

(Fasaʿi, I, p. 794; ʿAhdia and Capman, pp. 109-12). By 1852, the local Babis were rallying around a new leader, ʿAli Sardar (b. 1823). Fearing that the governor was planning a new round of reprisals, a few Babis, against the expressed teachings of the Bab, assassinated the governor in the public bath (Nicolas, 410; Momen, 1981, p. 147; ʿAhdia and Capman, p. 139). There was a failed attempt at reconciliation when a new governor arrived. The Babis armed themselves for protection (Ruhani, I, p. 176), and violence broke out. Six hundred Babi women and children followed their men up into the mountains to the south (Mazandarani, IV, p. 36.). Mirza Fazl-Allah, the British agent in Shiraz, wrote in his October 1853 report: "... the people (Babis) returned and having withdrawn their families from the place, again fled to the mountains where they have conveyed provisions, enough to maintain them for three to four months ..." (Momen, 1981, p. 148).

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Gunmen were hired from surrounding villages to trap the Babis, who were putting up a stiff resistance (Nicolas, pp. 415-16). By late October, 1853, around twelve thousand reinforcements had been assembled (Nicolas, p. 418; Ruhani, I, p. 184). Many Babis were killed in sorties, including ʿAli Sardar (Fayzi, p. 112; Nicolas, p. 41; Ruhani, I, p. 187; ʿAhdia and Capman, pp. 162 ff.). Temperatures dropped, and food ran out. The Babi men were captured or killed in the last sortie. Estimates of total casualties were in the hundreds (Shoghi Effendi, p. 165; Ruhani, I, p. 190). About 400 men participated in the battles. The women, children, and old men, and severed heads mounted on spears were marched under miserable conditions into Shiraz. A conservative estimate for the total number of prisoners is 450 to 500, including some 300 women, with an unknown number of children. Several hundred more believers were rounded up in a sweep of the Cenar-sukta quarter; Ruhani (II, p. 458), describes the men as mostly elderly or/and ill.

The Bahai cleric Mohammad-Šafiʿ worked with others in the late 19th century to repopulate the Cenar-sukta quarter with survivors of the conflict and their descendants. With the transformation of the Babi faith into the Bahai faith, Neyriz now had a Bahai community that developed friendly relationships with the Muslim residents. Bahai 'teachers' such as Taraz-Allah Samandari and Mirza ʿAli-Akbar Rafsanjani came through Neyriz in 1909 and inspired local believers. The meetings grew in size with some townspeople standing on roofs to hear Samandari who spoke in the courtyard below.

Centralized authority in Persia broke down during the period of the Constitutional Revolution in 1909. A local cleric, Shaikh Zakariya, under the orders of a regional warlord, Sayyed ʿAbd-al-Hosayn Lari, attacked Neyriz (Ruhani, II, p. 40), taking advantage of the political turmoil to settle a personal dispute in town (Balyuzi, p. 94). The attacks are blamed variously on Sayyed ʿAbd-al-Hosayn Lari (Ruhani, II, p. 40), and/or the local clergy of Neyriz, who directed Shaikh Zakariya to go after the Bahais (Balyuzi, p.

94). Bahais fled into the surrounding countryside and neighboring towns, while their homes were ransacked and, in some cases, torched; 18 Bahais were killed (Fayzi, p. 146; Ruhani, II, 45; Maʿani, p. 9; Momen, 1981, p. 369; ʿAhdia and Capman, pp. 231-41).

Despite these persecutions, the Bahai community of Neyriz was able to elect its first spiritual assembly (mahfel-e ruhani), during the years 1909-21.

Among its first members were Shaikh Mohammad-Hosayn, its secretary, Jenab Mirza Mohammad-Baqer Paymani, Mirza Fazl-Allah Paymani, Kʿaja Mohammad, and Karbalaʿi Mohammad Saleh. Mrs. Nsrat Mitaqi would be the first woman elected to the Assembly. Soon this Assembly became very influential in Neyriz with Muslims seeking its advice and referring to it as “the body of nine.”

Again, in 1928 and in 1929, mobs organized by Sayyed ʿAziz Yazdi and Shaikh Mohammad Yazdi attacked Bahai homes and demanded large sums of money. They broke up only when government troops intervened (Hesami, p. 268). By the late 1950s, large-scale persecution of the Bahais of Neyriz had ended. Instead, clerics warned against any association with the Bahais and encouraged the destruction of Bahai graves, harvests, and livestock (Ruhani, II, p. 374). The Bahai community of Neyriz eroded as Bahai businesses closed down and families moved away. Some left for Arabia and the Persian Gulf states, where they prospered financially.

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