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1948 -First announcement to open Libya to the Faith	
1951 -Second announcement to open Libya to the Faith.	
-King Idris accedes to the Throne of Libya – Dec. 24, 1951	
1952 -First arrival in Libya, Dr. Munib 'Abdu'l-Husayn Gollestaneh arrives in	
Benghazi February 21, 1952.	
1953 -Formation of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Benghazi in Ridván 1953.	
-Arrival in Tripoli, Libya of Dr. Robert Gulick and Bahiyyih Faraju'lláh and Ella Bailey as well as Bahiyyih's mother Shawket 'Alí Faraju'lláh –	
July 20,	
1956.	
-Passing Away of Ella Bailey August 26, 1953.	
-Mohsen 'Enayát opens Fezzan arriving Sabha September 26, 1953.	
- Circa October 1953, Dr. 'Abdu'l-Husayn Gollestaneh was assaulted at his	

work premises that caused breaking of 3 ribs.

- Áhmad Al Ghadamsi, accepts the Faith and thus becomes the first Berber Bahá'í, sometime towards the end of 1953.

-Circa December 1953, Mustapha El Beji, Tunisian graduate of Zaytouna of Tunis and teacher in El Marj town in Cyrenaica accepts the Faith.

1954 - Circa January 1954; Dr. 'Abdu'l-Husayn Gollestaneh struck by severe depression.

- Circa mid-June 1954, the situation changed very rapidly in Cyrenaica (letter of Muhammad Mustafá dated June 26, 1954 to Mr Banání)

-Arrival of Bashir Hosni 'Abdalláh circa January 1954 – a former associate of

the Mufti of Palestine bearing a letter of introduction from the NSA of Egypt and expelled from the Faith (Letter LSA Benghazi to NSA Egypt dated July 18, 1954)

-July 8, 1954, El Zaman newspaper of Benghazi published an article under the title – “ – ????? ????? ?????? ??????? ??

??????Termination of residence of the Bahá'ís in the country”

- July 10, 1954, a letter on behalf of the Bahá'ís refuting the false information

and accusations of El Zaman was sent to the Governor of Cyrenaica requesting his intervention.

- July 14, 1954, the answer to the above letter came from the Office Publications and Distribution of the Governorate that El Zaman is a private publication and is not under the jurisdiction of the Government.

-Between July and August 1954, Muhammad Mustafá, Ámin Battah, Mohsen

'Enayát, Hebat'ulláh 'Abdu'l-Samad and his wife Tahirih Gollestaneh,

Rowshan Mustapha and Mustapha El Beji were forced to leave Libya.

-August 26, 1954, Selim Jarrah and his wife Parvine left Benghazi.

-August 1954, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Benghazi was dismantled because of departure of members.

1974 -Yusuf Jarrah is appointed Auxiliary Board Member for Libya.

1983 -Yusuf Jarrah family return to Tripoli from the United States (Membership

transfer slip NSA of the USA dated November 7, 1983)

1985 Yusuf Jarrah family are obliged to leave Libya to the United States.

1987 -There is no one besides us in Tripoli, rather in Libya except Riaz Gollestaneh

and his wife in Benghazi (Letter of Fouad Rushdy dated May 19, 1987)

The Bahá'í Faith in Libya

Foreword

It was my privilege to be one of the early Bahá'ís who pioneered to Libya in 1952,

the fourth actually, and although destiny allowed me only two years there at the end of which I had to leave Libya with three other Egyptian Bahá'ís and one Tunisian Bahá'í expelled from the country because of our Faith, I continued to be connected with that country for more than fifty years after.

A sudden rise of hostility against the Bahá'ís by Muslim Shaykhs only two years after the first pioneer entered Libya disrupted the Administration and barred progress in teaching the Faith at a time when the Libyan had just woken from the slumber of a long period of foreign occupation.

During the twelve years that followed my departure, I did not feel it wise to go to Libya and visit the friends there. During that time, the friends of Libya, who had concentrated in Tripoli, which is near to Tunis, Tunisia, where I lived, came to Tunis as often as possible, while they continued a correspondence with me also.

During the years 1968 and 1969, I intermittently spent fortnights and even months in Libya in my work and was able to see the friends there. During the seventies and early eighties, my wife, Ulfet, and I visited the friends in the whole of Libya a few times while travelling to Egypt and back in our effort to help the friends in Egypt. In the nineties I went often to Libya in my work and was able to associate with the friends there.

The few documents and memories that I gathered from that long period of association with the affairs of the Faith in Libya are probably the only ones available worldwide. Hence the importance of recording them in this history.

Libya had been, and still is, a difficult country for teaching the Faith. Many pioneers have sacrificed effort, time and money in their endeavours to teach in Libya over, now, a period of more than seventy years. Yet Libya has not seen any durable success.

Why is that? I have no convincing answer.

In this history of the Bahá'í Faith in Libya, a trace of an answer may be found.

This book, *The Bahá'í Faith in Libya* will be the third in the series of

history of
the Faith in North Africa, following The Bahá'í Faith in Egypt and The
Bahá'í
Faith in Tunisia.

Because the Bahá'í Administration in Libya was short lived, recording the
history
of the Faith tends more towards recording individual achievements and their
effect
on the relation of the Bahá'í Community with the local population.

Introduction

Libya

For the Baha'is of Egypt, Libya seemed a faraway country. Both countries
share an
almost straight border line North/South of some 1000 km from the Mediterranean
in the
north, yet it is unlike Súdán in that there is a wide area of desert that
separates the Egyptians
and the Libyans. Added to this, the population of Libya in 1951, the year of
its independence,
was no more than 1.25 million including foreigners, spread thinly along the
1500 km plus
Mediterranean coast in the north and in the desert oasis in the south of
Tripolitania and in
the Fezzan. The country covers 1.76 million km² some 95% of which is pure
desert. It is
divided into 3 provinces; Tripolitania in the North West with Tripoli as
capital with a
population of some 700,000, Cyrenaica in the East with its capital Benghazi and
a population
of 300,000 and Fezzan South of Tripolitania with its capital Sabha and some
30,000
inhabitants. The country was poor when the Bahá'ís went there. Petroleum
had not been
discovered yet. It was the Italians who had constructed most of the
infrastructure and towns
during the period of their occupation between 1911 and 1942, and much of it
that was in
Cyrenaica, was destroyed during the Second World War.

However, it was to the most desolate Fezzan in Libya that the Sultan
'Abdu'l-Hamíd had
threatened to exile 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the year 1907.

This historic particularity of Libya is of importance to the Bahá'ís.

Estimate of the writer.

Socially, the inhabitants are divided in a number of tribes. Only a few Libyans

had
medium education at the time the first pioneers went there. During the Italian
occupation,
many Libyan families migrated to Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq. With
independence, many
of the immigrants returned to their country amongst whom were highly educated
young
generation members.

On December 24, 1951, King Idris declared Libya independent. Political parties
were
prohibited, and the king's authority was sovereign. Tripolitania and
Cyrenaica were
administered by Britain with a pronounced American presence in Tripoli, while
Fezzan was
administered by France. Idris Sanusi, Emir of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was
crowned king.

The Constitution of new Libya had a Federal Government with three States or
Provinces.

The reader is kindly reminded, that at this stage in the history of this book
we are
in the mid-20th Century, we are in North Africa and we are precisely in Libya
– the
second largest, most sparsely inhabited and one of the poorest countries in the
expanse
of the Great Western Sahara at that time.

Chapter One

First announcement of the NSA of Egypt and Sudan regarding Libya
Following the launching of the second Seven Year Plan in 1946 for the National
Spiritual
Assembly of the United States and Canada, Shoghi Effendi asked the other
National
Assemblies to adopt plans that take them to the year 1953. These plans were
known as
accessory plans. 2

In the year 1948, The Egyptian National Spiritual Assembly announced a 5 year
plan,

1948 – 1953, item 3 of which reads as follows:

3 – Send pioneers to Tunisia, Algeria and Libya.

I have no memory of any action being taken to implement that goal of the plan.

There was no call for pioneers to these three countries in the 19 day Feasts

that I, in

the end of my second university year, heard of.

It is true that Egypt was in a turmoil during that period. The war between

Egypt

and Israel broke out that year with the resounding defeat of the Egyptian army

in

Sinai. To leave the country, an exit visa was necessary from the Army Intelligence.

Another announcement regarding Libya – Revival of Spirit of Pioneering

In April 1951, a United Nations Non-Governmental Organisations Conference for the

Middle East was held in Istanbul, Turkey April 9 – 13, 1951 to which Bahá'í Delegates and

Observers were present. Muhammad Mustafá was the delegate from Egypt and the Súdán.

That was the first International event to which the Bahá'ís in Egypt were invited to

participate by sending a representative. The situation in the Middle East was turbulent

because of the Arab – Israeli conflict and communication with the Guardian was badly hampered.

Upon return from this trip to Turkey, Muhammad Mustafá informed the National

Assembly of the Guardian's wish for Egyptian Bahá'ís to pioneer to Libya and Algeria, both

countries being virgin territories, to use the terminology of the Ten year Plan not yet announced at that date.

During the 19 Day Feast of Nour 1951, I remember clearly when Sobhi Elias, member

of the LSA of Alexandria and probably also NSA member at the time, made the following

announcement: "Muhammad Mustafá returned from Turkey and said that the beloved

Guardian wants pioneers from Egypt to open Libya and Algeria".³

The feast ended and Fouad Rushdy and I walked home. We were both decided to pioneer to Libya. We did, as the following paragraphs show.

See "Shoghi Effendi: Author of Teaching Plans" by 'Alí Nakhjavání p. 93.

