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Newsletter of the Bahá'í
International Community
January-March 2006
Volume 17, Issue 4



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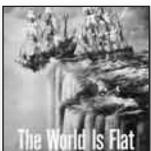
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Alarming new evidence that Iranian Bahá'ís are being secretly monitored

The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief releases a secret letter from the Iranian military command; human rights groups express grave concern.

NEW YORK – Recent events in Iran have begun to follow a pattern that has often preceded major human rights violations in the past, greatly alarming international human rights monitors and groups, particularly with respect to the long persecuted Bahá'í community of Iran.

Chief among these events is the discovery of a secret 29 October 2005 letter from the Iranian military high command ordering police and Revolutionary Guard units to “identify” and “monitor” members of the Bahá'í community of Iran.

The letter's existence was made known on 20 March 2006 by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, who said its contents made her “highly concerned.”

“[S]uch monitoring constitutes an impermissible and unacceptable interference with the rights of members of religious minorities,” said Ms. Jahangir, in a statement, also expressing the concern that “the information gained as a result of such monitoring will be used as a basis for the increased persecution of, and discrimination against, members of the Bahá'í Faith.”

Also of concern is a series of recent attacks on the Bahá'í Faith in Iranian news media. Since late 2005, more than 30 mostly negative and often defamatory articles about the Bahá'ís and their religion have appeared in *Kayhan*, the official Tehran daily newspaper. Radio and television broadcasts have likewise increasingly condemned the Bahá'ís and their beliefs.

In addition, international news reports and blogs have charted the rise in influence of a specifically anti-Bahá'í Society, known as Hojratieh, in high government circles.

In response to these trends — and especially in response to Ms. Jahangir's documentation of the 29 October Iranian military letter — a number of international human rights groups, governments, and news organizations have expressed alarm at the threat facing Iranian Bahá'ís.

In a statement on 5 April 2006, for example, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) said it “fears that the identification and monitoring of the Bahá'ís combined with the current hatred propaganda in the media could lead to increased discrimination in their regards and calls upon the Iranian authorities to abide by their international human rights commitments.”

A spokesman for the President of the United States, in a White House briefing on 28 March 2006, said the US Government shares the concerns of Ms. Jahangir.

“We call on the regime in Iran to respect the religious freedom of all its minorities, and to ensure that these minorities are free to practice their religious beliefs without discrimination or fear,” said Scott McClellan, White House press secretary. “And we will continue to monitor the situation of the Bahá'í — the Bahá'ís in Iran very closely, and to speak out when their rights are denied.”

In Europe, the Council of Europe expressed “deep concern” over the human rights situation in Iran in a 15 May resolution, noting restrictions on freedom of expression and religion, and specifically mentioning the situation of the Bahá'ís of Iran.

In France, Foreign Affairs Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said in an April interview that “[w]e are deeply worried about the harassment of the Bahá'í and Sufi minorities who are highly discriminated against.”

In India, Member of Parliament Karan Singh wrote a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan

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is published quarterly by the Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community, an international non-governmental organization which encompasses and represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá'í Faith.

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International Community

ISSN 1018-9300

Printed on recycled paper ♻️

Iran and the rule of law

By Bani Dugal
Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations

Respect for human rights is a clear indication of a nation's commitment to the rule of law, to humanitarian principles, and to honesty in its public affairs.

And there is no better measure of Iran's genuine commitment to human rights than the way it treats its largest religious minority, the 300,000-member Bahá'í community of Iran, who are by their religious principles committed to nonviolence and noninvolvement in politics.

Unfortunately, since 1979, when the Islamic Republic of Iran was established, Bahá'ís have faced a systematic and ongoing religious persecution at the hands of the Iranian government. In the early 1980s, until international pressure caused Iran to pull back from the brink, some 200 Bahá'ís were killed, hundreds were imprisoned, and thousands were deprived of their livelihood, access to education, and virtually all civil rights.

Today, there are deeply disturbing signs that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is gearing up for a new round of persecution against this innocent community.

Most worrisome is news of the discovery by United Nations officials of a secret letter from the Iranian military's high command to various government agencies calling for them "to identify persons who adhere to the Bahá'í faith and monitor their activities."

Sent on 29 October 2005 to the Ministry of Information, the Revolutionary Guard and the police force, the letter states that Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, had ordered that such information be collected "in a highly confidential manner."

Asma Jahangir, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on freedom of religion or belief, told the world about the letter's existence in a statement on 20 March 2006, saying that "such monitoring constitutes an impermissible and unaccept-

able interference with the rights of members of religious minorities."

Ms. Jahangir also expressed concern that the information gained as a result of such monitoring will be used as a basis for the increased persecution of, and discrimination against, members of the Bahá'í Faith.

Anyone familiar with some of the last century's most egregious episodes of human rights violations can easily read between the lines of such a letter. The identification and monitoring of minority groups are rarely undertaken with good intentions, especially when it involves the state military, police and other authorities.

Other recent trends and events in Iran likewise contribute to a great sense of urgency when Bahá'ís look to the near future.

First, there is the re-emergence of the Hojratieh Society. Founded in 1953 as a specifically anti-Bahá'í organization by a charismatic Shiite Muslim cleric, the Hojratieh Society has today reemerged in Iran as an influential if secretive faction that has been linked in news articles and Web blogs with the current Iranian administration.

Second, Iran's government-controlled news media has begun a propaganda campaign against the Bahá'ís. *Kayhan*, the official Tehran daily newspaper, has carried more than 30 articles about the Bahá'ís and their religion in recent months, all defamatory in ways that are meant to create provocation. Radio, television and internet programs have joined in as well with broadcasts condemning the Bahá'ís and their beliefs.

