

British and the Baha'i Faith



"Sir Abbas Effendi 'Abdu'l-Baha"

Knighthood, Protections and Appreciations bestowed upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá by the British Crown in 1920 by General Allenby

In Haifa, Palestine (now Israel), 'Abdu'l-Baha took care of the poor and dying; often feeding and washing the sick and diseased Himself. One year before a famine that struck northern Israel and southern Lebanon, 'Abdu'l-Baha had many fields bought and ordered extra crops to be grown; thus saving tens of thousands (mostly Arab Muslims and Druze and Turks, Christian Arminians and a some Jewish colonists) from starvation during the famine. He knew there would be a famine one year before the famine struck. Because of this act, and many others, He was knighted "Sir Abbas Effendi 'Abdu'l-Baha" by the British in 1920 by General Allenby (when the British took control of Palestine from the Turks).

The role which 'Abdu'l-Baha had played in allaying the burden of suffering that had oppressed the inhabitants of the Holy Land during the dark days of that distressing conflict; the conferment of a knighthood upon Him at a ceremony specially held for His sake in Haifa, at the residence of the British Governor, at which notables of various communities had assembled; the visit paid Him by General and Lady Allenby, who were His guests at luncheon in Bahji, and whom He conducted to the Tomb of Baha'u'llah, read more about it here: <http://watsongregory.homestead.com/files/knighthood.html>
Who was "Sir Abbas Effendi 'Abdu'l-Baha" read about it here:

http://www.bahai-encyclopedia-project.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81:abdu-l-baha-abbas-1844-1921&catid=36:administrationinstitutions

“The system of government which the British people have adopted in London appeareth to be good, for it is adorned with the light of both kingship and of the consultation of the people.”

(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 93)

“Victoria, Queen of England, was really superior to all the kings of Europe in ability, justness and equitable administration. During her long and brilliant reign the British Empire was immensely extended and enriched, due to her political sagacity, skill and foresight.”

(Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 282)

Baha'u'llah addresses Queen Victoria

"O Queen in London! Incline thine ear unto the voice of thy Lord, the Lord of all mankind . . . We make mention of thee for the sake of God, and desire that thy name may be exalted through thy remembrance of God, the Creator of earth and of heaven. He, verily, is witness unto that which I say. We have been informed that thou hast forbidden the trading in slaves, both men and women. This, verily, is what God hath enjoined in this wondrous Revelation. God hath, truly, destined a reward for thee, because of this. . . . We have also heard that thou hast entrusted the reins of counsel into the hands of the representatives of the people. Thou, indeed, hast done well, for thereby the foundations of the edifice of thine affairs will be strengthened, and the hearts of all that are beneath thy shadow, whether high or low, will be tranquillized. It behooveth them, however, to be trustworthy among His servants, and to regard themselves as the representatives of all that dwell on earth. This is what counselleth them, in this Tablet; He Who is the Ruler, the All-Wise. And if any one of them directeth himself towards the Assembly, let him turn his eyes unto the Supreme Horizon, and say: 'O my God! I ask Thee, by Thy most glorious Name, to aid me in that which will cause the affairs of Thy servants to prosper, and Thy cities to flourish. Thou, indeed, hast power over all things!' Blessed is he that entereth the Assembly for the sake of God, and judgeth between men with pure justice. He, indeed, is of the blissful. . . . O ye members of Assemblies in that land and in other countries! Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind, and bettereth the condition thereof, if ye be of them that scan heedfully. Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay, its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously. And if at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. We behold it, in this day, at the mercy of rulers, so drunk with pride that they cannot discern clearly their own best advantage, much less recognize a Revelation so bewildering and challenging as this."



