

Political objections to the Bahá'í Faith

Opponents of the Bahá'í Faith have accused the faith's followers of various political crimes, such as dual loyalty and being involved with foreign or hostile powers. These accusations (together with others with a more theological bent) are used to justify persecution of this religious minority^{[1][2]}

In support of government and clegy-led persecution of the Bahá'ís Iranian government officials and others have claimed that Bahá'ís have had ties to foreign powers, and were agents of Russian imperialism, British colonialism, American expansionism and Zionism, as well as being responsible for the policies of the previousShah of Iran.^[3]

These accusations against the Bahá'í have been disputed, and described as based on misconceived^[4] or exaggerated interpretations of historical fact.^{[5][6]} Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, taught that Bahá'ís are to be loyal to one's government, not be involved in politics, and to obey the laws of the country they reside in.^[7]

Contents

Historical context

Since the Iranian revolution

Russian and British ties

Russian ties

British ties

Bahá'ís and political activity in the Ottoman Empire

Bahá'í ties to Zionism

Bahá'ís as agents of the Shah's regime and its secret police

Bahá'í ties to Freemasonry

See also

Notes

References

Further reading

External links

Historical context

The Bahá'í Faith and its predecessor, the Bábí religion, originated in nineteenth century Persia, arousing considerable opposition, initially on purely theological and doctrinal grounds,^[8] it was seen as threat to established power and authority^[9]

In 1852, two years after the execution of the Báb, a fringe element in the Bábí community made an unskilled plot against the Shah, Nasser-al-Din Shah, in retaliation for the Báb's execution.^{[10][11][12]} While Bahá'u'lláh condemned the plan strongly, and renounced the movement's early anti-Qajar stance, on August 15, 1852 the radicalized Bábís attempted the assassination of the Shah and failed.^{[13][14]} Notwithstanding the assassins' claim that they were working alone, and that Bahá'u'lláh had not participated in the assassination attempt, the entire Bábí community was blamed, and a slaughter of several thousand Bábís followed.^[15] From that time Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar always remained suspicious of the Bábís and Baha'is and viewed them as agitators similar to the European anarchists.^[16]

The Shah of Iran and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, ‘Abdu’l-‘Aziz, successively exiled Bahá'u'lláh from Iran to Baghdad, Constantinople, and eventually to the fortress ofAcre for lifetime incarceration.^[17]

By the end of the 19th century, there was growing dissension within the Qajar state, and in an effort to draw public attention away from the government and instead toward the evils of the 'devious sect', charges of subversion and conspiracy against the Bábís and Bahá'ís increased.^[16]

In the early 20th century, the Bahá'ís were seen as being non-conformist in a society looking for unanimity and fearful of losing its perceived unique Shi'a culture due to threats from outside its boundaries.^[18] During the 1940s the clerical and governmental groups started stating that the religion was entirely manufactured by colonialists and imperialists to destroy the "unity of the Muslim nation" and that those who did not share the beliefs of the Muslim nation were agents of foreign powers.^[19]

By the 1960s critics of the Bahá'í Faith increasingly used charges of spying, and of connections to foreign powers rather than simply labelling Bahá'ís as heretics.^[20] These new charges helped define a new 'other' and reaffirmed a threatened Shi'i self.^[20] This new attitude towards the Bahá'ís was now not confined to the clerics, but was also rampant among the secular Iranian middle-class.^[20] In the 1970s accusations of Bahá'ís being numerous in the Shah's regime surfaced, as well as there being a perception that Bahá'ís were generally better off than the rest of the population.^[21]

Chehabi notes that while the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith mitigate against a preferential attachment of Bahá'ís to Iran, Iran is seen by Bahá'ís as the "Cradle of the Cause" to which it owes a degree of affection by Bahá'ís worldwide.^[21]

Since the founding of Israel, there have also been many accusations of Bahá'ís being associated with Zionism, largely on the grounds that the Bahá'í World Centre is located in current-day Israel, although this is an historic accident, rather than the result of deliberate action by the Baha'is.^[21] The Bahá'í World Centre has its historical origins in the area that was at the time part of Ottoman Syria. This dates back to the 1850s and 1860s and the repeated forced exiles of Baha'i leaders.