We all know what hateful propaganda can lead to. Again, recent history offers too many examples of its horrific consequences.

Accordingly, we make an urgent plea to all nations and peoples on behalf of our Iranian coreligionists that they not allow a peace-loving, law-abiding people to face the extremes to which blind hate can lead. The ghastly deeds that grew out of similar circumstances in the past should not now be allowed to happen. Not again. Not ever. ❀

Government officials visit Bahá'í book display in Senegal



In Dakar, Senegal, Mame Birame Diouf, Minister of Culture and Historical Heritage, far right with hat, visited the Bahá'í display at an international book fair in December. Shown left to right also are: Steve Pathe, a Bahá'í youth; Sandrine Toukam, a Bahá'í youth; Ouro Tchassanty, a Bahá'í doing a year of service; Mrs. Jeanne Toukam, a Bahá'í pioneer; and Mr. Diouf.

DAKAR, Senegal — The Minister of Culture and Historical Heritage visited a display by the Bahá'í community of Senegal at an international book fair, held in the West African capital city of Dakar in December 2005.

Mame Birame Diouf, head of the *Ministere de la Culture et du Patrimoine Historique Classe*, represented Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade at the fair. Minister Diouf accepted a gift of Bahá'í books.

Other government visitors to the display included three officials from the Department of Books and Reading of the Ministry of Culture (*Direction du Livre et de la Lecture*).

The book department bought 30 copies of the book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, in order to place them in public libraries throughout the country, said Shahnaz R. Ardekani, secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Senegal.

Ms. Ardekani said the Bahá'í display was visited by many of the publishers, authors, librarians, students, intellectuals and others

interested in publishing, who came from many countries to attend the fair, which was held 6-11 December 2005.

“The Bahá'ís manning the stall met a wide variety of people including school pupils, university students, teachers, government officials, artists, members of different religious orders, writers, and business people,” Ms. Ardekani said.

Several of those who visited the Bahá'í display attended a subsequent public meeting at the Bahá'í Centre where the topic “Unity of the human race — utopia or reality?” was discussed.

Bahá'ís reside in 382 localities in Senegal, and there are 34 Local Spiritual Assemblies. Social and economic development projects include classes for junior youth.

The Bahá'í community of Senegal, along with the other national Bahá'í communities of former French West Africa, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2003. [see <http://news.bahai.org/story.cfm?storyid=283>] *

— Bahá'í World News Service



Barney Leith (right), secretary for external affairs of the Bahá'í community of the United Kingdom, talks to Dr. Anna Cummins (far left), leader of the British Home Office's Faith Communities Engagement Team, at a Naw-Ruz celebration in the House of Commons on 21 March 2006. Also shown are several other Home Office officials.

British politicians commend Bahá'í efforts on social cohesion at Naw-Ruz

Top British politicians and interfaith representatives gather to celebrate the Bahá'í New Year with members of the Bahá'í community of the United Kingdom.

LONDON — Prime Minister Tony Blair and other top British politicians have sent greetings to the Bahá'í community of the United Kingdom on Naw-Ruz, the Bahá'í New Year.

In their messages, Mr. Blair and the others took note of Bahá'í efforts to promote social cohesion and human rights.

"I warmly commend all that the Bahá'í community does for social cohesion and better interfaith relations, which makes such a valuable contribution to our society," wrote Mr. Blair in his message, which was read on 21 March 2006 at a reception in the House of Commons.

"Your commitment to tackling discrimination and promoting our shared humanity is particularly important," said Mr. Blair. "I hope that this work will become increasingly well known."

About 90 people attended the Naw-Ruz reception, which was organized by the Office of External Affairs of the Bahá'í community of the UK and held on the terrace of the House of Commons.

While Mr. Blair was not in attendance, many prominent people were, including several Members of Parliament, a member of the House of Lords, and officials from a number of government departments, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Home Office, and No. 10 Downing Street.

Also joining the celebration were members of all of the major faith communities in the UK: Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians.

Member of Parliament David Cameron, leader of the opposition Conservative Party, also sent a message, which was read out at the reception.

“There is no doubt that your faith’s belief in the breaking down of barriers that separate people is a lesson to us all, as we face the national and international challenges of our day,” said Mr. Cameron.

“The importance you place on principles such as social justice, and the need to tackle prejudice, has stood the test of time. These principles are as vital today as they were a century and a half ago.”

In his message, Member of Parliament Sir Menzies Campbell, leader of the Liberal Democrat Party, took note of Bahá’í efforts to promote human rights.

“I have enormous respect and admiration for both the philosophy and culture which the Bahá’í faith embraces and represents,” said Sir Campbell in his message. “Particularly, I am proud of the work you do in conjunction with my fellow Liberal Democrat Parliamentarians regarding human rights abroad.

“I know that in Iran there is much to do before the Bahá’í Faith can live without fear of intimidation or persecution. However, I am confident that this end will be achieved through our collective effort.”

Member of Parliament Lembit Opik, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Bahá’ís, welcomed guests to the reception. He praised the Bahá’ís for their solidarity and optimism and said that being with Bahá’ís reminded him of why he was in politics — to try to make the world a better place.

Barney Leith, secretary for external affairs of the Bahá’í community of the United Kingdom, welcomed the guests and explained that the festival of Naw-Ruz is a time of celebration for the Bahá’í community.