‘Abdu’l-Baha visits London

Public officials, scholars, writers, editors, industrialists, leaders of reform movements, members of the British aristocracy, and influential clergymen of many denominations eagerly sought Him out, invited Him to their platforms, classrooms, homes and pulpits, and showered appreciation on the views He expounded. On Sunday, 10 September 1911, the Master spoke for the first time to a public audience anywhere, from the pulpit of the City Temple. His words evoked for His hearers the vision of a new age in the evolution of civilization:

This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise.... You are loosed from ancient superstitions which have kept men ignorant, destroying the foundation of true humanity.

The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers.

(Commissioned by The Universal House of Justice, Century of Light)

British Concern for the life of 'Abdu'l-Baha

No need to dwell on the energetic steps which the English believers as soon as they had been apprized of the dire peril threatening the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá undertook to insure His security; on the measures independently taken whereby Lord Curzon and others in the British Cabinet were advised as to the critical situation at Haifa; on the prompt intervention of Lord Lamington, who immediately wrote to the Foreign Office to "explain the importance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's position;" on the despatch which the Foreign Secretary, Lord Balfour, on the day of the receipt of this letter, sent to General Allenby, instructing him to "extend every protection and consideration to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His family and His friends;" on the cablegram subsequently sent by the General, after the capture of Haifa, to London, requesting the authorities to "notify the world that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is safe;" on the orders which that same General issued to the General Commanding Officer in command of the Haifa operations to insure 'Abdu'l-Baha's safety, thus frustrating the express intention of the Turkish Commander-in-Chief (according to information which had reached the British Intelligence Service) to "crucify 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His family on Mt. Carmel" in the event of the Turkish army being compelled to evacuate Haifa and retreat northwards.

The three years which elapsed between the liberation of Palestine by the British forces and the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were marked by a further enhancement of the prestige which the Faith, despite the persecutions to which it had been subjected, had acquired at its world center, and by a still greater extension in the range of its teaching activities in various parts of the world. The danger which, for no less than three score years and five, had threatened the lives of the Founders of the Faith and of the Center of His Covenant, was now at long last through the instrumentality of that war completely and definitely lifted. The Head of the Faith, and its twin holy Shrines, in the plain of 'Akká and on the slopes of Mt. Carmel, were henceforth to enjoy for the first time, through the substitution of a new and liberal regime for the corrupt administration of the past, a freedom from restrictions which was later expanded into a clearer recognition of the institutions of the Cause. Nor were the British authorities slow to express their appreciation of the role which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had played in allaying the burden of suffering that had oppressed the inhabitants of the Holy Land during the dark days of that distressing conflict. **The conferment of a knighthood upon Him at a ceremony specially held for His sake in Haifa, at the residence of the British Governor**, at which notables of various communities had assembled; the visit paid Him by General and Lady Allenby, who were His guests at luncheon in Bahji, and whom He conducted to the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh; the interview at His Haifa residence between Him and King Feisal who shortly after became the ruler of Iraq; the several calls paid Him by Sir Herbert Samuel (later Viscount Samuel of Carmel) both before and after his appointment as High Commissioner for Palestine; His meeting with Lord Lamington who, likewise, called upon Him in Haifa, as well as with the then Governor of Jerusalem, Sir Ronald Storrs; the multiplying evidences of the recognition of His high and unique position by all religious communities, whether Muslim, Christian or Jewish; the influx of pilgrims who, from East and West, flocked to the Holy Land in comparative ease and safety to visit the Holy Tombs in 'Akká and Haifa, to pay their share of homage to Him, to celebrate the signal protection vouchsafed by Providence to the Faith and its followers, and to give thanks for the final emancipation of its Head and world Center from Turkish yoke -- these contributed, each in its own way, to heighten the prestige which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh had been steadily and gradually acquiring through the inspired leadership of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

(Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 305)

British response to the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Baha

The news of His [‘Abdu’l-Baha] passing [November 28, 1921], so sudden, so unexpected, spread like wildfire throughout the town, and was flashed instantly over the wires to distant parts of the globe, stunning with grief the community of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in East and West. Messages from far and near, from high and low alike, through cablegrams and letters, poured in conveying to the members of a sorrow-stricken and disconsolate family expressions of praise, of devotion, of anguish and of sympathy.