Because Egypt was at war with Israel, correspondence between the Guardian and the NSA was difficult.

A couple of months later when I transferred from Alexandria to my home in Zaytún,

Cairo, I found Mohsen 'Enayát, my junior of 2 years, already decided to pioneer to Libya.

Elder Bahá'ís eventually pioneered to Libya, but I mention these two youths: Mohsen

'Enayát and Fouad Rushdy for the imprint they made in the troubled history

of the Faith in
Libya.

The National Spiritual Assembly appointed a Pioneering Committee to channel the offers and the pioneering to these two territories. What was fascinating was the enthusiasm that was there. More than I have ever seen in any time before. The youth struggled to think how they could answer Shoghi Effendi's request. Pioneering spirit was revived.

The Bahá'ís who pioneered to Libya:

Benghazi, Cyrenaica

Dr. Munib 'Abdu'l-Husayn Gollestaneh (MD) of Cairo, Egypt, was the first pioneer

to Libya. He arrived in February 1952 and took up work in Ajedabia hospital – 170 kms

westwards from Benghazi along the road to Tripoli. He taught the Faith to

Áhmad El-

Ghedamsi, the first Libyan to accept the Faith in the spring of 1954. Dr.

Gollestaneh

remained in Libya until 1964 and then left to the United States.

Eng. Yusuf Jarrah and his wife Hayat and two children Hala and Nabíl and child Badi'

came to Benghazi around mid-August 1952. Yusuf and Hayat came from Lebanon, but they

are originally from 'Akká. Yusuf was the mainstay of the Bahá'í community and with Hayat

brought the Faith to many Libyan families.

Mohsen 'Enayát, of Zaytún, Egypt, the youngest Bahá'í among the pioneers to Libya,

arrived Benghazi end of August 1952. He took a job of teacher in Ajedabia, 170 km west of

Benghazi along the coast, where he remained until July 10, 1953, when he left for Sabha in

Fezzan.

Eng. Rowshan Mustapha of Zaytún, Egypt, arrived Benghazi early September 1952.

He remained in Benghazi until the Government terminated his work and residence permit in

1954. He continued his pioneering by going to Tunisia.

Mustafá Salem of Alexandria, Egypt, who was a member of the NSA in Egypt came to

Benghazi probably in September 1952 also, and went to Tripoli on July 16, 1953, where he

was joined by his wife Ra'úth Gabriel. Mustafá Salem passed away on the 23rd November 1962 and was buried in Tripoli. 4

Saleem Jarrah and his wife Parvin Khusraw both originally of Acca, came from Jordan in March 1953. They both transferred to Tripoli and remained there until 1986 when age and health problems forced them to return to Jordan, their country of origin.

Áhmad El Meissi of Lebanon came to Benghazi sometime in 1952. He ceased to contact the friends two years later when the Government terminated the residence permit of a number of Bahá'ís.

Riadh Gollestaneh of Cairo, Egypt, arrived in Benghazi mid-1953. He was joined later with his wife Maheen (née Abreshami). They both remained in Benghazi after the exodus of all other Bahá'í. They lived and died like martyrs.

Feridún Zeinu'l-'Abidín and his wife Assia Rúhí of Cairo, Egypt, came to Benghazi around mid-1953. Later, they transferred to Tripoli.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Benghazi was established in Ridván 1953, but was disbanded in 1954 following the termination of residence for the Egyptian Bahá'ís.

Tripoli, Tripolitania

Dr. Robert Gulick and his wife Bahiyyih Faraj'ulláh and Robert jr. arrived from the United States to Tripoli July 20, 1953. They arranged for Miss Ella Bailey to pioneer with them.

Mrs. Shawkat 'Alí Faraju'lláh née Khanum, mother of Bahiyyih arrived with the Gulicks. She passed away February 15, 1954.⁵

Miss Ella Bailey arrived with the Gulicks also. She passed away a few weeks after arrival.⁶ The beloved Guardian signalled her pioneering to Libya and her death there. She had met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Chicago in 1912 and was blessed by Him.

The Bahá'í World xiii p.931

The Bahá'í World xii p.915

The Bahá'í World xii p. 685

Miss Laura Allen arrived Tripoli September 3, 1953, from the United States.

Feridún Shahrokh and his wife, first pioneers to Libya from Iran, arrived September 6, 1953, went to Tripoli with intention of settling there as merchants.

Mrs Katayún arrived with the Shahrokh to settle in Tripoli.

Ne'ímat 'Abdel-Wahid and his wife Nosrat from Iraq, arrived in Benghazi the 17th of September 1953 and proceeded to Tripoli on the 20th. They remained for some years. They had their firstborn, a son, in December 1953.

Miss 'Esmat Wakil of Iraq came with the 'Abdel-Wahids and went with them to Tripoli.

Miss 'Esmat is the sister of Mrs 'Abdel-Wahid.

Miss Rizvanieh Ighrari came from Iran to Benghazi on the 17th of September 1953. The

LSA directed her to Tripoli, but later she returned to Benghazi and married with Dr. Munib

Gollestaneh and the couple remained and maintained the Benghazi centre for many years after most of the other pioneers had left.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Tripoli was established in Ridván 1954.

Sabha, Fezzan

Mohsen 'Enayát (1931 - 2024) went to Sabha in Fezzan in answer to the request of Shoghi Effendi, arriving there on the 26th of September 1953. He was forced to leave Sabha ten months later during which a Provincial Minister accepted the Faith and the Faith was introduced to the representative to the parliament of the Tuaregs.

Fouad Rushdy of Alexandria, Egypt arrived in Sabha before the departure of Mohsen

in order to keep the locality open to the Faith. He was later joined in marriage with Siham

Jarrah of 'Akká and they remained in Fezzan for 3 years after which Fouad's employer, the

Ministry of Finance, transferred him to Tripoli. Fouad and Siham remained in Tripoli until their death in August 1996 and June 2000.

Derna, Cyrenaica

Eng. Hebat'ulláh 'Abdu'l-Samad and his wife Tahireh Gollestaneh

arrived from Cairo,
Egypt, to Derna in Cyrenaica in April 1954 and were obliged to leave in August
1954
because the government terminated his services because the couple were
Bahá'ís.

Later the following pioneers came to Libya: 7
? Ishaq Ghabrial & Salwa Iskandar with their three children Ra'úf,
Baha'a and
Sameh. Lived in Zliten and Gharian.

List provided by Riadh 'Alí 25.02.2023.

? Sabri & Ra'issa Elias accompanied by their daughters Carmel and
Malakút. Lived in Tripoli. Arrived late 1969).

? Abdul-Karim Isfahání (of Syria). Lived in Tripoli and Benghazi. Arrived
late 1968 or early 1969.

? Fouad Abdu'l Razzaq Abbas & Salwa Sabri (both of Iraq) accompanied by
their two children. Lived in Baidha.

? Enayat Rushdy and Ragaa' Rúhí (and their children Hassan and Rania).
Lived in Tripoli.

? Abbas Rushdy and Mariam Rúhí. Lived in Tripoli.

? Muhammad 'Abdu'l-Mageed Ahmad, a Baha'i from Sudan.
Arrived in

Tripoli early 1970's but didn't stay for too long to my knowledge.

? Rif'át and Fatima Shirazi (Egypt) accompanied by their three daughters
Malakút, Iman and Hala. Lived in Zuwarah.

? Riadh 'Alí of Iraq and his wife Rose (née Roumani), pioneered to Libya
and
lived in Gharian, Tripoli and Sirte (June 1969 to June 1976).

Chapter Two

Benghazi - Cyrenaica

Libya was opened to the Bahá'í Faith by the arrival from Egypt of Dr. Munib
'Abdu'l-

Husayn Gollestaneh on February 21, 1952 and settled in Benghazi, the capital
city of the
eastern province of Cyrenaica.

He was joined in August 1952, by Eng. Yusuf Jarrah and his wife Hayat
Jarrah and their

daughter Hala (4 yrs.) and their son Nabíl (2yrs.) and baby Badi'.

Mohsen 'Enayát must have arrived in Benghazi end of August 1952 followed
three days

later by Eng. Rowshan Mustapha in Benghazi also.

Other early arrivals in Benghazi were Mustafá Salem, around end September
1952 and

Salim Jarrah and his wife Parvin, in March 1953.

Áhmad El Meissi of Lebanon was already in Benghazi sometime after the
arrival of the

first pioneer - Dr. Munib 'Abdu'l-Husayn Gollestaneh and thus it was possible to establish the first local Spiritual Assembly of Benghazi during Ridván 1953. The Bahá'í Centre of Benghazi began with the autumn of 1952. The Centre quickly became a stopover for pioneers or visitors to Libya or on their way to other destinations. Boarding, transport and help of all sorts was provided by the Bahá'ís of Benghazi to Bahá'ís going through the town or trying to settle there.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Benghazi

The establishment of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Benghazi was a source of happiness to the beloved Guardian. This was confirmed by a letter from Dr. El-Sayyid Muhammad Al-'Azzawí8 dated July 1st, 1953 to the Local Assembly of Benghazi wherein Mr Al-'Azzawí wrote:

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Dr. El-Sayyid Muhammad Al-'Azzawí, a believer of Egypt, was visiting in Haifa with special permission from the Guardian at a time when believers from most of the middle eastern countries were not permitted to visit the Holy Land because of the ongoing war with Israel.