Mr. Leith noted that the festival of Naw-Ruz is shared with the Zoroastrians. Mr. Leith added, however, that while the Bahá’ís in the UK were free to celebrate, the Bahá’ís in Iran were suffering ever greater levels of persecution. He thanked Her Majesty’s Government, and particularly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, for its steadfast support and excellent work in defending the human rights of the Bahá’ís in Iran.

Mr. Leith also thanked the All Party Friends of the Bahá’ís for their continuing support.

While Prime Minister Blair has sent Naw-Ruz greetings to the Bahá’í community previously, this was the first time the UK Bahá’í community had received New Year’s greetings from the leaders of all three main political parties.

Gye Nyami, a London-based Bahá’í musical ensemble closed the formal programme by performing three pieces with texts taken from Bahá’í, Hindu and Buddhist scriptures.

“There can be no doubt that this was the best of the successive Naw-Ruz receptions held over many years in the House of Commons,” said Mr. Leith. “There was a warm spirit of welcome for all who attended.”*

“I have enormous respect and admiration for both the philosophy and culture which the Bahá’í faith embraces and represents.”

—Sir Menzies Campbell, leader of the Liberal Democrat Party



Peter Luff MP, Treasurer of the All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Bahá’ís, reads the Naw-Ruz greeting message from David Cameron MP, Leader of the Opposition at a 21 March 2006 Naw-Ruz celebration at the House of Commons.

Commission on the Status of Women remains a global rallying point

Anisa Fedaei, standing at right, portrayed the daughter of the cocoa farmer in a short play called "Playing the Game" during a workshop on "Women in Decision-making and Trade" during the 2006 Commission on the Status of Women.



The high level of participation by nongovernmental organizations at the Commission on the Status of Women shows that it remains a global rallying point for women and men who care about the advancement of women.

UNITED NATIONS — Not far from the bright lights of Broadway, a little production with a big message played to a standing room only crowd in late February.

In a conference room across the street from United Nations, as part of a "side event" to the 50th annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), about 100 people watched 16-year-old Anisa Fedaei portray the daughter of the cocoa farmer in a short play called "Playing the Game."

"I am Patience from a developing country and I am 12 years old," said Anisa. "I don't go to school because I help my mother. Our family lives in a small hut. My mother cannot own the land and cannot get credit."

But now, "Patience" explains, thanks to the help of a local cooperative, they can invest in the farm and grow enough to trade.

"With the co-operative we can export to places all over the world," she says. "Just think: our cocoa will be eaten by people everywhere in the world, my sisters can go to school as well as the boys, there will be

money for the uniform, we can have shoes and maybe I can go to school too."

Part of a workshop on "Women in Decision-making and Trade" co-sponsored by the National Alliance of Women's Organizations (NAWO), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the Gender Expert Group on Trade (GEGT), the play sought to illustrate the interplay between cultural preconceptions, traditions, legislation, and globalization on markets affecting the lives of ordinary people working to survive.

The workshop highlighted both of the main themes of this year's CSW: the enhanced participation of women in development, and equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes.

It also reflected a high level of participation by nongovernmental organizations at the CSW, which has become something of a global rallying point for women and men who care about the advancement of women.

Held this year from 27 February-10 March 2006, the Commission drew some

1,500 representatives from more than 400 organizations.

“The Commission discovered very early in its establishment that allies were essential to the success of its mission,” said Rachel Mayanja, special adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. “Thus the commission allied itself with civil society organizations — at its first session in 1947, it heard 12 women’s organizations.”

This year, civil society groups organized more than 125 “side-events” — such as the workshop on trade mentioned above — during the Commission. In those meetings — and in the Commission itself — the focus was on the two main themes this year.

“Ten years after the Beijing declaration, we still have far to go on actual representation of women at the highest levels of national and international leadership,” said UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette at the opening of the 50th Session of the CSW. “That includes the United Nations itself, the Charter of which proclaims the equal rights of men and women.”

A common theme in many of the speeches and workshops was that while women had posted gains in terms of educational achievement, political representation and economic viability, the goal of gender equality remains elusive. Women continue to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of poverty and under-representation in political life, said a number of speakers.

Strong Bahá’í participation

Among the representatives of nongovernmental organizations at the CSW this

year were some 21 Bahá’ís, representing the Bahá’í International Community and some 10 national Bahá’í communities.

Bahá’ís came from countries in five continents: Brazil, Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Bahá’í International Community delegation was composed of four people.

Bahá’ís sought to address the main themes of the Commission — women in decision-making and women in development — in various ways.

On 28 February, for example, the Bahá’í International Community hosted a luncheon for South African First Lady Zanele Mbeki at its offices in New York. More than 25 people attended, including representatives of the Mission of South Africa to the United Nations, the Mission of India to the United Nations, and various NGOs. Mrs. Mbeki spoke about a new program she has founded called South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID).

Bahá’ís also participated in or facilitated a number of the side events. For example, the workshop on trade described above was facilitated by Zarin Hainsworth, who not only represents the National Alliance of Women’s Organizations in the United Kingdom, but also the Bahá’í community of the UK. As well, young Anisa Fedaei, who portrayed the daughter of the cocoa farmer in the workshop’s play, is a Baha’i.

Many Bahá’í delegates came for the opportunities to network with other women’s organizations and to meet with government delegates, in the hope of winning more support for policies that advance the status of women.

“The Commission discovered very early in its establishment that allies were essential to the success of its mission. Thus the commission allied itself with civil society organizations — at its first session in 1947, it heard 12 women’s organizations.”