Since the Iranian revolution

After the overthrow of the Shah during the Iranian revolution, the Islamic regime targeted the Bahá'ís in Iran, since they held a deep hostility toward them as they saw them as infidels.^[22] As nationalism grew in Iran, Bahá'ís were viewed as unpatriotic and linked to foreign elements.^[23] During this time the Bahá'ís were accused of being anti-Islamic, agents of Zionism, friends of the Shah's regime, and being engaged with the US and British governments.^[23] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, both privately and publicly addressed the charges against them point by point, but received no response to their rebuttal.^[23]

In January 1980 with the election of President Bani Sadr and the continuing anti-Bahá'í sentiment, the Bahá'í Faith was officially described by the government as a political movement against the Iranian revolution and Islam.^[24] Before the revolution, Bani Sadr had connected the universal message of the Bahá'í Faith with Western colonialism.^[24] In February 1980, the Iranian ambassador to the United Nations stated that Bahá'ís were SAVAK agents and repeated the cleric's charges; only later when he broke with the regime in 1982 did he recant his previous statements.^[24]

By 1981, however, revolutionary courts no longer couched the execution of Bahá'ís with political terms, and they instead cited only religious reasons.^[1] Also documents were given out to Bahá'ís that if they would publicly embrace Islam, that their jobs, pensions and property would be reinstated. These documents were shown to the United Nations as evidence that the Iranian government was using the political accusations as a front to the real religious reason for the persecution of the Bahá'ís.^[1]

In 1983, Iran's prosecutor general once again stated that the Bahá'ís were not being persecuted because of their religious belief, but that instead they were spies, and that they were funnelling money outside the country.^[25] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, once again, addressed the issues raised by the prosecutor point by point; the letter was sent to various government agencies. The letter acknowledged that funds were being sent abroad as Bahá'í contributions to the shrines and holy places, but denied all other points, and asked for proof of the charges.^[25] No response was obtained from the government to this letter. The clerics continued to persecute the Bahá'ís and charged the Bahá'ís with "crimes against God" and Zionism.^[25]

In 1983 to a report to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations the official view of the Islamic Republic was published in a twenty-page document; the document stated that British encouraged the Bahá'í Faith in Iran, and that it was not a religion, but a political entity created by colonial powers, that there was a link between the Bahá'í Faith and Zionism and SAVAK. The United

Nations Human Rights Commission Sub-Commission Expert Mr. Eide stated that the publication provided by the Iranian government "recalled the publications disseminated in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, which had contributed to severe prejudice costing the lives of hundreds of thousands of peoples. The Sub-Commission should be on guard against any recurrence of such campaigns^[26]."

The Iranian government's statement was not accepted by the United Nations as the United Nations had received no evidence from the Iranian government regarding its claims.^{[27][28]} The representative from Germany stated that "the documents concerning the Bahá'ís showed that the latter were persecuted, not for criminal offences, but simply for their religious beliefs".^[29] The Iranian delegate dismissed the text of the Commission's resolution, and persecution of the Bahá'ís continued.^[30]

In 1991, the Iranian government again gave a statement to the United Nations stating that since the administrative centre of the Bahá'í Faith is located in Israel, it is directly controlled by Zionist forces,^[31] although the Bahá'í World Centre has its historical origins in the area that was once Ottoman Syria.^[17] In the late 1990s during Muhammad Khatami's presidency, the name-calling and outrageous accusations did not end, and with the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, the frequency and intensity of these accusations has increased.^[32]

Russian and British ties

During the 19th century, Britain had firm control over India; at the same time Russia had been expanding south and east into the Caucasus and Central Asia toward India, and a rivalry started between Britain and Russia over territorial and political control in Central Asia. The middle zone of land that was located between India and Russian holdings, included Persia, and was a highly coveted region, where both Russia and Britain worked to gain influence.^[33]

