

# The Star-Ledger

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## SPEAKING UP

### Iranian Jews held as spies must be freed

By Rev. Charles T. Rush  
and Charles "Shai" Goldstein

In Iran, 27,000 Jews live in a virtual prison. Incarcerated in a real prison are the 10 who were falsely convicted on charges of spying for Israel. The only real crime these men committed is being active members of the Iranian Jewish community.

The fate of these 10 Iranian Jews — Dani "Hamid" Teflin, Asher Zadmehr, Naser Levy Hayim, Ramin Farzam, Javid Beit Yakov, Farzad Kashi, Shahrokh Paknahad, Farhad Saleh, Faramarz Kashi and Ramin Renatizadeh — will be determined on Tuesday when an appellate court will decide whether to overturn the convictions. Iranian President Mohammad Khatami is scheduled to meet with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Wednesday in conjunction with the United Nations Millennium Summit.

The Iranian 10 were convicted on July 1 and were sentenced to up to 13 years in prison. The trial was a farce. The court was judge, prosecutor and jury. The defendants were denied the right to choose their own

legal representation, a clear violation of Iranian and international law.

The trial was closed to all observers, including the media, the defendants' families, Jewish community leaders, foreign diplomats and representatives of human rights groups. No evidence was presented. Two "confes-

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sions" for "spying and other crimes against the state" (obtained through coercion and under duress and later recanted) were full of contradictions and inconsistencies.

Before and since the trial, there has been a battle between moderates and extremists. Additional restrictions have been placed on the press in Iran during the past two weeks.

How could such a show trial occur? How could such injustice be allowed to flourish?

Because in Iran the church is the state and the state is the church.

It is only because of international condemnation that these verdicts are being reviewed. Millions of people worldwide — Jews and non-Jews — have marched, rallied, lobbied their country's leaders and sat in vigil on behalf of these martyrs. In fact, it is not unreasonable to believe that these men would already have been executed except for the loud and sustained international outcry.

Therefore, as Tuesday approaches, nothing is more important for us as citizens of a country founded on freedom of religion and separation of church and state than to stand together as Americans committed to justice and call upon the world community to demand that Iran overturn these unjust sentences. Readers can contact Annan by fax at (212) 963-4879 and find additional contacts (and sign an online petition) at [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org).

The Rev. Charles T. Rush is pastor of Christ Church in Summit and executive director of the New Jersey Coalition for Free Exercise of Religion. Charles "Shai" Goldstein is regional director of the Anti-Defamation League and a member of the coalition.