**— Rachel Mayanja,
UN special adviser
Gender Issues and
the Advancement of
Women**



South African First Lady Zanele Mbeki, right, with Bani Dugal, principal representative of the Bahá’í International Community to the United Nations, left, at a reception at the Community’s offices in New York on 28 April 2006 during the Commission on the Status of Women.

Shown at right are some of the 21 Bahá'ís, representing the Bahá'í International Community and 10 national Bahá'í communities, who came this year to the Commission on the Status of Women. Among them were Bahá'ís from Brazil, Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, the United Kingdom and the United States.



Kit Bigelow, director of external affairs for the Bahá'í community of the United States, said one focus for the US Bahá'í delegation was to promote ratification in the United States of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

“Our purpose in participating in the conference was to obtain useful knowledge and information to inform our advocacy work on the advancement of women in the United States,” said Ms. Bigelow.

“The role of the CEDAW in promoting both of these goals was underscored throughout the Commission, which assists our work in promoting the treaty’s ratification in the United States,” said Ms. Bigelow.

“In addition, the knowledge shared on methods to promote women’s participation in development will aid our work in advocating for full gender integration into government-based international development agencies in the United States,” said Ms. Bigelow. ❁

Nossrat Peseschkian awarded German Order of Merit

WIESBADEN, Germany — Nossrat Peseschkian, the founder of Positive Psychotherapy, has been awarded the order of merit of Federal Republic of Germany.

Dr. Peseschkian, who is a Bahá'í, received the honor from Silke Lautenschläger, Minister of Social Affairs in Hessen in ceremonies here on 23 January 2006.

Ms. Lautenschläger said Dr. Peseschkian was highly influential as a psychotherapist worldwide, “who has founded a treatment and therapeutic method which meanwhile has been established in many different countries and has been a source of help for an immense number of people.”

“Positive Psychotherapy is a form of short-term psychotherapy based on an in-depth psychological approach, resulting from cross-cultural psychotherapy,” said Dr. Peseschkian, saying it has a special usefulness in dealing with problems arising from transcultural issues, such as foreign laborers, problems with

foreign aid for development, transcultural marriages, or cultural prejudice.

“An important reason for my own concern with Positive Psychotherapy may also have been that I am in a transcultural situation,” said Dr. Peseschkian. “I am an Iranian, living in Europe since 1954. I have noticed that many modes of behavior, habits, and attitudes are evaluated completely differently in the two cultural groups.

“This observation, which I had already made during my childhood in Teheran, applies particularly to prejudices of a religious nature. As Bahá'ís, we were always in the cross fire between our Islamic, Christian, and Jewish schoolfellows and teachers. This led me to reflect on the relations existing between the religions and on interpersonal relationships.”

Dr. Peseschkian has published at least 12 books in German, along with numerous translations. Courses on Positive Psychotherapy have been held in at least 60 countries. ❁

UN creates new Human Rights Council

UNITED NATIONS—In outlining a plan for reform of the United Nations a year ago, Secretary General Kofi Annan made human rights a central component of his proposal.

“No security agenda and no drive for development will be successful unless they are based on the sure foundation of respect for human dignity,” said Mr. Annan in his March 2005 “In Larger Freedom” report.

So it was viewed by many as an historic step when the UN General Assembly approved on 15 March 2006 the creation of a new Human Rights Council.

“The decision of the General Assembly to create the Council is momentous,” said Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. “It responds to the hope that the global community could come together and create a strong institution at the heart of the international human rights system.”

The 47-member Council replaces the 53-member UN Commission on Human Rights as the premier international human rights enforcement agency.

The change seeks to address criticisms that have been leveled at the Commission in recent years, especially that the Commission had become too “political” in its workings, allowing nations that consistently violated human rights not only to escape scrutiny but even to serve as members on the Commission.

The structure of the new Council establishes that:

- Members will be “elected directly and individually by secret ballot by the majority” of the 191-member General Assembly. Previously, members of the Commission were elected by the 54-member Economic and Social Council.

- Members “shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights,” making “voluntary pledges and commitments” to do so. Members can be removed from the Council by a two-thirds majority vote of other members if they commit “gross and systematic violations of human rights.”

- The Council should meet no fewer than three times a year, for no less than 10 weeks. Previously, the commission met only once a year for six weeks.

Proponents of the Council say that these

structural changes will offer considerable safeguards against the kind of politics that plagued the Commission in the past.

“No member state has got everything it argued for” in the Council’s structure, said Jan Eliasson, president of the General Assembly. But it “includes a number of innovative elements which would make the Council a significant improvement on the Commission on Human Rights.”

The shape and substance of the Council were intensely debated. In particular, the United States lobbied for stronger provisions to prevent countries with poor human rights records from becoming members of the Council, urging that a two-thirds majority vote of the General Assembly be required for membership.

In the end, the resolution creating the Council passed by a vote of 170 to 4, with 3 abstentions. Voting against the Council were Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, and the United States; abstaining were Belarus, Iran, and Venezuela.

The resolution calls for the election of new Council members on 9 May 2006, and an inaugural meeting on 19 June. The Commission ended its last meeting on 27 March after adopting a resolution to transfer all its work to the Council.

Nongovernmental organizations that specialize in human rights agreed that while the Council’s structure did not include everything they might have hoped for, it is nevertheless an improvement over the Commission.

“The Council is definitely an advance over the Commission,” said Mariette Grange, director of the Geneva office of Human Rights Watch. “It includes what was good and efficient at the Commission — and it is an upgrade in other areas, such as the fact that countries must be elected by more than half of the General Assembly.”