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"؟؟؟؟؟؟"؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟؟

Further instructions from the Guardian arrived to the Assembly in Benghazi through Mr. 'Abdu'l-Rahman Jarrah of 'Akká, father of Yusuf Jarrah, the Chairman of the Local Assembly in Benghazi, confirmed in an attachment to a Message to the Assembly in Benghazi from Mr. Leroy Ioas dated July 1953:

“The beloved Guardian wishes 'Abdu'l-Rahman Jarrah to write his son and the Assembly in Benghazi of his happiness over the establishment of the new Assembly and to assure them of his prayers in their behalf. He feels if they can do any extension teaching work, he would like them to teach in Tripoli, and also in Feisan (sic), Tripoli, in Libya however, takes precedence over Feisan (sic). Both are very important, so if they have any ones wishing to pioneer, or can do some teaching works in either of these two areas of Libya, the Guardian would appreciate it”

The above two quotes were confirmed in a letter from Mr Leroy Ioas dated 16th July 1953 where we read:

“The Guardian has instructed me to write to your Assembly, calling your attention to the very great responsibility that rests upon you as the only Assembly in Benghazi,

and perhaps the strongest in North Africa outside of Egypt.

He knows how diligently you have worked to establish your Assembly, but at the same time he knows you appreciate the great spiritual gifts that come to the individuals who continuously move to new areas to establish the Faith when it has

become strongly established in a central point.

“The beloved Guardian attaches the greatest importance to the Cities of Tripoli and

Feezan (sic). He would certainly be most happy if any of the friends in Benghazi

could establish themselves in either of these cities, so that the Faith might become

established there. Feezan (sic) as you know, is the place where the Turkish Government had in mind imprisoning the Master, and for this reason the Guardian feels it extremely important that an Assembly be formed there. Likewise Tripoli is

the most important city in Tripolitania, and if your Assembly could establish the

Faith in those cities, it would add to the eternal glory of Benghazi, as well as the

beloved Friends who settle there”

The role of Yusuf Jarrah

It was Yusuf Jarrah who was instrumental in building up rapidly the Community of

Benghazi to a Local Assembly status. He was the mainstay of the Community in Benghazi,

and later in Tripoli.

He helped in finding jobs for a number of friends allowing them to pioneer to Libya. He

and his wife Hayat Jarrah, a capable speaker and capable of sustained valuable speech,

quickly endeared themselves to many a Libyan family, especially when they transferred to

Tripoli in September 1954.

When the threat to expel the Bahá'ís from Libya loomed in mid-June of 1954, he was

one of the Bahá'ís targeted for expulsion. His case was more serious in consequences. He

was stateless and his expulsion from Libya to Lebanon would have been disastrous for him

and his family. Fortunately, the Prime Minister of Libya, who knew Yusuf Jarrah's value,

intervened and transferred Yusuf to Tripoli and to the Federal Government, as opposed to

the Provincial Government of Cyrenaica.

Hala Jarrah⁹ added the following information regarding that critical period

of their life in

Libya:

I was young at the time and went to the Amira School for girls in Benghazi. At the

head of the school was Mme Hamida El-‘Anizi¹⁰, of the well-known ‘Anizi family, one

of the big tribes in Cyrenaica. Mme Hamida was also the President of the Women

Charity Association in which my mother, Hayat Jarrah, was a member as well as

Mme Yosra Canaan wife of the Prime Minister of Libya, Eng. Mustafá Ben Halim.

Yosra was Palestinian and a close friendship developed between my mother and her.

When the Libyan Government decided to expel the Bahá’ís from Libya, Mme ‘Anizi

went to the King at his palace and with courage confidence told the King said to him,

“Yusuf Jarrah used to send a lamb eve³⁵

ry Aid El Adha to feast the orphans in Orphanage while your ministers filled their

stomachs with lamb meat. If the Bahá’ís are like Yusuf Jarrah then I am one of them!”

Mother informed Mme Yosra that we were being expelled from the country and she informed her husband Mustafá Ben Halim. Ben Halim immediately contacted my

father and told him to go quickly to Tripoli with the family where he was to take up

the function of Director of roads in the Federation Ministry of Public Works.

The

family transferred too transferred to Tripoli and I remember we travelled by night

for a long time and we settled in a stricken by war hotel for a few months until a

Libyan employee with my father offered us a two room house adjoining his house free

until the Government allocates us a house or apartment. We were most grateful to

this kind and generous Libyan whom we called Uncle ‘Abdu’lláh El Hammaly.

My

mother taught his wife to read and write.

The government allocated for us a beautiful house in the town’s best residence area,

overlooking the sea – a real beauty.

I remember that my father contacted my grandfather ‘Abdu’l-Rahman

Jarrah in Akka

when we were notified to be expelled asking him to consult the beloved Guardian regarding our situation. The answer of the beloved Guardian was that my father

Hala Jarrah, born circa 1948, is the eldest daughter of Yusuf and Hayat

Jarrah. She was 4 years old

when she came with her pioneer parents to Benghazi in Libya.

The first Libyan women who went to Turkey for education.

should persevere and remain in Libya. My father persevered and obeyed and God rewarded him with all good.

During the early 60s, Yusuf brought his brother, Jamal Jarrah, a medical doctor in Syria,

over to Libya and helped him build a hospital which was a pride of the people of Tripoli.

In 1974, Yusuf Jarrah was appointed Member of the Auxiliary Board and he was able to

communicate through the friends of Tunis, mainly, and send the news of the friends in Libya

to the Counsellors in Africa.

In 1976, Yusuf purchased a Haziratu'l-Quds in Malta and he extended important help to

the friends in Egypt where the Administration was banned.

In 1978, Yusuf had a stroke while on business in London. He had to spend a year in Malta

for convalescence and returned to Tripoli in 1979. He insisted in sticking to his post of

pioneering in spite of his deteriorating health. However, he was obliged to leave Libya with

whole family and reside in the United States in 1985 where he passed away in 1989.

The Universal House of Justice wrote to Mrs Hayat at the passing of her dear Husband

Yusuf Jarrah:

March 13, 1989

DEEPLY SADDENED PASSING STAUNCH SERVANT CAUSE YUSUF JARRAH. HIS DEDICATED SERVICES UNFORGETTABLE. CONVEY YOU AND ENTIRE FAMILY HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES. PRAYING FERVENTLY HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

During June 1998, Hayat Jarrah passed away while in Jordan. The Universal House of

Justice addressed the following Message to the National Assembly of Jordan:

26 June 1998

Deeply grieved passing Mrs Hayat Jarrah. Her sacrificial pioneering services, her

wholehearted support teaching activities in various fields, exemplify the

spirit of
radiant dedication which motivated all her endeavours. Assure her dear children
and other relatives loving sympathy and fervent prayers Holy Shrines progress
her
soul Abha Kingdom.
The Universal House of Justice.

The role of Dr. Munib 'Abdu'l-Husayn Gollestaneh

Dr. Gollestaneh was the first to pioneer to Libya arriving in Benghazi in
February 1952.

He had pioneered to the south of the Sudan one year before. He was posted to
the hospital
of Agedabia which is 170 kms by road west of Benghazi. His was the merit to
respond to
the call of the Guardian to teach the Faith to the Berbers. Sometime towards
the end of 1953,

Dr. Gollestaneh taught the Faith to one of the employees of the hospital,
Ahmad El-
Ghedamsi, a Berber originally from Fezzan.

Dr. Gollestaneh's optimistic character and full of hope was a source of
happiness to the
friends of Benghazi on the weekends when he joined them from Agedabia.

Dr. Gollestaneh and Rizvanieh remained in Benghazi well after the forced exodus
of most
of the friends imposed by the Government of Cyrenaica as of June 1954. They
left around
the year 1964 to the United States.

The case of Riadh Gollestaneh and his wife Maheen Abreshami

Riadh came to Benghazi sometime in 1953 well after the establishment of the
Benghazi

Assembly. His brother, Dr. Munib Gollestaneh managed to obtain a job for him
with the

hospital accountancy. He did not mix with people of the country and remained
attached to

his brother and some of the friends in Benghazi. Later after I had left Libya
he married with

Maheen Abreshami in Iran and they both lived in Benghazi. I visited them in the
70s during

one of my journeys from Tunis to Egypt by road. 11 They seemed to be confined
to live alone.

Maheen seemed more open to the exterior of home, but Riadh had not changed.

Around the mid-90s we in Tunis heard that both Riadh and Maheen passed away and
were buried in an unknown cemetery by their neighbours. There were no Baha'is
in

Benghazi except the daughter of Salim Jarrah, Maha who is married to a

wonderful

Palestinian (non Bahá'í) named Fouad.

In April 2025 I received through Hala Jarrah the following from Maha regarding the last

days of Riadh and Maheen:

Maha heard about the death of uncle Riadh much later and when she and Fouad tried to

find out how and when this happened, they were not able to get any information.

Maha and

Fouad had tried to keep in touch with Riadh and Maheen before their death but that was

impossible because Riadh entered into isolation. They did not open the door of their home

to anybody, Riadh seemed frightened of everyone. Their neighbours said that they had not

heard any sound from their home and after a while they understood that they must be dead

inside. The neighbours contacted the police who broke into the house to find both Riadh and

Maheen dead. It seemed that Maheen died before Riadh.

I feel moved to record that in my opinion Maheen died a martyr.

Between 1970 and 1984, I made many visits to Egypt, average 3 visits per year usually with my

wife, Ulfet, and some of these trips were by car. These car trips allowed us to visit the friends in

Libya.

Chapter Three

The Expulsion of the Egyptian Bahá'ís from Libya

Then came the expulsion of the Egyptian Bahá'ís from Libya and Muhammad Mustafá

went to Cairo in July 1954.