The support of the United Kingdom during the Constitutional Revolution, the Anglo-Russian convention which solidified boundaries that identified control between Britain and Russia in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet, the occupation of Iranian territory during the First World War by the UK, Russia and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the coup d'état of 1921 which was backed by the British, all encouraged the development of antagonism to these foreign powers.^[34] Muslim clerics and other anti-Bahá'í groups connected the Bahá'í Faith, and its predecessor the Bábí movement, to the external governments of Britain and Russia to project the mistrust of these two latter groups onto the Bahá'ís.^{[35][34]}

Russian ties

In God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi alludes to the protection the Russian ambassador gave Bahá'u'lláh on different occasions, first after the attempted assassination of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar and again after the decision to exile Bahá'u'lláh from Iran, expressing his "desire to take Bahá'u'lláh under the protection of his government, and offered to extend every facility for His removal to Russia."^{[36][37]} In his Súriy-i-Haykal, Bahá'u'lláh included the Lawh-i-Malik-i-Rús, praising Czar Alexander II of Russia in these terms: "when this Wronged One was sore-afflicted in prison, the minister of the highly esteemed government (of Russia)—may God, glorified and exalted be He, assist him!—exerted his utmost endeavor to compass My deliverance. Several times permission for My release was granted. Some of the 'ulamás of the city, however, would prevent it. Finally, My freedom was gained through the solicitude and the endeavor of His Excellency the Minister. ... His Imperial Majesty, the Most Great Emperor—may God, exalted and glorified be He, assist him!—extended to Me for the sake of God his protection—a protection which has excited the envy and enmity of the foolish ones of the earth."^[37] When Bahá'u'lláh and his family traveled from Iran to Baghdad subsequent to his exile in 1853, they were accompanied by a representative of the Russian legation.^[38]

Opponents of the faith base much of their amplification and exaggeration of these "ties" on a document, allegedly a "memoir" of Dolgorukov (also known as Dolgoruki), who was the Russian ambassador to Persia from 1846 to 1854.^{[35][39][40]} The memoir states that Dolgorukov created the Bábí and Bahá'í religions so as to weaken Iran and Shi'a Islam.^[35] The document was first published in 1943 in Persian in Mashhad, and shortly thereafter published again in Tehran with some of the most glaring errors corrected. The book still, however, contains so many historical errors that it is inconceivable that it is genuine.^[39]

The memoir states that Dolgorukov used to attend gatherings of Hakím Ahmad Gílání, where he would meet Bahá'u'lláh. However, Gílání died in 1835, three years before Dolgorukov's arrival in the Persia. There are numerous other errors relating to the dates and times of events that the memoir describes; the memoir describes events after the death of personages, or when the people involved were young children, or when they were in different parts of the world.^[39]

Dolgorukov actually only became aware of the Bábí movement in 1847, three years after it started, and his dispatches show that he was initially afraid of the movement spreading into the Caucasus, and asked that the Báb be moved away from the Russian border.^{[39][40]} In 1852, after a failed assassination attempt against the Shah for which the entire Bábí community was blamed, many Bábís, including Bahá'u'lláh, who had no role in the attempt and later severely condemned it, were arrested in a sweep.^[41] When Bahá'u'lláh was jailed by the Shah, his family went to Mírzá Majid Ahi who was married to a sister of Bahá'u'lláh,^[42] and was working as the secretary to the Russian Legation in Tehran. Bahá'u'lláh's family asked Mírzá Majid to go to Dolgorukov and ask him to intercede on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh, and Dolgorukov agreed.^[42]

The memoirs, however, extend this assistance to all facets of Bahá'u'lláh's life. In one edition of the memoir, Dolgorukov is said to have provided money for Bahá'u'lláh to build a house in Acre, but Dolgorukov died in 1867, before Bahá'u'lláh arrived in Acre. Thus newer editions of the memoir state that Dolgorukov sent money for a house to be built in Edirne.^[39] As Dolgorukov left the Russian diplomatic service in 1854 and died in 1867, he was unable to interact with Bahá'u'lláh in the manner in which the memoir states.^[39]

Communist Soviet sources produced^[43] polemical pamphlets in 1930, an encyclopedic article in 1933, and most seriously in 1938 "monstrous accusations"^[43] accusing Bahá'ís of being 'closely linked with the leaders of Trotskyite-Bukharinist and Dashnak-Musavat bands'.^[43] Following this numerous arrests and oppression of the religion, Bahá'ís across the Soviet Union were being sent to prisons and camps or sent abroad.^[44] Bahá'í communities in 38 cities across Soviet territories ceased to exist.