Ms. Grange said in particular that two important features of the Commission have been carried over: 1) the system of “special rapporteurs” — in essence specially appointed human rights investigators that are empowered to monitor specific countries or specific themes, and, 2) the high degree of ac-

Council, continued on page 13

“No member state has got everything it argued for” in the Council’s structure, said Jan Eliasson, president of the General Assembly. But it “includes a number of innovative elements which would make the Council a significant improvement on the Commission on Human Rights.”

First Bahá'í Chair for World Peace changes hands at University of Maryland

COLLEGE PARK, Maryland, USA – A former senior official with the United States Agency for International Development, John Grayzel, has been appointed to the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland in the United States.

Dr. Grayzel will succeed the inaugural holder, Suheil Bushrui, who retired effective 31 December 2005 after holding the position since 1993.

The Chair's mission is to contribute Bahá'í perspectives and experiences on issues of global peace, social and economic justice, and the value of cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity.

"Dr. Bushrui very much laid the foundations for the work of the Chair, and he was

very successful at building credibility and admiration among people for the idea of examining things in the light of spirituality at a secular university like the University of Maryland," said Dr. Grayzel.

"The idea now is to build on that foundation by finding key areas of focus where the Chair can play a critical role in bringing together people of various perspectives and faiths to look at issues in ways that are truly transformational," said Dr. Grayzel.

"Learning to value human diversity is particularly important, because it helps us move beyond simple tolerance," said Dr. Grayzel. "We have to show people that the diversity of humanity is 'value-added.'"

For his part, Dr. Bushrui will remain at the University of Maryland, continuing as a professor of the Khalil Gibran Research and Studies Project. Well known for his seminal studies in English of the works of W.B. Yeats and for his translations of Yeats' poetry into Arabic, Bushrui is also a well-known authority on the works of Kahlil Gibran.

"I believe that my main mission at the Chair was to establish it and allow it to become academically viable and accepted by my peers at the university," said Dr. Bushrui, who is 77. "That is done. Now it is time for me to do something else, and for someone else to come in with new blood and new energy, to take this to higher levels."

During his tenure at the Chair, Dr. Bushrui won high regard for his thoughtful scholarship and insights as a world-class lecturer. In 2003, he received the Juliet Hollister Award for "exceptional service to interfaith understanding." Other recipients of the Hollister award include South African President Nelson Mandela, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, Queen Noor of Jordan, the Dalai Lama, Kenyan activist Wangari Maathai, and theologian Thomas Berry. The Hollister Award is given by the Temple of Understanding, a New York-based non-profit organization dedicated to interfaith understanding.

Dr. John Grayzel, below, will succeed Suheil Bushrui as holder of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland.





Dr. Suheil Bushrui, at left, retired on 31 December 2005 after holding the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace since 1993.

Dr. Grayzel praised greatly Dr. Bushrui's contributions as the inaugural holder of the Chair, saying that he infused the Bahá'í Chair with vision and energy. Dr. Grayzel noted that Dr. Bushrui adhered to a broad definition of international relations, one that focused on traditionally non-academic topics such as interfaith dialogue and intercultural reconciliation.

Dr. Grayzel said that among Professor Bushrui's many accomplishments was the design and teaching of an innovative, award-winning course called "The Spiritual Foundation of the Human Race" and the preparation of a related textbook that will soon be published in both English and Arabic editions.

"Perhaps Professor Bushrui's greatest achievement as holder of the Chair was in obtaining formal recognition by wider scholarly and policy circles of the need for a more comprehensive approach to peace-building," said Dr. Grayzel.

"The substance of this approach is captured in Professor Bushrui's own words: 'Beyond pragmatic political and economic arrangements for security and coexistence, there remains the fact that peace springs from a spiritual or moral attitude that must be cultivated, in part, through education.'"

Dr. Grayzel, a member of the Bahá'í Faith, holds a law degree from Stanford University and a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Oregon.

He served for 27 years in the field of international development, tackling a wide

variety of service assignments for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) before retiring as a member of the Senior Foreign Service.

Among other things, Dr. Grayzel was engaged in conflict resolution, local governance, natural resource management, macro- and micro-economic growth, policy reform, technology innovation and improvement to both basic and higher education in developing countries.

His work took him to over 50 countries including almost 20 years of residence in Western and Central Africa, India, and the Philippines. He also served in the US Peace Corps.

The Bahá'í Chair for Peace is part of the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management, which adheres to the belief that "peace building and development-with-justice are two sides of the same coin."

The Center's director, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, welcomed Dr. Grayzel's appointment saying that Dr. Grayzel, with his extensive background in international development, "will be a good fit" with the Center's programs and priorities.

The chancellor of the University of Maryland System, William E. Kirwan, said that through the Chair, the values of the Bahá'í Faith resonate on campus and support the major values and activities of the university.

"This is the first ... Bahá'í Chair in existence, and was one of my most important initiatives as president of the College Park campus," Dr. Kirwan said.*

"Perhaps Professor Bushrui's greatest achievement as holder of the Chair was in obtaining formal recognition by wider scholarly and policy circles of the need for a more comprehensive approach to peace-building."

– Dr. John Grayzel.

Alarming new evidence that Iranian Bahá'ís are being secretly monitored

Iran, continued from page one

Singh, calling attention to the Special Rapporteur's statement and urging him to "take up this matter" with Iranian authorities.

A number of news organizations have also reported on these concerns. Agence France Presse and Reuters both carried news of Ms. Jahangir's statement when it was released. Other news organizations — including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Indian Express*, and the *Times of India* — have followed up with other stories recently on the threat facing Iranian Bahá'ís.

Officials of the Bahá'í International Community were quick to express concern after Ms. Jahangir's statement.