The Benghazi, Libya, Community had, initially in 1952, three Egyptian nationals, I being

one of them. A few other Egyptians, not Bahá'ís, were also there employed in the

Government. Early in 1954, Muhammad Mustafá, who had returned from the Spanish

Sahara, and I, found it necessary to meet with the Egyptian Ambassador, Yahiya Haqi who

seemed very positive towards us and the other Egyptian Bahá'ís who were now five

including my father and I.

Later in that year, Egyptian Sheikhs from Al-Azhar who had come to Libya, incited the

government to send the Egyptian Bahá'ís, indeed all Bahá'ís, away from

Libya. The Egyptian Ambassador added his blessings to the efforts of the Sheikhs. The result was that Muhammad Mustafá, Mohsen 'Enayát¹², Ámin Battah and I were notified to leave the country within 8 days. For me, the 8 days were after termination of my work with the Public Works Ministry which gave me some 30 days to go. Muhammad Mustafá and Ámin Battah were interrogated by the Egyptian State Security Investigation upon their return in Egypt. My guess was that the Ambassador must have reported to Cairo his negative opinion about the Bahá'ís and what took place in Libya. In turn, the State Security Department would have been informed and I would not be able to come out of Egypt again should I return to Egypt. I did not want to return to Egypt following the notice of termination of service by the Libyan Government, but without any significant amount of money I saw very little possibility to pioneer anywhere, and the return to Egypt became the only alternative. ¹³

What happened in Benghazi?¹⁴

The friends of Benghazi generally understood that the local government of Cyrenaica had confidence in them. Not only were the friends some of the most sincere employees in the government but also their life collected respect and love from all those who knew them. We understood that the authorities knew of our activity and, at least, have heard enough about the Bahá'í Faith to realise that the Bahá'ís are peace-making and sincere followers of God. This was more than once ascertained during interviews made by friends with Governor (Waly) and other responsible officials.

Signs of opposition

There were, however, three prominent figures who showed open animosity to the friends; these were the Director of Interior for the Province, the local Minister (Nazir) of the Province and another Nazir called Wanis El Qaddafi. This later was the Nazir who

Mohsen, originally Persian, was of Egyptian nationality and had an Egyptian passport.

Destiny, however, decided otherwise because I landed in Tunis, Tunisia a couple of months later.

This whole chapter refers is the summary of the report Rowshan Mustapha sent to Mr Leroy Ioas

at the World Centre, on behalf of the Spiritual Assembly of Benghazi dated 7th August 1954.

expelled Mohsen Enayat from his work with the Education Department prior to his

pioneering to Fezzan at a time when the Nazir of Public Works (now the Prime Minister of

Libya) refused to expel the many Bahá'ís in his departments because of their religious belief.

Dr. Hussayn Gollestaneh targeted.

The Nazir of Interior and the Director of Interior, both had for some time purposely ill-

treated some friends. Amongst these was Dr. Hussayn Gollestaneh in Agedabia.

This ill-

treatment led some officials of the hospital to quarrel with Dr. Gollestaneh and cause him

bodily harm. The Nazir and Director who should have investigated the matter, purposely

closed the case, Dr. Gollestaneh's forgiveness to his assailants helped them to sign it off and

in spite of a contrary advice of a medical board, Dr. Gollestaneh was returned to work in the

same hospital where he had met with this attack. As a result a severe nervous breakdown

befell Dr. Gollestaneh during early March 1954, some 5 months after the incident.

The King of Libya takes action against the unjust officials.

Upon hearing about this incident the King of Libya investigated the matter and finding

that the case was unjustly ruled out, decreed the expulsion of the Nazirs of Public Health and

of the Interior as well as the Director of Interior and two other officials. In the meantime Dr.

Gollestaneh was being treated in Cairo at the Libyan Government expense and returned to

Benghazi fully recovered. The expelled Nazirs and officials, joined hands in arousing their

respective and other tribes to threaten the court and, in revenge, against the Bahá'ís too.

The Waly of Cyrenaica, being a close friend of the Director of Interior,

together with some other prestigious personalities, urged both by revenge and hope to calm down the uprising tribes, managed to get the approval of the King to terminate the residence of all foreign Bahá'ís and expel from Government service any Libyan who is Bahá'í in the whole country. Fortunately, however, the Baha'is in Tripoli and those of Benghazi who went there at the outbreak of the attack, were spared this last measure. Shaykh Shaheen, who had attacked the Faith in the local papers, was allowed during an interview with the King to speak about the Bahá'í Faith and what he said was naturally not the truth.

A further grave incident that played in the hands of the opponents of the Faith

Around early January 1954, the friends in Benghazi received a Palestinian national by the name of Bashir Hosni 'Abdu'llah who came from Egypt with credentials that he is Bahá'í.

As usual the friends extended to him sincere help and even an employment with the

Government. It turned out that this Bashir had a disastrous political background and was an

active follower of the Mufti of Palestine. He mixed with the friends and disclosed our activity

to the Authorities who did not find difficulty to misinterpret them. Thereafter our

correspondence was opened and the home and telephone of Yusuf Jarrah and Rowshan

Mustapha were watched. Within a short period of a few weeks, this Bashir stole some

government property, including a motorcycle and fled leaving debts he owed the friends as

well as others.

The Assembly in Benghazi immediately expelled him from the Community and advised

the National Assembly in Egypt, but that did not attenuate the terrible damage he caused the

Community in Benghazi with the Government.

Other factors added leverage to the opposition against the Bahá'ís

1) The Egyptian Legation to Libya seemed to have impressed the opinion that the Bahá'í

principles are detrimental to the required spirit of animosity to Israel and to Islamic and Arab

unity. This notion has greatly enhanced and empowered the opponents.

2) The opponents of the Faith also managed to convince the King and the Royal family

that the Bahá'í movement is dangerous to the Sanusíyyah¹⁵ Order.

3) The acceptance of the Faith by the Tunisian graduate of the well-known Tunisian

Zeytuna Mosque, Mustapha Al-Beji, who was a teacher as well as Imam of a Mosque in

Benghazi and in El Marj was looked upon as an indication that the Bahá'í Faith is a menace

to the Sanusíyyah Order.

A Prince of Libya sought meeting a Bahá'í

In August 1954, as I was preparing to leave Benghazi following termination of my

services, I received notification that Prince Al-Ridha would like to see me.

This was great

news and I went to the Palace to see him. He was dark skin well built, probably in his mid-

thirties.

The Prince received me cordially and seemingly with pleasure. He immediately asked me

to brief him on the Bahá'í Faith. I did not record the meeting after, unfortunately, but I

remember that he listened carefully, did not ask many questions and finally asked for books

or a book introducing the Faith. I remember I took to the palace the next day two books in

Arabic. One was Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era.

The King of Libya Idriss Al Sanusi is the spiritual leader of the Sanusíyyah Order.

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Chapter Four

Sabha - Fezzan

In Sabha – Fezzan

The development towards establishing a Community in Sabha, the capital of Fezzan was

different to the two other Communities of Libya – Benghazi and Tripoli. Sabha was no more

than an oasis in the great Sahara and situated some 700 km south of Tripoli.

The pioneer

going there had to have a job with the government which was much more difficult than

Benghazi and Tripoli.

Following the establishment of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Benghazi in Ridván of

the year 1953, the beloved Guardian asked for a pioneer to go to Fezzan, where the Sultan of Turkey had threatened to exile 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the year 1907.

Mohsen 'Enayát of Benghazi, the youngest among the pioneers, offered to take up that

task. Indeed he was the only one among the Bahá'ís of Libya who could have settled this most difficult goal.

Mohsen went to Tripoli where Robert Gulick tried to obtain a job for him with one of the

Unites States development programs. Finding that the efforts of Gulick had delayed, Mohsen

went to Sabha in Fezzan arriving there on September 26, 1953 without work and with a small amount of money.

The beloved Guardian extremely delighted

In the message from Haifa dated September 30, 1953, Mr Leroy Ioas wrote:

Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Benghazi,

The beloved Guardian was extremely delighted when I presented to him your cablegram of September 28th, advising that Mohsen 'Enayát had reached Fezzan on September 26th.

The Guardian feels this is a very historic event. It represents a unique victory for the

Faith, that the light of divine guidance should now be illuminating the area where

'Abdu'l Hamid intended to incarcerate the Master.

The Guardian assures Mr 'Enayát of his great appreciation of his sacrificial service,

and assures him of his prayers on his behalf. He will pray that the doors may be

opened, and that souls may become attracted to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh; that

the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse may be with Mr 'Enayát, and the blessings of

the Holy Spirit confirm him at all times.

The Guardian sends his deep appreciation to all the members of your assembly, he

assures you of his prayers in your behalf.

Faithfully yours,

Leroy Ioas.

Secretary – General.

In Sabha, Mohsen immediately started to teach and was successful in introducing the Faith to the Governor of Fezzan, the Nazir of Finance of Fezzan and the representative to the parliament of the Tuaregs of the region as well as to two Algerians employed by the Libyan Government. Mohsen, again finding that he was without work and his residence in Libya could be terminated any time, had to reinforce the presence of pioneers in Sabha, and he approached the Nazir of Finance who accepted the application of Fouad Rushdy of Egypt, an accredited accountant, and offered Fouad a job in Sabha. Fouad arrived in Sabha on the same day Mohsen departed.

Letter of Mr Músá Banání dated July 3, 1954:

Please give the assurance of my most fervent prayers to the dear friends in Benghazi. Their steadfastness and perseverance in these historic days shall go down in Bahá'í history as a shining example of courage and merit. Unity of the friends, prayer and wisdom will assuredly enable the devoted community of Benghazi to overcome this present wave of persecution.