The British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Winston Churchill, telegraphed immediately to the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, instructing him to "convey to the Bahá'í Community, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, their sympathy and condolence." Viscount Allenby, the High Commissioner for Egypt, wired the High Commissioner for Palestine asking him to "convey to the relatives of the late Sir 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas Effendi and to the Bahá'í Community" his "sincere sympathy in the loss of their revered leader." . . .

Many and divers newspapers, such as the London "Times," the "Morning Post," the "Daily Mail," the "New York World," "Le Temps," the "Times of India" and others, in different languages and countries, paid their tribute to One Who had rendered the Cause of human brotherhood and peace such signal and imperishable services.

The High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, sent immediately a message conveying his desire to attend the funeral in person, in order as he himself later wrote, to "express my respect for His creed and my regard for His person." As to the funeral itself, which took place on Tuesday morning -- a funeral the like of which Palestine had never seen -- no less than ten thousand people participated representing every class, religion and race in that country. "A great throng," bore witness at a later date, the High Commissioner himself, "had gathered together, sorrowing for His death, but rejoicing also for His life." Sir Ronald Storrs, Governor of Jerusalem at the time, also wrote in describing the funeral: "I have never known a more united expression of regret and respect than was called forth by the utter simplicity of the ceremony."

(Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 311-13)

Shoghi Effendi, grandson of ‘Abdu’l-Baha

The grandson of ‘Abdu’l-Baha attended Balliol College in Oxford, 1920-1921.

Shoghi Effendi, passed away on a trip to London in November 1957 and is buried in the Great Northern London Cemetery. When ‘Abdu’l-Baha passed away unexpectedly in November 1921, Shoghi Effendi returned to Haifa. He was appointed as Guardian of the Baha’i Faith, according to the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Baha. In 1957 he came to London to purchase items for the International Baha’i Archives Building in Haifa. During his stay in London he passed away on November 4th.

First Baha’i World Congress held in London at the Royal Albert Hall, 1963

First International Bahá'í Convention held 21-23 April 1963 at the Bahá'í World Centre, during which the Universal House of Justice was first elected, and the first Bahá'í World Congress, held in London 28 April through 2 May 1963. Immediately following the World Congress the Universal House of Justice met for several days in the council room of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles at 27 Rutland Gate, dealing with essential matters concerning its establishment and initial functioning.

(The Universal House of Justice, Messages 1963 to 1986, p. 8)

Bahá'í International Community collaborated with the World Wide Fund for Nature's Network on Conservation and Religion

Public Information. This office, set up in 1985, assumed responsibility for both public information and public relations for the Bahá'í International Community. . . .

The Office built relations with a number of international organizations. For instance, in 1989 the Bahá'í International Community collaborated with the World Wide Fund for Nature's Network on Conservation and Religion in launching an "Arts for Nature" project with a gala dinner in London at which both Ruhiiyyih Khanum and H. R. H. The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, were featured speakers. The Office cultivated relations with the press through membership in the New York Foreign Press Association and the Religious Public Relations Council.

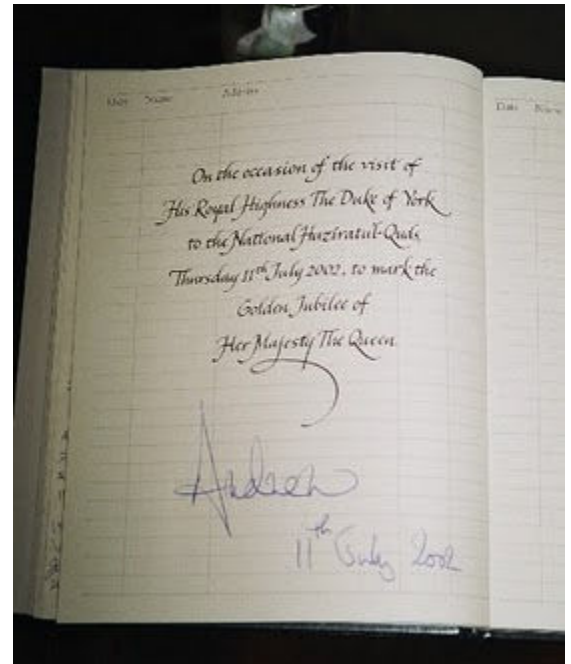
February 29, 1995 Baha'i International Community International Organ