"We are dreadfully afraid for the lives of our fellow Bahá'ís in Iran," said Bani Dugal, principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations, in a statement released within hours of Ms. Jahangir's announcement.

"We make an urgent plea to all nations and peoples on behalf of our Iranian coreligionists that they not allow a peace-loving, law-abiding people to face the extremes to which blind hate can lead," said Ms. Dugal. "The ghastly deeds that grew out of similar circumstances in the past should not now be allowed to happen. Not again."

Signs of increased monitoring

Even before the disclosure of the 29 October letter by Ms. Jahangir, there were signs of increased government monitoring of the Bahá'í community, said Ms. Dugal.

"We have received reports that the Association of Chambers of Commerce is compiling a list of Bahá'ís in every type of trade and employment, and that problems are being created for Bahá'ís in various trades in localities throughout the country," said Ms. Dugal.

She added that Iranian Bahá'ís have also experienced an escalation of acts of personal harassment against them.

"A movement appears to have targeted Bahá'í households, which have begun receiving notes, CDs, and tracts, all of which are

aimed at refuting the claims of the Faith," said Ms. Dugal.

Some of these communications are in the form of documents allegedly written by Bahá'ís who have recanted their Faith. "One such tract is entitled 'From one who has recanted' and attempts to show the Bahá'ís the 'error' of their ways," she said.

Of great concern, also, said Ms. Dugal, is the sharp increase in negative attacks on the Faith in the news media.

Since September 2005, the influential, state-controlled *Kayhan* newspaper has run more than 36 articles defaming the Bahá'í Faith, with the clear intention of arousing in readers feelings of suspicion, distrust and hatred for the Iranian Bahá'í community.

The articles engage in a deliberate distortion of history, make use of fake historical documents, and falsely describe Bahá'í moral principles in a manner that would be offensive to Muslims.

On 23 February 2006, for example, *Kayhan* ran an article titled "Murdering of Muslims by Bahá'ís on Eve of Ashura." It recounts an old story claiming that Bahá'ís had once sacrificed a Muslim child on the eve of an Islamic holy day, after a bout of drinking and dancing. The story is false, of course, — Bahá'ís are forbidden by their religious principles to drink alcohol — and certainly are forbidden from killing, let alone as part of any ritualistic sacrifice.

Nevertheless, the article concludes by saying: "They [the Bahá'ís] would offer beautiful women and girls to our youth to attract them to their beliefs. Unfortunately, nowadays, we again see their promotional activities increasing in order to attract the Muslim youth. We should be very careful."

Other Iranian news media have followed suit, airing attacks against Bahá'ís on radio and television.

Before the onset of previous government campaigns of persecution against Bahá'ís, such as in 1955 and 1979, similarly defamatory articles and radio programs were run against the Bahá'ís, stirring up animosity and

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– Bani Dugal,
Bahá'í International
Community

prejudice, apparently to prepare the public for what was to come.

“We know what hateful propaganda can lead to; recent history offers too many examples of its horrific consequences,” said Ms. Dugal.

The anti-Bahá’í Hojjatieh Society

Also of concern is the re-emergence of the Hojjatieh Society among top circles in the Iranian government.

The Society was founded in 1953 as a specifically anti-Bahá’í organization by a charismatic Shiite Muslim cleric, and during the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Society played an important role in stirring animosity against Bahá’ís. In the early years of the revolution, more than 200 Bahá’ís were killed, hundreds were imprisoned, and thousands lost jobs, pensions, or access to education.

In the early 1980s, the Society fell into disfavor and was banned in 1984, in part because of differences over theology. Among other things, the Society holds that a truly Islamic state cannot be established until the return of the 12th Imam, a prophetic ninth century figure that many Shiites believe will come back

as the ultimate savior of humanity.

Recently, however, the Society has re-emerged as an influential if secretive faction. Last fall, several news organizations, including Reuters, linked it with upper levels of the current Iranian administration. Outside observers in blogs and elsewhere have connected the Society’s re-emergence with the return of hardliners to positions of power in the government, including President Ahmadinejad, who has frequently stated his expectation that the 12th Imam will return soon.

As has been reported here in previous issues, other events in 2005 have likewise raised concerns among human rights groups. In December, a Bahá’í, 59-year-old Dhabihu’llah Mahrami, died in an Iranian prison of unknown causes after being wrongly jailed for 10 years.

Also last year, at least 59 Bahá’ís were arrested, detained or imprisoned, a figure up sharply from the last several years. As well, Bahá’í youth remain excluded from higher education in Iran, despite government promises to the international community in recent years that they would be allowed to attend university.*

UN creates new Human Rights Council

Council, *continued from page 9*

cess that NGOs have to the Commission.

Other new features of the Council, Ms. Grange said, also make it more likely that countries involved in human rights violations will be less likely to be members of the Council — although it is not guaranteed.

She said, for example, the mere fact that a member can be suspended for serious human rights violations — even though it is likely to be politically very difficult to win such a suspension — increases the moral pressure on countries to live up to international human rights norms.

Yvonne Terlingen, Amnesty International’s representative to the United Nations, said the Council does indeed look better for human rights than the Commission.

“But it very much depends on how seriously governments are going to take the new provisions and how they are going to interpret them,” said Ms. Terlingen. “If countries are going to continue to engage in the horse trading of votes, then we haven’t made any progress.”

But Ms. Terlingen added that early indications are that governments are taking the new provisions seriously, and that countries who seek membership will have their human rights records carefully examined.

