

Appeal to Authority

This is an interview between University of Texas professor James Bill and Iranian Prime Minister Abbas Hoveyda in 1974.

Question: Mr. Hoveyda, the Shah in an interview in *Le Monde* a few days ago indicated that torture was being used in the prisons of Iran.

Hoveyda: I don't believe he said that.

Question: He said exactly that...

Hoveyda: No, I believe he said that Iran only did what other nations of the world do.

Question: He said that other nations tortured psychologically, and that Iran was now beginning to use this kind of torture as well, implying that Iran had been practicing physical torture all along. Mr. Prime Minister, is torture going on in the prisons of Iran?

Hoveyda: [Weak laugh] You mean like pulling out nails and breaking fingers... that kind of torture? No [laugh] of course not.

Question: What would you say if I told you I know of individuals personally who had been tortured in Iranian prisons, friends who had been whipped, beaten, and had their fingernails pulled out.

Hoveyda: Perhaps, but that is not our business. This is police business. I have nothing to do with their activities...

Question: Well I find this torture business depressing.

Hoveyda: [Shouting] Well you taught us how! You trained us! You Americans and British!

Question: I didn't train anybody.

Hoveyda: You Americans did.¹

¹ The questioning was conducted by University of Texas professor James Bill, and the verbatim interview appeared in Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, pp. 186-187.