The Bahá'í International Community organized the Arts for Nature event at the Syon House in London, both to encourage artistic expression in the service of conservation and to raise funds for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

(The Baha'i International Community, 1995 Apr 06, Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Baha'i Faith)

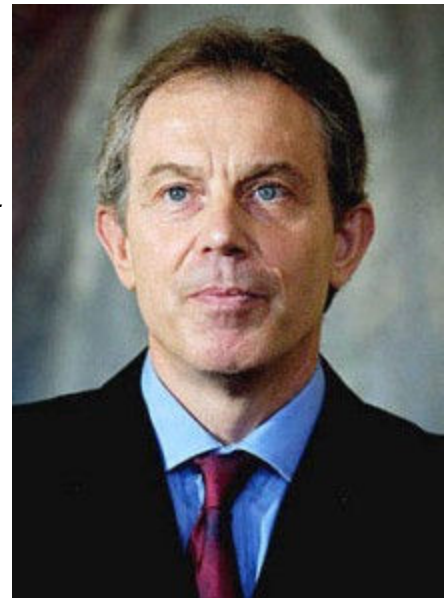
Visit of the Duke of York Prince Andrew to the UK National Baha'i Centre July 2002





Read about Prince Andrew visits the British National Center here:
<http://www.bahaindex.com/en/news/1-general-news/2059-prince-andrew-visits-the-british-national-center>
 Or here: http://bahaicause.blogspot.com/2011/01/visit-of-duke-of-york-to-uk-national_12.html?spref=fb

Tony Blair was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1997-2007. He was the Labour Party's longest-serving Prime Minister and the only leader to have taken the party to three consecutive general election victories. On a number of occasions, Mr Blair sent the UK Bahá'í community messages for the celebration of Naw-Rúz. On 30 May 2008, Tony Blair launched the Tony Blair Faith Foundation as a vehicle for encouraging different faiths to join together in promoting respect and understanding, as well as working to tackle poverty. Reflecting Blair's own faith, but not dedicated to any particular religion, the Foundation aims to "show how faith is a powerful force for good in the modern world."



He wrote:

"I am very much encouraged by the vision the Baha'i community demonstrates in recognising the power of interfaith dialogue and the importance of all citizens fulfilling their potential. Your community has a vibrancy which is well demonstrated by the recent opening of the Baha'i Gardens on Mount Carmel in Israel. It is an outstanding monument to your faith." 21 March 2002

"In many ways, Bahá'ís embody the spirit of community cohesion that is so important to our society. The Bahá'í community, in its outlook on life and in its proactive work in the inter-faith, cohesion and anti-discrimination fields, show how much faith-based bodies can contribute to wider society, and the Government looks forward to continuing our good relationship." 21 March, 2005

"I warmly commend all that the Baha'i community does for social cohesion and better inter-faith relations, which makes such a valuable contribution to our society. Your commitment to tackling discrimination and promoting our shared humanity is particularly important. I hope that this work will become increasingly well-known." 21 March 2006

Read more about it here: <http://bahaitributes.wordpress.com/2008/09/21/tony-blair-1953/>

British Prime Minister praises Baha'i community

7 April 2005

LONDON — The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, has praised the work of the nation's Baha'i community in assisting social cohesion and the interfaith movement.

"In many ways, Baha'is embody the spirit of community cohesion that is so important to our society," Mr. Blair said in a message on the occasion of the Baha'i Naw-Ruz (New Year).