On 9 May, when the first members of the Council were elected, some countries with poor human rights records failed to win seats on the Council. A full list of the new Council members is at <http://www.un.org/ga/60/elect/hrc>.

Diane Ala’i, the representative of the Bahá’í International Community to the United Nations in Geneva, agreed that the Council has great potential.

“Much will depend on who are elected as the first members of the Council,” said Ms. Ala’i. “We hope that countries will move away from the traditional regional groupings and regional affiliations in voting.”

Ms. Ala’i said the Community was nonetheless pleased that the Council will continue to use special rapporteurs and other mechanisms from the Commission to monitor human rights.

“The system of special procedures and experts used by the Commission to monitor and call attention to human rights violations has been extremely important in protecting the Bahá’í community of Iran, which has been subject to systematic violations since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979,” said Ms. Ala’i. *

“If countries are going to continue to engage in horse trading of trade votes, then we haven’t made any progress.”

**– Yvonne Terlingen,
Amnesty International’s
representative to
the United Nations**

Two Bahá'í musicians receive Grammy nominations

NEW YORK — Two Bahá'í musicians received separate nominations for a 2006 Grammy Award, the music industry's best known and most prestigious awards.

Singer songwriter Red Grammer received a nomination for "best musical album for children" for his 2005 album, *BeBop Your Best*.

Jazz singer Tierney Sutton received a nomination in the "jazz vocal album" category for her 2005 album *I'm With the Band*.

The nominations were announced in New York on 8 December 2005.

Finalists were announced on 8 February 2006 and, although neither artist won in their categories, nominations for Grammy Awards are nevertheless considered quite prestigious in and of themselves.

BeBop Your Best is Mr. Grammer's sixth album for children. Its songs focus on the development of moral character, with titles like

"Truthfulness," "Responsibility," "Kindness," and "Integrity." The songs on the album were co-written with veteran songwriter Pamela Phillips Oland.

"One of the really cool things about getting a Grammy nomination for an album like this is that it is all about character, which is somewhat unusual for a popular album," said Mr. Grammer, who has been a Bahá'í for 33 years.

Mr. Grammer said the nomination was also personally significant because "it reflects recognition of excellence by the music industry."

"It isn't a nomination by your listeners," he said. "It is a nomination by your colleagues."

Long known for his upbeat and inspiring songs for young people, Mr. Grammer has won considerable recognition for his previous albums, many of which also touch on Bahá'í themes, such as the need to treat all people with equality. His album *Teaching Peace* was recognized as one of the "top five" children's recordings of all time by the "All Music Guide."

Ms. Sutton's *I'm With the Band* album was recorded live in March 2005 at Birdland in New York. Produced by Elaine Martone, *I'm With the Band* is Ms. Sutton's first live recording and her sixth album.

Ms. Sutton, who has been a Bahá'í since 1981, said she was deeply gratified to be nominated for a Grammy.

"The way we arrange our music is based on the principle of consultation, and our band is very much run on Bahá'í principles," said Ms. Sutton. "So there is very much a sense with everybody in the band that what we do is essentially a spiritual thing."

In June 2005, Tierney won JazzWeek's Vocalist of the Year Award.

The Grammy Awards are the music industry's best known and most prestigious award. They are granted by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, Inc., an organization of musicians, producers, engineers and recording professionals, who each year choose the nominees and final award winners. ❁

Tierney Sutton, a Bahá'í who was nominated last year for a Grammy Award, in a recent publicity photograph.



The World is Flat

Review, continued from page 16

of computer programming when companies needed software quickly rewritten.

Mr. Friedman then focuses on how this convergence of trends and technologies has given a huge boost to two countries: India and China. With relatively vast populations of highly educated individuals eager to make their way into the global marketplace, these two countries are positioned to become the business and technological superpowers of the 21st century.

For example, he quotes the mayor of the Chinese city of Dalian, Xia Deren, in describing Chinese ambitions at becoming a software powerhouse: “First we will have our young people employed by the foreigners, and then we will start our own companies. It is like building a building. Today, the U.S., you are the designers, the architects, and the developing countries are the bricklayers for the buildings. But one day I hope we will be the architects.”

The middle part of the book deals primarily with how America must refashion itself if it is to survive in his new flattened world. Among other things, he would like America to invest more in scientific education, and to adopt policies that encourage innovation and leadership, such as a crash program for alternative energy and conservation.

The last section deals with how this flattening process is affecting more than business relationships. He suggests, for example, that “flatism” in part accounts for the rise of Islamic radicalism.

“One of the unintended consequences of the flat world is that it puts different societies and cultures in much greater direct contact with one another,” writes Mr. Friedman, noting that some cultures thrive on the opportunities for collaboration while others are “threatened, frustrated, and even humiliated” by this close contact.

“When Muslim radicals and fundamentalists look at the West, they see only the openness that makes us, in their eyes, decadent and promiscuous,” writes Mr. Friedman. And, “if openness, women’s empowerment, and freedom of thought and inquiry are the real sources of the West’s economic strength, then the Arab-Muslim world would have to change. And the fundamentalists and extremists do not want to change.”

As indicated at the start of this review,

Bahá’ís are likely to find much in this book that will seem familiar.

Bahá’u’lláh was unquestionably the world’s first true globalist — a vision that Bahá’ís understand came through Divine inspiration. He clearly foresaw — to borrow Mr. Friedman’s terminology — a “flattening” of the world such that humanity would come to recognize that it is a single race, living for all practical purposes in a single country — a country that is the planet itself.