British ties

There have also been claims that the Bábí movement was started by the British, and that the Bahá'í Faith has ties to British imperialism; the connection to the British, however, has also been supported by false evidence.^[39] Firaydun Adamiyyat, in a biography on Nasser-al-Din Shah's first Prime Minister Amir Kabir, stated that Mulla Husayn, the Báb's first disciple, was really a British agent who was recruited by Arthur Conolly, a British intelligence officer, explorer and writer. Adamiyyat states that the evidence of such an accusation appears in Conolly's book *Journey to the North of India Overland from England through Russia, Persia, and Affghaunistaun*, but no mention of Mulla Husayn or the Báb appears in the book. In later editions of Adamiyyat's biography on Amir Kabir, the fabrication has been removed.^[39]



Accusations of ties to the British also arise from the knighting in 1920 of `Abdu'l-Bahá, then head of the religion, by the British Mandate of Palestine.^[45] According to Harry Charles Luke, an official in the British Colonial Office who served as assistant Governor of Jerusalem, `Abdu'l-Bahá "on the 4th December, 1919, was created by King George V a K.B.E. for valuable services rendered to the British Government in the early days of the Occupation."^[46] According to a recent PhD, however, `Abdu'l-Bahá, received this award in recognition of his "humanitarian work in Palestine" during the war, especially his distribution of grain from his personal supply, which averted a famine in Northern Palestine.^{[47][48]} He was ceremonially knighted on April 27, 1920, an event which was prominently reported in the Star of the West as "a most wonderful celebration."^[49]

Bahá'ís and political activity in the Ottoman Empire

During this period, `Abdu'l-Bahá communicated with a number of different actors who were civilian, parliamentarians of the Young Turks, opposed to the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, including Namık Kemal, Ziya Pasha and Midhat Pasha, in an attempt to disseminate Bahá'í thought into their political ideology.^[50] He emphasized Bahá'ís "seek freedom and love liberty, hope for equality, are well-wishers of humanity and ready to sacrifice their lives to unite humanity" but on a more broad approach than the Young

Turks. Favorable relations included Abdullah Cevdet, one of the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress who would go on trial for defense of Bahá'ís in a periodical he founded. Abdullah Cevdet considered the Bahá'í Faith an intermediary step between Islam and the ultimate abandonment of religious belief.^{[51][52]}

‘Abdu'l-Bahá also had contact with military leaders as well, including such individuals as Bursalı Mehmet Tahir Bey and Hasan Bedreddin. The latter, who was involved in the overthrow of Sultan Abdülaziz, is commonly known as Bedri Paşa or Bedri Pasha and is referred to in Persian Bahá'í sources as Bedri Bey (Badri Beg). He was a Bahá'í who translated ‘Abdu'l-Baha's works into French.^[53]

‘Abdu'l-Bahá also met Muhammad Abduh, one of the key figures of Islamic Modernism and the Salafi movement, in Beirut, at a time when the two men were both opposed to the Ottoman ulama and shared similar goals of religious reform.^{[54][55]} Rashid Rida asserts that during his visits to Beirut, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá would attend Abduh's study sessions.^[56] Regarding the meetings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá and Muhammad 'Abduh, Shoghi Effendi asserts that "His several interviews with the well-known Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abdu served to enhance immensely the growing prestige of the community and spread abroad the fame of its most distinguished member."^[57]

Due to the concerns of Hamid II views of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's activities, a Commission of Inquiry interviewed him in 1905, with the result that he was almost exiled to Fezzan.^[58] In response, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá wrote the sultan a letter protesting that his followers refrain from involvement in partisan politics and that his *tariqa* had guided many Americans to Islam.^[59] Subsequent to the Young Turk Revolution ‘Abdu'l-Bahá was released from his imprisonment and allowed to travel away from Palestine. He freely expressed his disapproval of Sultan Abdul Hamid II and his policies.^[60] ‘Abdu'l-Bahá would continue to praise the Committee of Union and Progress, and during his tour of North America in 1912, the Ottoman embassy in Washington, D.C. held a dinner in his honor.^[61]