"The Baha'i community, in its outlook on life and in its proactive work in the inter-faith, cohesion and anti-discrimination fields, show how much faith-based bodies can contribute to wider society, and the Government looks forward to continuing our good relationship," Mr. Blair said.

The message was read at the Naw-Ruz reception held on 21 March 2005 on the terrace of the House of Commons. Baha'i representatives, members of both Houses of Parliament, and senior members of the public service attended the event.

The All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Baha'i Faith sponsored the gathering, which was also attended by representatives of interfaith organizations, NGOs, and the media.

The All Party Friends of the Baha'i Faith was formed in 1999 and has since hosted five Naw-Ruz receptions. The group is open to members of Parliament from across the political spectrum and was formed largely in response to the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran and other states.

The chair of the All Party Friends of the Baha'i Faith, Lembit Opik MP, spoke of his admiration for the work of the Baha'is.



The secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom, Barney Leith, thanked the All Party Friends of the Baha'i Faith for defending the human rights of the Baha'is in Iran and for keeping the government of the United Kingdom informed of the situation.

"Sadly, the situation of the Baha'is in Iran is deteriorating at the moment. This makes the work of the All Party Friends of the Baha'is even more vital," Mr. Leith said.

Entertainer Inder Manocha, a Baha'i who was named best comedian in last year's Ethnic Multicultural Media Achievement Awards, was master of ceremonies for the gathering.

Baha'i communities throughout the world celebrate their new year, marked by the spring equinox in the northern hemisphere, between sunset on 20 March 2005 and sunset on the 21st.

Known as "Naw-Ruz," the festival has been celebrated in Iran from time immemorial, and was confirmed by Baha'u'llah as a holy day. It coincides with the first day of the first month of the year in the Baha'i calendar.

Read more about it here: <http://news.bahai.org/story/362>

Bahá'ís receive message from Prime Minister Blair at New Year's reception in House of Commons

21 March 2002

LONDON — In a message commemorating the Bahá'í New Year, British Prime Minister Tony Blair commended the Bahá'í community of the United Kingdom for its "significant contribution" to multiculturalism and interfaith dialogue.

The message was read at a reception on 21 March 2002 in the House of Commons, which was attended by nearly 100 people.

The gathering was sponsored by the All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Bahá'í Faith, and participants included members of the British parliament and other government officials, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations and members of the media.

MP John Battle, the Prime Minister's advisor on interfaith matters, read the Prime Minister's message.

"I have a clear vision of a multi-cultural Britain -- one which values the contribution made by each of our ethnic, cultural, and faith communities," stated

Mr. Blair, as read by Mr. Battle. "I am determined to see a truly dynamic society, in which people from different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds can live and work together, whilst retaining their distinctive identities, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

"British Bahá'ís make a significant contribution towards achieving this vision and we are a stronger, better country because of it. It is particularly important that we celebrate the contribution of the Bahá'í faith to the stability and prosperity of British society as a whole.

"I am very encouraged by the vision the Bahá'í community demonstrates in recognizing the power of interfaith dialogue and the importance of all citizens fulfilling their potential. Your community has a vibrancy which is well demonstrated by the recent opening of the Bahá'í Gardens on Mount Carmel in Israel. It is an outstanding monument to your faith," said Mr. Blair's statement.

At the reception, Barney Leith, Secretary General of the Bahá'í Community of the United Kingdom, welcomed participants and talked about the UK Bahá'í community's Institute for Social Cohesion, an initiative to facilitate dialogue between entities that are working towards building stronger societal bonds in the United Kingdom.

MP Lembit Opik, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Bahá'ís, welcomed the people to the reception and spoke of his esteem for the Bahá'í community.

"The Bahá'ís seem to have a uniquely positive image among religious believers," Mr. Opik said.

"Personally I feel that this is because Bahá'í teachings fit human nature rather than trying to change it."