Bahá’u’lláh also identified some of the new requirements for peace and prosperity in a globalized era. These include religious harmony, equality for women, a supreme emphasis on education, and an embrace of diversity,

For example, Mr. Friedman says that the flat world will be driven by a much more diverse group of players. “Individuals from every corner of the flat world are being empowered. Globalization 3.0 makes it possible for so many more people to plug and play, and you’re going to see every color of the human rainbow take part.”

Bahá’u’lláh very clearly envisioned a future where all the peoples of the world, of whatever race or color, would be treated equally — sharing in the creation of a new global society. “God is no respecter of persons on account of either color or race,” state the Bahá’í writings. “All colors are acceptable to Him, be they white, black, or yellow.”

Mr. Friedman also writes about the importance of moral virtues, saying that Internet search engines have made it more difficult to lie or otherwise inflate your reputation or record. “In a flat world, you can’t run, you can’t hide... Live your life honestly, because what ever you do, whatever mistakes you make, will be searchable one day.”

Bahá’u’lláh likewise saw that in a globalized world, moral principle would be all the more important, since the old standards of trust, such as membership in the tribe, would not be enough to hold it together. “Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of mankind,” the Bahá’í writings state. “Without truthfulness, progress and success in all of the worlds are impossible for a soul.”

The World is Flat is an important work. While many of us, Bahá’ís included, have an abstract vision of the degree to which humanity is rapidly becoming one, the insightful and detailed reporting provided by Mr. Friedman help make such abstractions real. And that can only help us all deal with the changes that are so rapidly transforming the world today. ✨

**“In a flat world,
you can’t run,
you can’t hide...
Live your life
honestly, because
what ever you do,
whatever mis-
takes you make,
will be searchable
one day.”**

**– Thomas L.
Friedman**

A New Voyage of Discovery

**The World is Flat:
A Brief History of
the Twenty-first
Century**

**By Thomas L.
Friedman**

**Farrar, Straus and
Giroux**

New York

To come right to the main point of this review: Thomas Friedman's brilliant catch phrase, book title and powerfully developed new thesis — *The World is Flat* — is yet another reaffirmation of what Bahá'u'lláh said about 150 years ago when He declared that “The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”

That's not to say there is nothing new in Mr. Friedman's latest book. *The World Is Flat* is a wide-ranging examination of how trends and technologies like freedom, the Internet, and open-source software are converging to make it possible for educated people everywhere to compete with the best and the brightest in North America and Europe. And that is changing everything, for people everywhere, much more quickly than had been previously imagined.

Mr. Friedman, a Pulitzer prize-winning columnist for the *New York Times*, says the convergence of these trends and technologies is “flattening” the world. They create a “level playing field” where companies and individuals now successfully compete in the global market regardless of location.

Mr. Friedman is by now an acknowledged expert on globalization, having outlined its impact in his 1999 book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. There he argued that globalization had become “the dominant international system at the end of the twentieth century — replacing the Cold War system...”

This thesis is further developed in *The World Is Flat*, adding this idea: the acceleration of globalization has now empowered not just countries but individuals to a degree never before thought possible.

He identifies three successive waves of globalization. The first was powered by trade between the Old World and the New World from 1492 until about 1800. The second was powered by the Industrial Revolution and spearheaded by multinational companies, running from 1800 to 2000.

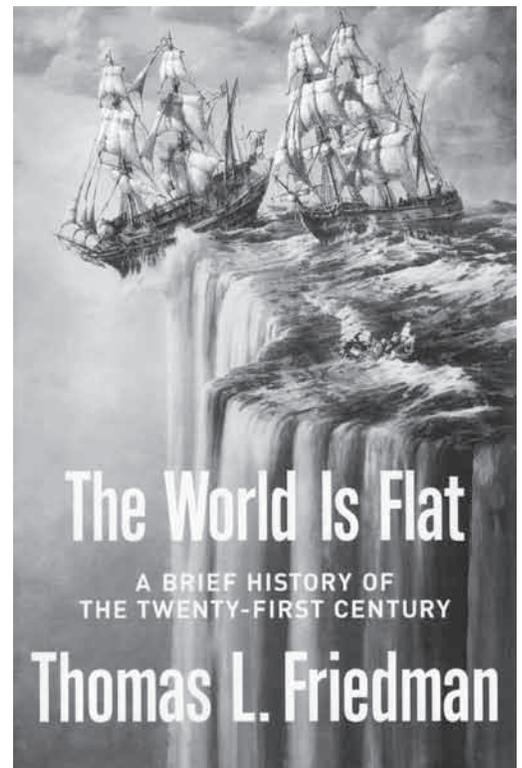
“I argue in this book that around the year 2000 we entered a whole new era: Globalization 3.0,” writes Mr. Friedman. “Globalization 3.0 is shrinking the world from a size small to a size tiny and flattening the playing field at the same time.

“And while the dynamic force in Globaliza-

tion 1.0 was countries globalizing and the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was companies globalizing, the dynamic force in globalization 3.0 — the thing that gives it its unique character — is the newfound power for *individuals* to collaborate and compete globally.

“And the lever that is enabling individuals and groups to go global so easily and so seamlessly is not horsepower, and not hardware, but software — all sorts of new applications — in conjunction with the creation of a global fiber-optic network that has made us all next-door neighbors.”

Mr. Friedman then identifies “the ten forces that flattened the world.” These include:



the fall of the Berlin Wall, which allowed us “to think about the world as a single market, a single ecosystem, and a single community”; the creation of the Netscape browser, which opened the Internet to everyone; the development of workflow software, which allowed individuals anywhere to collaborate on projects; and the scramble to fix the Y2K millennium “bug,” which caused the first big outsourcing

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