The story of Fezzan

“As a consequence of their¹⁶ intrigues, a Commission of four, under the chairmanship of ‘Arif Bey, arrived in the winter of 1907 post-haste from the seat of the (Ottoman) Empire.”¹⁷ This was the second and last Commission sent by order of the Ottoman Sultan to incriminate 'Abdu'l-Bahá and get rid of Him by death or exile.

“Rumours were rife that 'Abdu'l-Bahá would be forcibly removed to Fízán (Fezzan)..., a vast expanse of desert totally cut off from the rest of the world”¹⁸

Shoghi Effendi told a number of pilgrims that he had encouraged the Americans to pioneer to Cyprus and Fezzan in Libya, because Mírzá Yahyá had been sent to the former and 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been threatened with exile in the later in 1905 and 1907. The threats of exile to Tripoli were not exaggerated. In 1914, the former Governor of Tripoli visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá and said that in 1907 he had received a telegram from Sultan ‘Abdu'l-Hamid informing him that 'Abdu'l-Bahá would be

arriving in just a few days on His to exile in Fezzan, deep in the Sahara desert. The Sultan told him to be ready to take Him to Fezzan with a large escort of horsemen.

The Governor waited, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá never arrived.¹⁹

Immediately following the establishment of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Benghazi in Ridván of 1953, the Guardian asked the Assembly to send a pioneer to Fezzan.

The violators of the Covenant in 'Akká.

'Abdu'l-Bahá – by H.M. Balyuzi p.118

'Abdu'l-Bahá – by H.M. Balyuzi p.118

Áhmad Sohrab Diary 14 March 1914 p.791 also quoted in Earl Redman's "Shoghi Effendi

through the pilgrim's eye" vol. 2 pp. 63-65

The story of Mohsen 'Enayát and Fezzan²⁰

Among the Bahá'ís in Libya, there was no one with the necessary qualifications or

possibilities to pioneer to Fezzan other than Mohsen 'Enayát, the youngest pioneer. He

volunteered for this goal. The only way to go to Fezzan was through Tripoli. A fortnightly

air connection Tripoli – Sabha, the capital of Fezzan Province, was in schedule at the time

besides a desert road from Tripoli to Sabha which was extremely difficult and could only be undertaken with a guide.

Mohsen left Benghazi around mid-July 1953, with the intension of attending the

International Teaching Conference in Stockholm, representing the Bahá'ís of Egypt and then

to Tripoli where he will look for a job in Sabha. In his cabled message to the Conference,

the Guardian announced: "A pioneer is en route to Fezzan, Libya, chosen scene of 'Abdul-

Bahá's banishment by 'Abdu'l-Hamid." This rendered Mohsen restless. He rapidly went to

Tripoli and met with the friends there and asked for their help to obtain a job in Sabha. Dr.

Robert Gulick, pioneer in Tripoli, took up the responsibility of helping find a job for Mohsen.

A United States Point Four Program established in 1947 to help third world countries was

under consideration for Libya and it was hoped that Mohsen could obtain a teacher's job

under that program. The program delayed and instructions from the Guardian were

received

that as soon the pioneer arrives in Fezzan, the Guardian should be informed immediately.

Mohsen could not delay his departure any longer. In spite of the difficulties of life in

Sabha that he was told, Mohsen decided to go there and took the first available Tunis Air

flight Tripoli – Sabha, arriving there around mid-August 1953.

Mohsen writes:

First shock, there was no airport or any kind of buildings around, just a vast space of

endless sand. A few private cars came to pick up those who had arrived on the plane

–friends or relatives, and quickly left. Nobody paid any attention to him except a

police officer who got out of Jeep and walked towards him. “Who are you?” he

asked. “I have been sent by the office of the European Recovery Plan in Tripoli to

expedite the process of signing an agreement with it so that they can proceed with

appointments of teachers for the schools here.” He put my suitcase at the back of his

jeep and we drove for about ten minutes.

On our way I remembered the name of a cousin of one of our contacts in Cyrenaica

who told me he could be helpful as he holds a high position in the administration of

Fezzan. So I asked about him. The answer was: “Yes, he is now in prison. What is

your relation with him?” “Nothing, just his cousin asked me to convey his greetings.”

But that was enough to give me a second shock with no break in between. 21

The officer took this newly arrived pioneer to a square white building with many

arches that was to be the government rest house. At that point, it had just been

finished, but was empty and Mohsen was its first guest. His room had a bed with

mattress filed with palm leaves and a chair. Being alone gave him plenty of time for

Quoted from Earl Redman’s “Shoghi Effendi through the pilgrim’s eye” vol. 2 pp. 63 -65.

Mohsen ‘Enayát’s letter report of 11 December 2014 to Earl Redman.

prayer and reading the Writings. His isolation and worries about teaching vanished when the Governor General of the province called the first meeting of the provincial parliament.

Invitations went to the heads and notables of different tribes scattered over Fezzan to come to Sabha where they would be roomed in the government guest house. All of a sudden the abandoned building became like a beehive: so crowded, full of movement and the sound of various tribal languages: Bedouin Arabic, Amazigh, Tuareg as well as the local dialect. The previously silent building became overnight

a Babel-like city.

There was no need for means of transportation or giving a good reason for mixing

with the population, their leaders are all there at my doorstep, so eager to talk to me

and find out new stories to tell their people when they go back. The younger ones

wanted to seize the occasion to learn mathematics, which was not taught in the traditional Qur'anic schools. Others wanted to deepen their knowledge in the meaning of passages of the Qurán. It was a relatively busy time.

During these simple gatherings strong ties of friendship were developed and many

of individuals present hear of the Bahá'í religion for the first time, with a big shock

of course, but they got over it through the signs of true love and friendship.

A few

began reading Bahá'í literature, especially the book "Bahá'í Proofs" by 'Ábu'l-

Fadl.²²

Mohsen was able to teach the Faith to two provincial ministers one of them being

the Minister of Finance. Mohsen lost no time to ask the Minister of Finance to recruit

Fouad Rushdy, another young Bahá'í from Egypt, who wanted very much to pioneer

to Libya. Fouad arrived in Sabha the day Mohsen was to leave. The Sabha Bahá'í

Centre remained open. Mohsen's efforts proved the truth of the Writings which say

that those who arise and put their Faith in God will be assisted.

Indeed, Mohsen 'Enayát is the conqueror of Fezzan.

Note regarding Mohsen 'Enayát

After leaving Libya, Mohsen returned to Egypt and resumed his higher studies

and became a lawyer. When in 1962, a crisis took the Baha'is of Spanish Morocco, he did not hesitate to go and add his talented knowledge of Islamic countries, to the defence of the imprisoned Moroccan Bahá'ís of Nador. The Egyptian Security Intelligence were waiting for his return to seize and imprison him. He, therefore, went to France and obtained his doctorate degree in International Law. His life then after was dedicated to the service of the Faith in Africa, in the Holy Land, in Egypt, in the North African countries and generally in the Arab countries. He mastered the translation of the Guardian's Writings as well as the Arabic, Persian, English and French languages. Mohsen 'Enayát passed away in his home in Edmonton, Canada, on November 26, 2024 at the age of 93 years. The Universal House of Justice wrote:

Idem.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of dearly loved Mohsen Enayat, consecrated follower of the Ancient Beauty. His long life of service to the Cause of God, including as a Chief Legal Officer at the Bahá'í World Centre, is recalled with warm admiration. Notable among his many endeavours were his vigorous and effective defence of the Faith in the Arab region as well as his contribution to Arabic translations of Bahá'í literature.

Kindly convey to his dear wife, Felicity, as well as other family members and loved ones the heartfelt condolences of the House of Justice for the loss they have suffered and assure them of its supplications at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of his radiant soul in the heavenly kingdom. Prayers will also be offered for their comfort and solace at this time of parting. With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Department of the Secretariat

The Role of Fouad Rushdy in Fezzan and Tripoli

Fouad Rushdy (1924 - 1996) had decided to pioneer to Libya the moment he heard the Guardian's instructions to the National Assembly of Egypt asking for pioneers

from Egypt to go there. That was in the summer of the year 1951. He was an accredited accountant with the Alexandria branch of the Ford Motor Company, a post that was an envy to his mates of similar career status.

Mohsen's efforts to get a job offer for Fouad were successful, and Fouad went as quickly as possible to Sabha, arriving on 28th July 1954 and immediately took up his function as the principle accountant of the provincial ministry of Finance of Fezzan.

In 1956, Fouad married Siham Jarrah of 'Akká and remained in Fezzan until 1964 when

he was transferred to the Ministry of Finance of the Government of Libya. During the lapse of that decade, 1954 – 1964, great changes happened in Libya

– petroleum was discovered and production began in 1954. Construction and public works projects were conducted all over the country and education was greatly enhanced.

Fouad was quickly promoted to the position of consultant in the Ministry of Finance in

Tripoli. A most delicate position under the circumstances which the country was experiencing at that time. He walked on glowing embers. His dedication to his work, his

uprightness and his most joyful character gained the appreciation and recognition of the

various ministers of finance he worked for during 30 years, at the close of which he went on pension.

In the year 1985, what seemed to be a concerted effort of the authorities of all the North

African countries²³ to oppose the Bahá'í expansion in these countries took place. Fouad,

well known as a Bahá'í, was subject to various questionings by the "Mukhabarat" – or

Secret Intelligence Services of Libya, preparing to terminate his services with the Ministry

of Finance because he is Bahá'í. Termination of service with the government would entail

the termination of residence in Libya. His long good standing reference with the Ministry

Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

allowed him to confront the matter of his expulsion from the country with the Minister of

Finance personally. He told the Minister: "...if you want to terminate my

service in the ministry, I can only understand and accept. However, I would beg that you delay that action for three months until my son Tayseer²⁴ terminates the final exams of his University in Agricultural Engineering, otherwise such a break in his career would be very harmful”.