The All Party Friends of the Bahá'ís was formed in 1999. The group is open to members of Parliament, peers, and members of the European parliament and was formed largely in response to the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran and other states.

This was the third reception held by the Bahá'ís in the Parliamentary building, but was the first held on the terrace of the House of Commons, the most prestigious parliamentary venue for this type of event. Omid Djalili, a Bahá'í actor and comedian, was the guest speaker for the evening. He performed a 10-minute stand-up comedy routine about world culture and the humor inherent in diversity.

Bahá'ís celebrate their new year on 21 March; the date coincides with the vernal equinox and the traditional beginning of Spring. The Bahá'í calendar, which was established by Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Faith, is based on 19 months of 19 days, with four intercalary days.

Read more about it here: <http://news.bahai.org/story/156>



Barney Leith, Secretary-General of the Bahá'í Community of the United Kingdom, addresses the some one hundred participants at the Bahá'í new year's reception in the British House of Commons on 21 March. | MP Lembit Opik, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Bahá'ís, stands to the right.

Cherie Blair: defends persecuted Bahá'ís of Iran

Iran's Baha'is face "uncertain, dangerous future."

By BNUK-July 9th, 2009

Cherie Blair QC – one of the United Kingdom's leading human rights lawyers and wife of former Prime Minister Tony Blair – is calling for Iran to ensure that seven leaders of the Bahá'í faith – held in prison for more than a year without charge or access to their legal counsel – be given a fair trial and a chance of justice.



In an article published in Thursday's edition of *The Times*, Mrs. Blair writes that, in the aftermath of Iran's disputed Presidential election result, there is a risk that the ongoing threat to the country's largest non-Muslim religious minority may be overlooked. "They face a very uncertain, dangerous future," writes Ms Blair.

Read more about here: <http://www.iranpresswatch.org/post/4296>

Or here: <http://www.bromleybahai.org.uk/2009/07/14/cherie-blair-iran-s-bah%C3%A1-%C3%ADs-face-uncertain-dangerous-future/>

Or here : <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/jan/12/bahai-rights-on-trial-iran>

The Prime Minister Gordon Brown meets with Bahá'í delegation



The Prime Minister Gordon Brown has underlined the UK government's concern over the seven Bahá'í leaders being detained in Iran. Mr. Brown's remarks were made at a meeting which took place this afternoon at the Prime Minister's office in the Houses of Parliament, attended by Lembit Öpik, MP for Montgomeryshire - who is Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Friends of the Bahá'ís group - and a delegation of three Bahá'ís, including two members of the national governing council of the Bahá'í Faith in the UK.

Read more about it here:

<http://www.bromleybahai.org.uk/2009/07/15/gordon-brown-meets-with-bah%C3%A1-%C3%AD-delegation/>

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

Read about it here: http://www.onecountry.org/e174/e17404as_UK_Naw_Ruz_story.htm

‘Abdu’l-Baha’s PARIS TALKS

Talks given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Paris, France, in 1911 (67BE)

Click here : <http://bahai-faith.manvell.org.uk/fragrant/paris/index.html>

To read more about The Baha'i Faith and Queen Victoria go to:

<http://bahaiforums.com/general-discussion/2308-bahai-faith-queen-victoria.html> or To:

http://www.netcomuk.co.uk/~vickers/warwick_bookshop/pages/queenvictoria.html

For THE HISTORY OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH go to:

<http://www.northill.demon.co.uk/bahai/intro8.htm>

For 100 Years of the Baha'i Faith in Europe check:
http://bahai-library.com/hassall_fazel_100-years_europe

For BBC2: faith39/80 - Bahá'í Faith check:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkzzJQNUpAU>

To learn about Persecutions of Bahá'ís in Iran, go to:
<http://iran.bahai.us/>

To check BBC news
Iran Bahá'ís face espionage trial go to:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8202928.stm>

To learn about the Bahá'í faith go to:
<http://bahai.com/>