Bahá'í ties to Zionism

Bahá'ís have also been accused of ties to Zionism, a movement that calls for the self-determination of the Jewish people and a sovereign, Jewish national homeland. This claim is typically advanced by noting that the most holy shrines of the Bahá'ís are located in current-day Israel.^[21] However, Bahá'u'lláh was banished from Persia by Nasser-al-Din Shah, at which time Bahá'u'lláh went to Baghdad in the Ottoman Empire.^[62] Later he was later exiled by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, at the behest of the Persian Shah, to territories further away from Iran and finally to Acre in Syria,^[63] which only a century later was incorporated into the state of Israel.^[39]

Bahá'u'lláh died in 1892 near Acre, and the burial place is in Bahji. Following his death, Bahá'u'lláh's son ‘Abdu'l-Bahá took over the leadership of the religion until his death in 1921, and he is buried in Haifa, which was then in Palestine.^[64] Another important figure for Bahá'ís who is buried in current-day Israel is the Báb, whose remains were secretly transferred to Palestine and buried in Haifa in 1909.^[65] Israel was not formed until 1948, almost 60 years after Bahá'u'lláh's death, 40 years after the Báb's remains were brought to the region, and 27 years after ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's death.

On February 23, 1914, at the eve of World War I, Baron Edmond James de Rothschild, a member of the Rothschild banking family who was a leading advocate and financier of the Zionist movement, attended a general meeting at the home of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá during one of his early trips to Palestine. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá is recorded saying in part "Unless the souls are believers in God and assured in the verses of God, wealth causes the hearts to be hardened and without light."^[66]

Subsequent to the British occupation of Palestine following World War I, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá remarked,

If the Zionists will mingle with the other races and live in unity with them, they will succeed. If not, they will meet certain resistance. For the present I think a neutral government like the British administration would be best. A Jewish government might come later

There is too much talk today of what the Zionists are going to do here. There is no need of it. Let them come and do more and say less.

The Zionists should make it clear that their principle is to elevate all the people here and to develop the country for all its inhabitants. This land must be developed, according to the promises of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zachariah. If they come in such a spirit they will not fail.

They must not work to separate the Jews from the other Palestinians. Schools should be open to all nationalities here, business companies, etc. The Turks went down because they attempted to rule over foreign races. The British are always in power because they keep fair and promote harmony
This is the path to universal peace here as elsewhere - Unity We must prevent strife by all means.

— Star of the West (8 September 1919)^[67]

Bahá'ís have from time to time negotiated with the government of Israel over such matters as the acquisition of properties that currently compose the Bahá'í World Centre buildings. For example, a cablegram sent by Shoghi Effendi on November 12, 1952 announced the "acquisition of vitally-needed property" of the Mansion of Bahjí and the area around it from "the Development Authority of the State of Israel..The exchange of said property including land and houses, was made possible by the precipitate flight of the former Arab owners"^[68]

Similarly, the mansion of Mazra'ih was transferred by the nascent Israeli government from a Muslim waqf to the Bahá'í administration in 1951.^{[69][70]}

"Masra'ih is a Moslem religious endowment, and it is consequently impossible, under existing laws in this country, for it to be sold. However, as the friends are aware, the Ministry of Religions, due to the direct intervention of the Minister himself, Rabbi Maimon, consented, in the face of considerable opposition, to deliver Masra'ih to the Baha'is as a Holy Place to be visited by Baha'i pilgrims. This means that we rent it from the Department of Moslem and Druze affairs in the Ministry of Religions. The head of this Department is also a Rabbi, Dr. Hirschberg. Recently he, his wife and party, visited all the Baha'i properties in Haifa and 'Akka, following upon a very pleasant tea party in the Western Pilgrim House with the members of the International Baha'i Council."^[69] (*Bahá'í News*, no. 244, June 1951, p. 4)