The Minister answered: “Mr Fouad, as long as I am in this Ministry, you will not move from here!”

During the year 1993, the Rushdy family bought a house in the Ramleh area of Alexandria that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had occupied for some time during His visit to Egypt. In a message dated January 3, 1994 through Mohsen 'Enayát stating: “Regarding the Rushdys, kindly inform this dear family that the Universal House of Justice deeply appreciates their services over the past several decades. Silently, steadfastly and with self-sacrifice, they have persevered and endured with high fortitude the challenges of that difficult problem”.

For the later period of his work with the Ministry, Fouad was the only Egyptian foreign employee. When he passed away on August 15, 1996, he was deeply mourned by all who knew him. The then Minister of Finance, Dr. Muhammad 'Abdalláh Beit Elmal, wrote a touching letter of condolence to “The family of the regretted Mr Fouad 'Abdu'l-Rahman Rushdy” that was delivered by a delegation of two high persons of the Ministry who travelled from Tripoli to Alexandria in Egypt to personally present the letter to the family.

A never heard of gesture on behalf of a high officer in Libya.²⁵ A further proof of the wonderful reputation Fouad left in Libya.

Fouad Rushdy passed away on the 15th August 1996, the Universal House of Justice sent this message:

DEEPLY SADDENED PASSING DEARLY LOVED CONSECRATED
PROMOTER FAITH FOUAD RUSHDY HIS SELFLESS STEADFAST
SERVICES PIONEERING FIELD LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. EXTEND
HEARTFELT SYPATHY BEREAVED FAMILY ASSURE FERVENT PRAYERS
HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL.
UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Fouad's younger son Tayseer, continued to live in Tripoli after the passing

of both Fouad
and Siham and during a period Tayseer was the only Bahá'í in Libya and
later their daughter
Abeer returned to Libya with her husband Ihab Muhammad.
Fouad Rushdy, indeed, had conquered Libya to the Faith.

Tayseer is Fouad's youngest son.
Curiously, I received the same letter of condolence signed by the Minister of
Finance of Libya, Dr.
Muhammad 'Abdu'lláh Beit Elmal, by mail in Tunis, Tunisia. I am not a
member of the Rushdy
family. The Libyan Intelligence Services in Libya had probably surveyed the
exchange of
correspondence between Fouad and me, as well as his visits to Tunis and
concluded that I must be
related to the Rushdy family.

Chapter Five

In Tripoli – Tripolitania

The arrival in Tripoli of Dr. Robert Gulick and Mrs Bahiyyih Faraju'lláh
Gulick together
with Ella Bailey and Mrs Shawkat 'Alí Faraj'ulláh in July 1953
established the Bahá'í
Community in Tripoli. They were joined with Laura Allen in September of the
same year.

The arrival of Feridún Shahrokh and his wife who had first pioneered to Libya
from
Iran, arrived September 6, 1953, went to Tripoli with intention of settling
there as merchants.

Mrs Katayún accompanied the Shahrokh. With the transfer of Mustafá Salem
from
Benghazi to Tripoli, the Local spiritual Assembly of Tripoli was established in
Ridván of
1954.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Tripoli continued through the period of crisis
of the
Egyptian Bahá'ís in Benghazi, rather the Arab Bahá'ís in order to include
the Jarrahs (Yusuf
Jarrah family and Salim Jarrah family). With the departure of Robert and
Bahiyyih Gulick
in 1964, the LSA was dissolved.

Unfortunately, I do not have any information regarding the activity of The
Gulicks during
their decade in Libya. Both have a glorious history of service to the Faith and
they must have
contributed amply besides opening their home to the friends, counselling them
and
encouraging them. They helped pioneers in North Africa and extended their

service to the friends in Egypt. They visited the friends in Egypt and Tunisia many times. The highlight of their pioneering is, of course, having accomplished the desire of Miss Ella Bailey to pioneer and the blessings she brought to Libya and the whole of Africa. The petroleum discovery changed the peoples of Libya – which is normal. The quest of money occupied all minds and thought – which is usually the case. Then came the Revolution of 1st September 1969 and the rapid rise of Colonel Ma'ámmar Al-Gadhafi. Spies were everywhere and stories of disappearances abounded. Sons were encouraged to keep an eye on the activities of fathers and vice versa. Many pioneers came to Tripoli during the period after 1954 and until 1975, but the formation of Local Assemblies was not possible. A local assembly would have been considered an “illegal organisation” by the Authorities and may give rise to another crisis of expelling the Bahá'ís. However, it was the centre of Tripoli that endured, mainly by the sons and daughter of Fouad and Siham Rushdy. At the present, as I close this history in mid-2025, there are no Bahá'ís in Libya as far as my knowledge goes. What the future holds for the Faith in that devastated country is not known.

A document showing the Community in Libya at the time when the expulsion of the Egyptian Bahá'ís became evident mid-1954, by Board member Muhammad Mustafá

A document by Board member Yusuf Jarrah Showing the Community in Libya in 1974.

Chapter Six Reflection

It took me some time and much quiet reflection to write this chapter. I was expelled from Libya because I am Bahá'í. In that is the consolation that it was for the Faith and not because of a fault of mine. Is this correct: not because of a fault of mine? When I was to leave Benghazi, I apparently had no choice but to return to my country - Egypt. I had a small amount of money, my financial responsibility towards the family in

Egypt was urgent I had to find work and fast. I wanted to continue pioneering all the time, but my situation persuaded me that it would be impossible. Fortunately, one of the pioneers with us, Feridún Zein, a Persian and therefore was not one of those threatened to be expelled, suggested that I may try to go to Tunisia or Algeria – both countries being goals of the NSA of Egypt for consolidation. This is how, I embarked on a new trail of pioneering and landed two months later in Tunisia – always a pioneer after passing through Rome and Paris to obtain a visa for Tunisia or Algeria. The Local Assembly in Benghazi asked me, once in Rome, to send a full report to the beloved Guardian on what happened in Benghazi and the expulsion of the Egyptian Bahá'ís. Both in Egypt and in Libya, correspondence with Israel was prohibited and correspondence in general was being censored and sending reports to Haifa from Libya was out of question. In answer to my report, I received the following in a message from Leroy Ioas – Assistant Secretary:

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

Your loving letter of August 9th came duly to hand, likewise the letter which you

wrote, giving the details of the problems in Libya.

I have just received word that the Bahá'ís in Tripoli are now having difficulty. It is

apparent the religious authorities have been able to influence the Government against the Faith.

All of this of course goes back to the original instructions of the beloved Guardian

that no contacts were to be made with Government officials and religious leaders,

from the standpoint of propagating the Faith. The Bahá'ís were enjoined to work

quietly, and teach the natives.

Of course there must be a divine wisdom in the present situation. The only bad thing

is that so many of the Bahá'ís have left Libya, rather than remaining there until they

were literally forced out.

.....

Faithfully Yours

Signed Leroy Ioas
Assistant Secretary

My report did not have any reference to “contacts were made with Government officials and religious leaders...” To my knowledge, the Bahá'ís of Benghazi did not contact Government Officials and religious leaders. Other reports must have been sent to Haifa.

I was one of three Bahá'ís who “left Libya rather than remaining there until they were literally forced out”. This was my mistake although I did not know that I should remain until I am literally forced out. I think that the truth of the situation we went through in Libya is that “Of course there must be a divine wisdom in the present situation.”

Three of the four Egyptians that were obliged to leave have all fared well in service to the Faith during lives. The writer of this history is the one still alive. 26 Muhammad Mustafá passed away 15 August 1981, Ámin Battah December 30, 2010 and Mohsen 'Enayát September 26, 2024.

Had it been necessary for the Faith that all or any of these four Egyptian Bahá'ís remain in Libya, then, I feel, Providence would have arranged their situation otherwise. I cannot see any one of them had done anything wrong or had been implicated in the incident of Dr Munib Gollestaneh, which seems to be at the origin of the movement to expel these four Egyptian Bahá'ís.

“MAY.... THY FORGIVENESS AND MERCY BE VOUCHSAVED WITH EVERY BREATH, UNTIL, BENEATH THE SHELTERING SHADOW OF THINE UPRAISED STANDARD I MAY AT LAST REPAIR TO THE KINGDOM OF THE ALLPRAISED” Abdu'l-Bahá.

I am almost 96 years old at present.

Chapter Seven
THE COMMUNITIES

Benghazi Community and LSA

Picture dated May 1953

Front row – left to right
Yusuf Jarrah, Hayat Jarrah, Parvine Khosrow, Selim Jarrah
Standing – left to right

Mohsen 'Enayát, Riadh Gollestaneh, Husayn Gollestaneh, Rowshan
Mustapha, Mustafá
Salem,
Feridún Zein, Ahmad El-Meissi

Ridván 1953

The Local Assembly of Benghazi, being the first achievement in the plan of extending the Faith into Libya and Algeria, it was highly welcome. The Guardian was happy to see this Assembly. Mustafá Salem and Feridún Zein alone had Administrative experience as Assembly members. In fact Mustafá Salem was member of the NSA of Egypt and the LSA of Alexandria, when he pioneered to Benghazi. The Guardian then asked the Assembly to send a pioneer to Fezzan where the Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid intended to exile 'Abdu'l Bahá in 1907.

