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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Thirty-eighth session
Item 12 of the draft provisional agenda*/

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Thirty-fourth session
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND
OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Note verbale dated 10 August 1981 from the Australian Permanent
Mission to the United Nations Office at Geneva
addressed to the Secretary-General

The Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to a motion moved in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia by Senator Puplick and adopted by the Senate on 26 March 1981, and a question and answer in the Senate on 7 May 1981, both of which relate to the treatment of religious minorities, particularly the Baha'is, in Iran and the texts of which are attached.

The Australian Permanent Mission would be grateful if the Secretary-General would circulate the text both of the motion and of the question and answer to members of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights as an official document of the Commission and in sufficient time for the members of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to be made aware of the document's contents when they meet for the XXXIV Session of the Sub-Commission.

TEXT OF A MOTION MOVED BY SENATOR PUPLOCK (NEW SOUTH WALES)
AND ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY ON 26 MARCH 1981 BY
THE AUSTRALIAN SENATE

That the Senate deplores the continued persecution of religious minorities in Iran, particularly the large community of Baha'is, and urges that this total abuse of the right to religious tolerance be brought to the attention of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations.

*/ E/1981/25, chapter XXVI.

THE TEXT OF A QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE AND ANSWER GIVEN IN
THE AUSTRALIAN SENATE ON 7 MAY 1981

Senator Wheeldon - has the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs seen press reports based on a report of the official Iranian newsagency, Pars, that last Friday three persons were executed in Iran, having been convicted of charges of espionage, co-operating with the régime of the former Shah and active membership of the Baha'i organization which apparently was described by the prosecutors as a Zionist organization? As it appears to be evidence from this report that the sole offence that those people had committed was their membership of the Baha'i religious faith and as that is a faith which is represented in this country and which appears to consist of an eminently peaceful group of people, will the Government consider making some representations of protest to the Iranian Government?

Senator Dame Margaret Guilfoyle - the Minister for Foreign Affairs is aware of statements along the lines mentioned by Senator Wheeldon, and Honourable Senators will be aware of Government statements about the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran, including that made on 3 March by the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Senate. As foreshadowed in that statement, on 9 March the Australian Delegation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights spoke strongly against Iranian violations of human rights and referred particularly to the Baha'is. On 15 March a member of the Baha'i National Council and another leading Baha'i were executed in Shiraz. The verdicts against them alleged a number of offences but prominently cited their adherence to the Baha'i faith. Those verdicts, which were confirmed by the Supreme Court of Iran, indicate an intensification at the highest level of persecution of the Baha'is by the Iranian authorities.

Further evidence of the religious nature of this campaign was provided in late April by the acquittal, following his conversion to Islam, of a Baha'i employee of the Bank of Iran who had been charged with belonging to the deviationist Baha'i sect and with currency trafficking. The Government will continue to use available opportunities to protest in the strongest terms about the situation. I am sure that the Minister for Foreign Affairs will be interested to hear the matter raised in the way in which Senator Wheeldon did so in his question this morning.