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CONCERN FOR 13 MEMBERS OF  
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WHO  
ARE ON TRIAL

**HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 19, 2000*

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I want to share with my colleagues the deep concern that I have for 13 members of the Jewish community in Iran who are on trial for a crime I do not believe they have committed. Iran's arbitrary charges against these thirteen individuals endangers that country's entire Jewish community and is an offense to world Jewry. The trial takes place at the same time when the world honors those who were lost to the Holocaust and vows never to let such atrocities of hate recur.

I am encouraged by the fact that so many of my colleagues have taken a role of moral leadership on this issue, and have expressed their outrage to the Administration and to Iranian authorities. This past week, members of Congress took further steps to emphasize how seriously this trial can affect Iran's status. We wrote to the World Bank and contacted nations on the bank's loan approval board to urge postponement of pending loans for development projects in Iran. Unfortunately, those loans were approved. I am grateful that representatives of numerous nations that were present expressed concern over the trial. The outcome of this trial will not be overlooked by members of Congress or the Jewish and human rights communities.

The future for these thirteen individuals does not look promising. No matter what the outcome of this trial is, I will never forget Iran's behavior and will take this matter into account as I make foreign policy decisions that affect that country. I commend to my colleagues an article written by Douglas Bloomfield for the Chicago Jewish Star. Mr. Bloomfield's column is usually full of great information and insight, this one is particularly compelling and is worthy of members' attention.

SHOA TRIAL

(By Douglas M. Bloomfield)

There was something deeply troubling and yet fitting that as Jews around the world last week remembered the Six Million who perished in the Holocaust, the Ayatollahs began the trial of 13 Jews accused of spying for Israel. It was a dramatic reminder that Jews remain endangered in some parts of the world.

The time and place were appropriate. Iran is where a long-ago Hitler once concocted genocidal plans for the Jews of the Persian Empire. Just a few weeks ago, Haman's modern descendants declared the ancient vizier was really an Egyptian, not unlike the Austrians trying to convince the world Hitler was really a German.

The trial of 13 men accused on trumped up espionage charges opened on a dramatic note with the televised confessions, outside the courtroom, of first, one man and then two more and other followed, all dutifully denying coercion.

It was an alarming development unabashedly offered by a regime that wanted the

world to see the confessions but not the trial.

Naturally, the "confessed" spies declared that their admissions were voluntary; what would one expect from a man who'd been in an Iranian jail for some 15 months, never allowed to see his lawyer?

It was reminiscent of Iran's Lebanese allies distributing videotapes of their American hostages pleading guilty to sundry offenses, and North Vietnam staging televised war crime confessions by American POW's.

No court in any civilized country would consider such confessions to be valid, but then again few would call Iran "civilized."

If the Iranian charges were true and the confessions freely given, there would be no reason to keep the evidence and the trial secret.

The defense attorney for one of the three said that under Islamic law and international norms, a confession given by a prisoner after more than a year in jail is invalid.

International attention is focused on the courtroom in the southern city of Shiraz. President Clinton has repeatedly spoken out, as have Members of Congress, the nation's governors and many mayors and other public officials.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright last week warned Iranian leaders the trial "will have repercussions everywhere" on that country's efforts to "earn international respect." That came in the same week that her department officially reaffirmed Iran's status as a leading state sponsor of international terrorism.

Other leaders have made serious and personal efforts to help: the Pope, UN Secretary General Kofi Anan, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Prime Minister Tony Blair and others from Japan, Russia, China, Europe and elsewhere.

More than 60 journalists, human rights activists and diplomats from the around the globe stood vigil outside the locked doors of a legal system controlled by the most extreme factions in that country. Inside, the lives of 13 Jews were in the hands of a single man who sits as prosecutor, judge and jury.

Israel has privately assured the United States the men are innocent and it is unaware of any links between the accused and Israeli officials. Charges that they also spied for the United States have apparently been dropped.

Some of the international pressure is apparently getting attention in Tehran. That's why the prisoners were presented on television confessing. It may also explain why the trial was adjourned for Passover, not exactly a national holiday in the fervently Islamic state, and why the three youngest defendants were released on bail. Trials in Iran usually last hours, not weeks as this one is expected to. The court could have declared them guilty and quickly hanged them, as happened three years ago with two other Jews similarly charged.

But will those gestures, aimed at the international community, be enough to save the lives of these men? What do these gestures mean?

The hard-liners have never shown much sensitivity to world opinion. In fact, they seem to revel in sticking their thumbs in the eyes of public opinion, especially American and Israeli eyes.

Just before the trial began, a leading cleric delivered a sermon over state radio declaring, "These people are spies . . . they are Jews and are . . . by nature enemies of Muslims."

These 13 Jews are pawns in a battle between the hard-line Islamic extremists and the reformers, who scored another important victory in last Friday's runoff elections, for control of an ancient land whose chief ex-

ports of late have been religious bigotry and terrorism. One thing the ruling ayatollahs and the reformers led by President Khatemi seem to agree on is their hatred of Israel.

If the verdicts are guilty, which carries a death penalty, some fear the ayatollahs declare that all Jews are Zionists, and the Zionist state is the mortal enemy of Islam and Iran, and thus all Jews are enemies and spies.

Iran wages daily war against Israel through proxies such as Hezbollah. Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said again recently the only way to solve the problems of the Middle East is to annihilate Israel.

As the trial in Shiraz opened, there was an event worth noting in another country with a long and bitter history of anti-Semitism: Poland. Some 5,000 young Jews from around the world, led by the presidents of Israel and Poland, took part in the annual March of the Living from Auschwitz to Birkenau to honor those who perished solely for the crime of being Jews.

Just weeks earlier, a British judge struck an important blow for the cause of truth and morality, a blow in an ongoing battle against Holocaust denial that should never have been necessary.

Other nations are at long last beginning to come to terms with their Holocaust guilt and with Holocaust denial; throughout the Arab world, however, denial is a surging companion to rising anti-Semitism, often officially encouraged as in Egypt and Syria.

In this country, too, we have made tremendous progress in confronting the scourge of anti-Semitism, but there are counter-forces, including a presidential candidate who admires Hitler, belittles the Holocaust and blames the Jews for dragging America into World War II.

The trial of the Iran 13 is an alarming reminder that for all the lessons learned from the tragic past, there remain places where Hitler's work is commended, not condemned. It is a clarion warning of our responsibility to stand guard on the legacy of Hitler's victims in Iran and around the world.

VIEJAS BAND OF KUMEYAAY INDIANS:  
SPIRIT OF COOPERATION  
AWARD

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 19, 2000*

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, today I recognize the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians, as it is honored by the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, AFL-CIO, at its 12th annual Worker's Memorial Dinner with its Spirit of Cooperation Award.

The Viejas Indian Casino recently signed a contract with the Communications Workers of America Local 9400, in what is possibly the first ever union contract with any Tribal Casino in the United States. Not only did Viejas sign an agreement with the union allowing it to organize workers at the casino, but they also gave the union space for a temporary organizing office on the property and allowed the union easy access to the employees.

After the representation election, Viejas and the union successfully negotiated a contract that provides good wages, benefits, and union representation to employees. Viejas has been model of employer attitude and has forced a truly special relationship with the union.