Tripoli Community and LSA

Seated – from left to right
Ra'úth Salem, Feridún Shahrokh, Robert Gulick, Bahiyyih Gulick
Rear row – from left to right
Mustafá Salem, Laura Allen, Shawkat Faraju'lláh, Katayún Shahrokh,
'Osman
Ismail

Mustafá Salem who had pioneered to Benghazi in 1952, re-pioneered to Tripoli. He was joined by Robert and Bahiyyih Gulick and their 2 yr. old son, Shawket Farajullah Zaki Al-Kurdi and the blessed Ella Bailey. The Shahrokh did not remain long in Libya. They came to Tunisia for a while and again pioneered elsewhere. Needless to say, the Gulicks were very confirmed in bringing the Faith to the attention of many Libyans. The fact that an American was so versed in Islám and had such respect for Islám attracted the attention of many persons amongst whom were those of the News Papers.

Ella Bailey

'Oh, Ella Bailey, Ella Bailey! Oh, Ella Bailey, Ella Bailey! Oh, Ella Bailey!'.
. . He kept repeating my name as He looked off into space. But He put into my name every possible emotion. That was the wonder of it."

Ella Martha Bailey was born in Houston, Texas, on December 18, 1864.

On learning that Shoghi Effendi had expressed the hope that Mr and Mrs Gulick would pioneer in Africa, Miss Bailey secretly aspired to go with them. She ... beamed gratefully when she was told that they would enjoy having her with them. Death came toward twilight, at eight o'clock on August 26, 1953.

In the cabled Message of Shoghi Effendi at the close of the Holy Year 1952 – 1953 we read:

Irresistible unfolding Crusade sanctified death heroic
eighty-eight year-old Ella Bailey elevating her
rank martyrs Faith shedding
Further lustre American Bahá'í Community consecrating
Soil fast awakening African Continent.
Sabha Bahá'ís and friends

From left to right
An Algerian working in Sabha, Foad Rushdy, Mohsen 'Enayát in Libyan traditional dress,
Zhafir Barkan – Nazhir of Finance of Fezzan, Oukeed an Algerian Berber working in Sabha.

This picture was taken at the end of Mohsen's stay in Sabha. He was joined by Fouad Rushdy in time to talk with Mohsen about the situation. It was Mohsen's friendship with the Nazir of Finance of Fezzan that gave Foad a job and entry in Libya. The Nazir and Oukeed had accepted the Faith. The Governor of Fezzan, not in the picture, was friendly towards the Faith and received Foad most cordially.

Hayat in Mursuq

Mursuq – March 11, 1955

From left to right
Maid standing, Hala 7, Nabil 5 and Hayat Jarrah.

Fort and Mosque of Mursuq

Under Ottoman rule (1578–1912) Murzuk or Mursuq was at times the capital of Fezzan, and enjoyed a long period of prosperity. The town had a major fort. The Ottoman army usually maintained a garrison there, but local control remained in the hands of the Sultan of Fezzan.

Hayat Jarrah must have had a tiring journey from Sabha, where she probably came

from Tripoli by plane and then by desert road to Mursuq. I think she wanted to visit the place the Master would have been imprisoned rather than Sabha. She was good speaker and must have attracted the attention of Libyan women in Tripoli.

Mohsen at Agedabia bus station December 1952

Mohsen 'Enayát and Felicity circa 1970

Foad Rushdy

Foad Rushdy

October 5, 1924 – August 15, 1996

In my humble opinion, Foad is the conqueror of Libya.

Foad is the third of 6 sons of the 'Abdel-Rahman Rushdy family. All three were pioneers. The second son Gamal would probably be considered the one who had the most difficult experiences amongst the three in his pioneer services, while Foad had the longest and the most frustrating experience of all. When the call for pioneers for Libya was announced, Foad had a good position with the Ford Motor Company in Alexandria, he was serving in the youth activity, making friends and a reasonably bright future. He decided to pioneer when he first heard the call. It took too long to get him a job in Fezzan, thanks to the efforts of Mohsen 'Enayát. The Egyptians could go to Libya at the time, just walk in so to say. But to remain for over a month of time, one had to have a job. That was the cause of the two year delay of Foad.

To him, like all pioneers who go to difficult places, Sabha of the desert of Fezzan was more beautiful to his heart than Alexandria the gem of the Mediterranean. He married Siham Jarrah, sister of Hayat Jarrah, who also went from 'Akká to Sabha happy to be, amongst other things, a pioneer.

Shoghi Effendi blessed their marriage.

She had her third birth, a son Tayseer, in Sabha – which was a risk.

Foad's professionalism and Bahá'í conduct brought him to the Ministry of Finance in Tripoli, which became the capital of not Tripolitania only but a defacto capital of Libya, and he gained the full confidence and appreciation of the various ministers he worked for.

During no less than 40 years he supported the whims of the population including the murky period when Gadhafi took power in 1969.

The problem we all felt in Libya was the uncertainty of our staying there and the refusal of the Libyan to accept us or any stranger. With no apparent reason a stranger working in Libya could find his job terminated and the residence permit cancelled any day. We felt we were watched and any movement or conversation scrutinised and doubted.

In the delicate position Foad held in the Ministry of Finance with all pit holes around him, it is historic that when he passed away in Cairo a special envoy from the Minister of Finance went to Cairo and presented a letter of condolences of the Minister to the family. A step that was

never heard of anything similar to in the history of Libya. Astonishing enough, I, in Tunis, received the same letter of condolences from the Minister of Finance of Libya? Every move and step Foad took was watched. His letters and communications censored both in Libya and in Tunis when he visited us. Probably when in Egypt too. They concluded that I must be a near cousin or a brother of Foad. Foad during his lifetime, and Siham and Taysir after him “stuck to their post” as the Guardian asked the pioneers in the Ten Year Crusade to do. Taysir experienced most dangerous menace by brigands in the turmoil after Gaddafi’s assassination. He was the only Bahá’í in Libya for a long time. Today Foad’s daughter ‘Abeer is alone and the only Bahá’í in Libya, hoping her husband to re-join her soon.

My house a rest house

From left to right

Mr Ámin Battah, Mr ‘Emad Sabírán, Mr Muhammad Mustafá, Rowshan Mustapha.

Photo on occasion of departure of Mr ‘Emad Sabírán to Tunis via Tripoli.

Photo taken in front of my house in Benghazi on the road towards Fowayhat This house which I rent soon after arrival in Benghazi in 1952, quickly became the resting house of Bahá’ís on arrival or in transit in the town.

From left to right

Miss ‘Esmat Kamal (Mrs Ne’imat’s sister), Mrs Nosrat ‘Abdel-Wahid, (behind Mrs Nosrat) the bus driver, Mr Ne’imat ‘Abdel-Wahid, Mustafá El-Beji, Rowshan Mustapha holding baby of the ‘Abdel- Wahids, Mohsen 'Enayát.

The picture shows the departure of the Ne’imat ‘Abdel-Wahid family towards Egypt in June 1954. They arrived from Tripoli a day or two before.

The Bahá’í Centre of Benghazi began with the autumn of 1952 and the Local Assembly was established in Ridván 1953. The Centre quickly became a stopover for pioneers or visitors to Libya or on their way to other destinations. Boarding, transport and help of all sorts was provided by the Assembly of Benghazi to Bahá’ís going through the town or trying to settle there.

Letter of condolences of The Minister of Finance of the Libyan Government to the family of Fouad Rushdy

Chapter Eight

Stories in Memory

My trip to Sabha²⁷

In December 1953, I was in Benghazi, Libya, working with the Government and responsible for the power station and electricity in Benghazi. I had pioneered to Libya in 1952.

Mohsen 'Enayát, was in Sabha, South of Tripoli and I decided to go and see him during my annual holidays. He had been there a few months and he was complaining of the rough life there. In my estimate he needed someone to visit him. The Assembly was happy with this initiative.

With the exception of a green strip of green land along the sea coast, Libya is a wide and deep desert with an oases here and there. At the time of my story there were no paved roads except along the coast.

I went to Tripoli, 1050 kms with an Italian in an advanced age who had an old truck with which he transported merchandise between Benghazi and Tripoli. Why I chose that means rather than the bus service, I do not remember. Maybe there was some problem with the bus service. The trip took 24 hours of continuous driving at an average speed of 50 kms per hour with stops for food and short rest along the way. I found out later that the bus took the same time 24 hrs. There was a plane service, but it was costly. I was hoping to take a plane in Tripoli to Sabha. Tunis Air had a two weekly service Tripoli-Sabha-Tripoli on the same day.

I missed that plane service and could not wait 15 days for the next plane, so I went and asked if there is any bus service. I was told that there is no bus service, but there was a merchant of Sabha who had a truck leaving for Sabha and I was directed to a certain Mr. Ibrahim who was somewhere in the souks. I went to the souks and found Mr. Ibrahim sitting in front of a shop, probably his, and asked him if I can find a place with him to Sabha. He said that he had a place and he will take me to Sabha and we were to leave in an hour or so. I thought I was in luck.

I had had a look at a map of Libya and saw some points with names of towns or villages

between Tripoli and Sabha. I expected we would rest in them on the way and find some food, nevertheless, I took some sandwiches with me. At the fall of the evening we embarked in a truck loaded 4m (approx. 13ft) high with merchandise. There was the driver in the cab with Ibrahim next and me at the right window. I actually took the place of a helper hand who travelled on top of the merchandise heap, the poor fellow. We struck south into the desert and at 10 at night, the truck stopped for supper. So I took my sandwiches out and offered one to Ibrahim. Courteous as I am! Ibrahim looked at me and went into a fit of laughter: "Where do you think you are going Mr. Mustapha?" he exclaimed.... Little did I know that we had three nights in the desert ahead?