The mansion was ultimately purchased by the Bahá'ís in 1973.^[70]

Since the Iranian revolution there have been accusations that the Bahá'ís support Israel because they send fund contributions to the Bahá'í World Centre which is located in northern Israel.^{[25][71]} The donations are used in the Bahá'í World Centre for upkeep of the Bahá'í properties, as well as the administration of the worldwide Bahá'í community.^[25] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran in a 1983 letter to the Iranian government stated that while Muslims were praised for sending money out of the country to Iraq and Jerusalem for the upkeep of their religious shrines, when Bahá'ís sent money for the upkeep of their own shrines : was considered an unforgivable sin.^[72]

Bahá'ís as agents of the Shah's regime and its secret police

Another criticism claims that the Bahá'ís, during the time of the Pahlavi dynasty, collaborated with the SAVAK, the Iranian secret police, and held positions of power in the government.^[73] Even before the Iranian revolution, the Bahá'ís, viewed as the "other" in Iranian society, were held responsible by the rest of the Iranians for the abusive suppression by SAVAK and the Shah's unpopular policies.^[74] After the revolution, the assertion that the Bahá'ís were agents of the Shah perhaps partly originates because Bahá'ís did not help the revolutionary groups, since one of the tenets of the Bahá'í Faith is to obey the government of one's country.^[75]

The Bahá'í International Community has, however, stated that the Bahá'í community in Iran was the victim of the Shah's regime, and that SAVAK was one of the main ways of persecuting the Bahá'ís.^[28] For example, Reza Shah's government ordered the closure of Bahá'í schools, such as Tehran's Tarbiyat school for boys and girls, in 1934.^[76] Also during the month of Ramadan in 1955, when the Shah's government needed to distract the general population from its decision to join the Baghdad Pact under pressure from the British and American governments, it sought the support of the clerics. Ayatollah Seyyed Hossein Borujerdi, acting as the Marja Taqlid, a Grand Ayatollah with the authority to make legal decisions within the confines of Islamic law, pushed the Shah's government to support the persecution of the Bahá'í community.^{[77][78]}

The 1955 attacks were particularly destructive and widespread due to an orchestrated campaign by the government and clergy who utilized the national Iranian radio station and its official newspapers to spread hatred which led to widespread mob violence against Bahá'ís.^{[77][78][79]} The Shah's military also occupied the Bahá'í centre in Tehran, which was destroyed in the violence.^{[77][78]} Mottahedeh states that under the Pahlavi dynasty, the Bahá'ís were actually more a "political pawn" than a collaborator, and that Reza Shah's government toleration of Bahá'ís in the early 20th-century was more a sign of secular rule and an attempt to weaken clerical influence than a signal of favour for the Bahá'ís.^[77]

There is also evidence that SAVAK collaborated with Islamic groups throughout the 1960s and 1970s in harassing Bahá'ís.^[78] SAVAK also had links to Hojjatieh, a radical anti-Bahá'í group. Rahnema and Nomani state that the Shah gave Hojjatieh free rein for their activities toward the Bahá'ís.^[28] Keddie states that the accusations of Bahá'ís being part of SAVAK were mainly false pretexts for persecution.^[2]

With regards to the accusation that Bahá'ís held many prominent positions in the government of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi there is no empirical study that endeavours to determine the truth of such an accusation.^[73] There were a number of individuals who were part of the government and who had Bahá'í backgrounds, but were not Bahá'ís themselves. One problem that arises is the definition of a Bahá'í: a Bahá'í is a member of a voluntary association that admits people only when they meet certain religious qualifications, and one can choose to become, remain or cease to be a Bahá'í.^[73] However, Muslims who do not recognize the possibility of apostasy (leaving one's religion) may not understand that individuals are free to reject their previous, in this case Bahá'í, beliefs.^{[28]:110}

