



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.-Kans.)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1978

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STATE DEPT. RESPONDS TO DOLE CONCERN FOR SAFETY OF MINORITY GROUPS IN IRAN

WASHINGTON-- State Department officials have told Senator Bob Dole (R.-Kansas) that "the U.S. Embassy in Tehran has adopted an understanding attitude toward the issuance of visas, particularly for minority groups" who wish to leave Iran.

Dole was also told by Assistant Secretary of State Douglas J. Bennett, Jr., that "the entry into the U.S. and the status of Iranians already in the United States come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service" and that "the State Department has recommended that the Department of Justice adopt a similar understanding attitude."

Dole originally sent a letter to President Carter on February 15, 1979, expressing his concern for religious minorities in Iran. He specifically noted that he had received information indicating that Jews, Baha'is and Christians were being persecuted and, in some cases, physically abused by some of the revolutionary factions.

"Assistant Secretary Bennett was responding at the request of the President, and I appreciate that response," said Dole. "He notified me that the new government of Iran has give its assurances to the Rabbi of Tehran and to other Jewish leaders that Jewish Iranians do not need to fear for their safety," Dole added.

Dole further stated that he plans to keep a close watch on the situation in Iran in the coming weeks and months.

"While it is heartening to learn that the State Department and the Jewish leaders in Iran have received these assurances, I am still concerned about other groups, like the Baha'is, the Armenian Christians and the Zoroastrians. And in a situation that is as unstable as that which we see in Iran, it may be that government assurances will not be enough to stem the tide of religious persecution."

Dole has sent a letter to the Justice Department requesting that they "act expeditiously" on entry into the U.S. of Iranian religious minorities.

"Also," said Dole, "I plan to join with Senator Bayh of Indiana in sending a letter to the Prime Minister of Iran, expressing our concern on this matter and asking for his personal reassurance. Senator Bayh's office will be sending out the letter early next week."