This story is of no historical value included as a break for the reader. Supper was composed of potato stew with tomato and a few hot peppers and bread. No meat, thank God, because it would have probably been camel meat. But the stew was extremely hot though I did eat reasonably hot food at the time. Waiting for the stew to be ready Ibrahim helped himself to an appetizer – three hot peppers he crunched one after the other in apparent pleasure, the smell of the peppers as he ate them almost made me sneeze! After supper there was tea – little glasses of very strong tea with some sugar. A further drive in the night until about midnight and we stopped for a night's sleep: The driver slept in the cab, while the boy helper slept on top of the merchandize. Ibrahim covered himself in his woollen burnouse from head to shoes and slept on the sand. I was given a thin cover to lie on, on the sand. It was freezing cold at night in the desert in December. I could not sleep, but in the absence of the moon, the stars had a most brilliant crystal appearance in a clear black sky – a wonderful sight that attenuated a little the suffering from the cold. In the early morning the driving starts in nowhere – but the driver who is a desert guide knows his bearings. At midday there is a stop for lunch: same stew, same

appetizer for

Ibrahim, same tea and same start to trek through the desert.

On the third night we perceived lights at a couple of kilometres away. That was the

bivouac for the night of the French army convoy that came from Tunis with supplies to the

French Army camp in Sabha and further in Fort Lamy in Chad. Libya was, and still is,

composed of three provinces: Cyrenaica, with capital Benghazi; Tripolitania, with its

capital Tripoli and Fezzan with its capital Sabha. Cyrenaica and Tripolitania were under a

British mandate, while Fezzan was under a French mandate. To note that Tunisia and Chad

were under French occupation. Hence the supply convoy of the French Army starting from

Tunis.

In the early morning after the third night in the desert overcast with a tapestry of

diamond stars we arrive in Sabha.

Mohsen was asleep in an open room in a newly constructed flat building. He was the

only person around. I called him to wake up. He turned and looked at me and went back to

sleep. I had to call him again to convince him that I was truly there.

I returned to Tripoli by plane. There was no airport nor customs nor police.

The Tunis

Air plane transformed into an army soldier's transfer plane had two long benches on each

side with no belts. For a flight attendant there was a French military person who spent all

the time with the pilot in the cockpit.

The plane took off leaving a storm of dust and turned around and I could see what

Sabha looked like as well as the sand runway of an airport. That was not bad.

But then the plane went round again and I could see the same panorama from the opposite windows. I thought that was funny: is there something wrong? My fears were

confirmed when the plane took a dive down to earth. I thought, that's it for me, I shall be a

martyr!

The plane steadied and returned to climbing and I could see the few individuals who

saw the plane take off waving good-by to the pilot. The whole operation was for the pilot

to say good-by to the ground persons.

I felt my heart start beating again.

That was my first and last trip to Sabha.

Shoghi Riaz Rohani 28

Muhammad Mustafá had arrived in Benghazi and left on his way to the Spanish Sahara

a few days into September 1953 when the Public Works Department I worked for, assigned

me to the town of El-Marj, 100 km east of Benghazi on the highway connecting Benghazi

with the Egyptian frontier. This was to be for a limited period of about three months, to

undertake a particular task. I, therefore, transferred to El-Marj, staying at the Government

rest house, fully content that I had seen my father happily on his way to his pioneering post.

El-Marj, like all towns and villages in Libya at the time, could not be called a town. There

was practically no tarmac surfaced roads and no facilities or even a café, and very few

individuals to associate with. My pastime was to take walks along the highway.

Traffic was

rare and the passing of a car or truck on the highway was a curiosity and a diversion from

monotony.

One day in October a truck came trotting along from the east towards Benghazi and, as

usual, I stopped to see the truck go by and maybe even exchange a hand wave with the

travellers. The passenger next to the driver looked at me and I thought the face was familiar

although it was covered with a large fashion sunglasses and a woollen headdress. But the

passenger recognized me and asked the driver to stop and came over to me. There was

Shoghi Riaz Rohani dressed up as though he was going to the Himalaya rather than facing

the climate of North Africa. Of course, we were very happy to see each other.

- God bless you Riaz, where are you going dressed up like that?

- To the Spanish Sahara...

- To the Spanish Sahara? My father is already on his way to the Spanish Sahara!

(Wrongly

thinking that one pioneer was all that was necessary for a goal territory)

-I am going to the Spanish Sahara... (He said in what I felt was a defiant tone!)

-Well, my dear Riaz, the road is all yours, you only have 6000 kms plus ahead... My

prayers!

At that point, Riaz had already made 2000 kms on rail and road!
We talked a few minutes and then he resumed his journey. Of all the young Bahá'ís I knew in Alexandria, Riaz was the last one I thought would pioneer to such a desolate area like the Spanish Sahara. He was some 7 years older than I am, and I saw him always very well dressed, owning a number of suits, shirts, while the rest of us were content with much less. He sported a pointed chin beard as seen on philosophers and artists. He had some capability in music and painting. I never thought he would give up all this easily. Yet here was a typical case of what sacrifice could mean. Riaz eventually became a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for the Canary Islands, arduously for years trying to go into the Spanish Sahara but his efforts were not rewarded. He rendered, however, wonderful services in Morocco and later in France and at an advanced age for some months in Cyprus.

Heart-breaking it was sometimes

Muftah²⁹ the house helper: One day a Libyan knocked at my door. A tall man, probably in his early 30s. He appeared to be very poor and looked very tired. He asked if he could work. I asked him to come in and finally he came every day just to do a bit of cleaning the

This story is not of historical value. I added it to amuse the reader.

Not the real name.

floor, the patio and kitchen etc. He was no professional at all, but that was all I needed. No

Libyan girl or women was allowed to go out of home, let alone work for a stranger who is

single with other singles in the house.

Muftah continued for some three or four weeks and then suddenly stopped. That was no

surprise for me. Such unforeseen attitudes were common.

Three or four weeks later, Muftah appeared at my door. He simply said, "I am hungry"

Of course I gave him food and after he rested a while he left. I gave him some money.

Today, 70 + years later, my heart still aches as I remember Muftah and the thousands of

Muftahs at the time who were there.

The poor and haggard couple:

On the first morning in my trip to from Tripoli to Sabha, the sun had risen and it had become warm in the truck cab. We were in the desert, nothing in view but sand and pebbles and small rock. A slowing down of the truck from its already slow movement, woke me up from a snooze. There in front of the truck coming from the right across the trail of the truck were a couple. They looked poor and haggard, their clothes barely covering their frail and skinny bodies. They had lost many of their teeth. They had waved the truck to stop. All they asked for was "water". Just looking at them broke my heart and as the story sank in my conscience I felt even worse. Here we are in a desert with nothing in the horizon but sand and gravel and a trace of a trail. And here are a couple of human beings asking for some water to drink. Here again, the 70 + years have not erased my heart aching every time I remember that scene.

The Egyptian Magazines

In 1972 Ulfet and I visited the friends in Egypt by car for the first time. Between the end of 1970 and the end of 1984, we visited Egypt regularly at the rate of two or three visits per year mainly by air, but with four visits by car. The car allows us to visit the friends in Libya and also to take books to the friends in Egypt. The Egyptian airport custom authorities search the luggage of travellers like us thoroughly and Bahá'í books or literature would be the cause of trouble. The Egyptian customs at the frontier with Libya do not care so much. But the Libyans do and they search the luggage of travellers both in the car and in the luggage compartment in the rear. But, I noticed from many trips between Tunis and Tripoli by car, the Libyan customs do not look at what is on the back window, which is on the shelf between the back seats and the back window. We, therefore would pack the rear rack, so to say, haphazardly with books and papers of all sorts and nobody cares for them

through the two
frontiers: Tunisia/Libya and Libya/Egypt.
During that trip this time I took 12 weekly magazines of Akhbar Al Yom because
the
edition had a three page report on the subject of the figure 19 in the Qurán.
A certain Rashad
Khelifa, an Egyptian Engineer in the States had discovered wonderful values of
19 and
multiples of 19 in the Qurán. I intended to give these magazines to the
friends in Tunisia to
help conversation with non Bahá'ís. The 12 editions were spread on the rear
window in a
disorderly manner as usual.
Well we crossed the Egyptian frontier control and happily the Libyan control
and the
magazines were there. 50 metres later, we were waved to stop by a young Libyan
customs
officer. He looked at us and into the back and asked to see one of the
magazines. Relations
were not good between Libya and Egypt at the time and I could expect the worse.
The young
officer flipped slowly the pages, too slow for my rising heart beats and said,
“Can I keep this
magazine?” Of course I give my whole hearted consent and we were waved to go
with the
broad smile of the Officer.
Sometime later, maybe 300 kilometres later I was on a stretch of the road that
was straight
and desolate with no cars in either direction or inhabitants in view. Suddenly
a motorcycles
officer appeared and waved us to stop. He asked for our passports, looked in
the car and
spotted the magazines. This was no young officer this time. He put his hand
inside the car
and pulled one magazine out and started to slowly flip the pages. Of course I
explained the
subject of the figure 19 and the Qurán hoping to sooth his humour in case he
intends to cause
us problems. After a minute or two that seemed much longer, the officer asked,
“Can I keep
this magazine?” With a deep breath I said he was welcome and we were on our
way again.
After we left, it dawned on me that the Libyan Government had decreed the
interdiction
of any publications from Egypt, which are very appreciated by the people of
Libya who do
not have any national periodicals or magazines of interest compared to the ones