Bahá'ís have used the term Bahá'ízada to refer to people of Bahá'í background who are not Bahá'ís themselves or part of the Bahá'í community; there is no Muslim equivalent of the term.^[73] Of the Bahá'ís who held positions near the Shah, the best known is the Shah's personal physician, Abdol Karim Ayadi. While Asadullah Sanii, another Bahá'í, was appointed Minister of Defence, the Bahá'í community of Iran revoked his administrative rights — as he had accepted a political position and Bahá'ís are prohibited from involvement in partisan politics — the public, however, still continued to associate him with his previous religion.^[73] Parviz Sabeti, a SAVAK official, was raised in a Bahá'í family, but had left the religion and was not a member of the community by the time he started working with the agency.^[73]

Other people who were associated with the Bahá'í Faith either had Bahá'í backgrounds or were not connected with the religion at all.^[73] For example, it was often rumoured that the Prime Minister Amir-Abbas Hoveida was a Bahá'í. While Hoveida's father had been a Bahá'í, he had left the religion and Hoveida himself was not religious.^[73] Other people rumoured to be Bahá'ís included Mahnaz Afkhami, who was the Minister for Women's Affairs and the daughter of a Bahá'í mother, and Farrokhroo Parsa, a cabinet member who was not connected to the religion at all.^[73] Chehabi notes that the allegations that half of the Shah's cabinet were Bahá'ís are fanciful and, given the persecution the Bahá'ís have suffered, irresponsible exaggerations.^[73]

Bahá'í ties to Freemasonry

Iranian critics of the Bahá'í Faith have accused the religion of having ties to Freemasonry.^{[39][40]} As Freemasonry was a secretive society originating from the West, many in Iran connected the movement with the introduction of foreign ideas into the country in order to undermine Iranian values.^[39] Claims were made that many of the earliest Freemason lodges, such as Malkom Khan's faramush-khanih, which were founded in 1858, were linked to European lodges.^{[80][81]} However, Freemasonry was brought to Iran by Iranians who had seen the movement in other parts of the world.^[39]

Specific accusations connecting the Bahá'í Faith to Freemasonry often include an assertion that Dr. Dhabih Qurban, who was a well-known Bahá'í, was also a freemason.^[39] This assertion is based on an Iranian book publishing documents related to Freemasonry in the country; that book states that in specific pages of Fazel Mazandarani's book on the Bahá'í Faith there are statements that Dr. Dhabih Qurban is a Freemason, but in fact Freemasonry is not mentioned in the pages of the referenced Bahá'í book.^[39] Furthermore, the Iranian book that is the source of the accusation includes a discussion between the Grand Master of the Great Lodge in Iran, and the Grand Master notes that "no Bahá'ís have become masons and this is repeated by others present with no-one disagreeing."^[39]

At times and places where the Bahá'ís have not had access to their own specific venues, they have either hired, or used with permission those belonging to other organizations, with which they do not have other links. This has included Masonic lodges, such as the case with Ruth "Ruhaniyyih" Mofett during her visit to Puerto Rico in 1950 to introduce the religion there.^[82]

On the other hand, Shoghi Effendi, the head of the Bahá'í Faith in the first half of the 20th century, stated that the teachings of the Baha'i Faith expressly forbid membership in secret societies, and asked all Bahá'ís to remove their memberships from all secret societies, including the Freemasons, so that they can serve the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith without compromising their independence.^[83]

See also

- Criticism of the Bahá'í Faith



Bahá'ís standing between the Masonic Youth and Cuban National flags with the group of enthusiastic young Masonic men, one of the major influences which also and Josephine Kruke flew to Cuba to help open up new spiritual circles. In the same month (1908), February, Mrs. Moffett gave lectures in many Masonic Lodges, the University of Havana, Rotary Club, Havana Women's Club, Cultural Center in Havana, Montecarlo, Santiago de Cuba, Santa Clara, Cienfuegos, and also the Thoroughbred Society.

Ruth Moffett in Puerto Rico

Notes

- Ghanea 2003, p. 103
- Keddie 1995, p. 151
- Ghanea 2003, p. 294
- Cooper 1993, p. 200
- Simpson & Shubart 1995 p. 223
- Tavakoli-Targhi 2008, p. 200
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- Momen 1981, pp. 71–82
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