Jewish prisoners also were present.

The 10 were sentenced to prison terms ranging from four to 13 years; Hoenlein said there is concern that the prisoners will not survive their sentences because of harsh prison conditions.

"The U.S. is the leader of the free world and does have some moral persuasion" to bring to bear, Hoenlein said. "The president is fully committed to doing that."

Saturday's verdict drew condemnation from Israel, which denied that the convicted men were spies, and from Clinton, who said he was "deeply disappointed" that Iran appeared to have treated the men unfairly.

The 10 men were sentenced by an Iranian judge who acted as both prosecutor and jury.

Hoenlein said earlier in the week that he thought international pressure may have helped avert death penalty sentences for the men and could have a positive effect on the appeals process.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 5, 2000

July 6, 2000, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A02

LENGTH: 592 words

HEADLINE: Clinton Sees Relatives Of Jailed Iranian Jews; Espionage Trial Faulted; Release of 10 Sought

BODY:

President Clinton met yesterday with relatives of three of the 10 Iranian Jews just sentenced to long prison terms for spying for Israel, and he told them the United States will do all it can to seek their release.

Clinton, his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and top U.S. officials spoke for an hour with some of the American relatives of three of those who were sentenced over the weekend, National Security Council spokesman P.J. Crowley said.

"The president did say he is fully committed to do all that he can to seek their release," Crowley said. "We will do what we can to mobilize our own efforts and those of other governments to put pressure on Iran to release these people."

In a case that alarmed the Western world, a Revolutionary Court in Shiraz, Iran, sentenced the 10 Iranian Jews on Saturday to between four and 13 years in prison for spying for Israel. It acquitted three others.

Clinton condemned the court's decision shortly after it was handed down, saying it was clear the Jews were not accorded due process of law and that the judicial proceedings were "seriously flawed."

The United States and many other nations have called on the Iranian government to overturn the sentences.

Jewish groups have said that the convicted Jews were innocent victims of fabricated charges.

Malcolm Hoenlein, vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said after meeting Clinton at the White House that he hopes the president's view will send a message to the world and give hope to the families of the sentenced Jews.

"The United States could play a leading role in establishing a climate in which the appeals and the next step of this process can take place," he said.

The lead defense lawyer at the hearing said on Saturday that he is confident the prison terms will be reduced on appeal.

Hoenlein, who spoke for the families who were concerned about releasing their names for fear of repercussions in Iran, said the eight family members who met with Clinton told the president of the hardships of imprisonment in Iran.

"[They spoke of] conditions of the imprisonment--they are held in solitary confinement. They have been held in solitary confinement for more than 17 months," he said. "They are allowed no visitors, except five minutes a week with members of their families where they are separated by glass partitions.

"They have been subjected in the past to physical torture and certainly psychological torture," he said, adding that while in court the men said the confessions they had signed were obtained under duress. "Their concern is these people will not survive the kind of lengthy prison terms that some of them received."

Hoenlein said the families talked about the "fear and the panic" in the Jewish community in Iran because of the trial.

With about 30,000 Jews, Iran is home to the largest Jewish community in the Muslim Middle East. Iran's constitution guarantees a Jewish representative in parliament and recognizes Jewish laws on personal status, including those on marriage, divorce, burial and inheritance.

The special parliamentary deputy for the community said in Iran over the weekend that Jewish emigration from the country has grown since the case began.

Crowley noted that pressure from the United States, and other countries with closer ties to Iran, had helped ensure that the Jews were not given death sentences. Some Iranian hard-liners had demanded that they be executed, alarming overseas Jewish groups and Western nations.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 06, 2000

AG: Iranian
jews

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

July 10, 2000

Dear Friends:

I join with you today in calling for release of the ten Iranian Jews imprisoned by the Iranian government.

My heart goes out to the prisoners and their families. As I have said before, the proceedings in which the ten Iranian Jews were convicted in Shiraz were unfair and outrageous. The trial leading up to these convictions did not meet the standards of international law.

As these convictions are appealed, the Iranian government can still end this miscarriage of justice and comply with the rule of law. I believe that all those committed to human rights must continue to speak out until these defendants, so wrongly convicted, are released. Iran should know that its actions are being closely watched here in the United States and around the world.

Sincerely yours,



Hillary Rodham Clinton

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1997

EDITORIALS/OPINION

Tough, Smart Women, Working to Better Iran

By Catherine O'Neill

TEHRAN — Somehow I had always felt that women who adopted the chador had shut me out. That black cloak seemed a way of saying: "Don't approach! My values are different."

A recent visit to Iran has proved how wrong I was. It also has taught me something about not imposing my values on tough, smart women who are working to make changes in their country.

At the invitation of Unicef, I went to Tehran to attend a conference on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The conference was organized by a group of Iranian women who want to change some of Iran's laws affecting children and women.

Almost no non-Iranians were present in the hotel ballroom as several hundred chador-clad women, and some men, discussed, debated and criticized aspects of Iran's laws.

One speaker criticized Iranian companies that profit from cheap child labor.

Another talked about the illogic of a 30-year-old woman professor's being unable to choose a spouse without the approval of a father or grandfather — while a 15-year-old boy needs no approval to get married.

Speakers noted Iran's effective village health care programs, universal immunization for children and the high percentage of girls and boys attending school.

But the speakers wanted more for Iran's children and women.

During breaks, women approached me to talk. They were doctors, lawyers, teachers, psychologists, professors, child education experts and mothers. We cared about the same things: drug abuse among young people, child custody issues, child abuse, juvenile delinquency, homeless children, foster care and child labor.

I thought about a Los Angeles Times article that I had read on the plane to Tehran. It was accompanied by photographs of California mothers injecting themselves with heroin while their children sat on their laps. Drunken and drugged fathers send their daughters to bed hungry because it is too "dangerous" for them to walk to a nearby soup kitchen for supper.

As I listened to the Iranian

women, I realized that we Americans have no reason to be smug about how we care for our children.

Another reason we cannot be smug is that the United States and Somalia are the only two countries in the world that have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In Iran, I also realized how the uniformity of the chador is a way of uniting women. There are no clothes to separate the sophisticated, educated urban elite from deeply religious rural women. All Iranian women, in public, are dressed the same.

In central Iran I had lunch with some young teachers and librarians from a village. They had been babies at the time of the Iranian revolution and had never been to Tehran. Two were engaged to be married and asked about wedding practices in the United States.

When they picked their husbands, they said, they had sought men with good religious values who would make a good living. They also said that men's looks were not so important because looks fade.

Schoolgirls in mosques asked to have their pictures taken with me.

In a gynecologist's office, where chador-clad women waited their turn, the woman doctor said she performed in-vitro fertilizations.

In a restaurant, a group of women encouraged me to try the water pipe.

My experiences in Iran should not be so rare for Americans. A new generation has arrived and almost two decades have passed since the hostage crisis of 1979-80. The United States is the only major power with no contact with Iran. But the Iranian people have given a signal: They voted in a new president against the recommendations of their religious leaders.

It's time for us in the United States to reach out to the 70 million children, men and women in Iran, who, I've found, have much in common with us.

The writer, who serves on the boards of several humanitarian organizations, visited Iran at the invitation of Unicef. She contributed this comment to the International Herald Tribune.