

Foreword

This monograph consists of English translations of two research essays by Bahram Choubine.¹ The first is Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq and the Baha'is, originally published in Persian by Sherkat Ketab in 2009. This learned article has been translated at the request of the author and the publisher and is presented below in an expanded form with additional annotations. The second translated essay by Bahram Choubine is entitled, "Suppression of the Baha'is of Iran in 1955." Both articles have been translated and annotated by Ahang Rabbani and are briefly introduced below before their full translation is provided.²

A Few Words about Dr. Musaddiq and the Baha'is

The Baha'i community has had a presence in Yazd and its surrounding towns from the time of Baha'u'llah. By 1903, the Baha'i community of Iran had experienced nearly a half-century of relative peace. During this period the community had changed its character from a militant messianic Babi community, to a peace-loving, ethically bound, progressive-minded Baha'i community that had grown considerably in numerical strength and geographic spread. Throughout this interval, however, Baha'is continued to be periodically harassed and occasionally a few were killed by their opponents, often as an excuse for political ambitions, but no large-scale persecution took place. This pattern changed drastically in the summer of 1903, when a pogrom was unleashed against the community in Yazd and its surrounding regions, resulting in the murder of several hundreds of defenseless Baha'is.³ Even though this incident was not spread across the nation, it may well be regarded as the first notable collusion of the local and state authorities with the ecclesiastical establishment in an attempt to bring about total eradication of the Baha'i community. After that incident, most of the Baha'is of this region moved to other regions—notably to the newly founded town of Ishqabad in Turkmenistan—while a few returned home to rebuild their lives and businesses. Gradually, the community gained strength

and

reestablished its activities, though always under the watchful eye of the fanatical Shi'i clergy.

In the nearby small town of Abarqu, however, there were no Baha'is until the summer of

1949, when a retired Baha'i by the name of 'Abbas-'Ali Purmihdi settled there. He had been

an employee of the postal service and delivered mail and packages from Yazd to Abarqu; as

such, he knew many of the inhabitants of this town.

A few months later, on January 3, 1950, a 50-year-old Muslim woman by the name of

Sughra and her five children were brutally murdered one night. What followed had profound

implications for the Baha'is of that region, and indeed the entire country, and involved the

1 It should be noted that Bahram Choubine has never been a member of or affiliated with the Baha'i

community. He has, however, on numerous occasions spoken strongly in support of the human rights of

Baha'is in Iran and written extensively about the beleaguered religious minorities of that country. His

collaborator, Ahang Rabbani, is a member of the Baha'i community and has authored numerous books and

research articles on the history and teachings of the Baha'i faith. Some of his publications can be accessed at

<http://ahang.rabbani.googlepages.com/>.

2 Choubine, Dr Mohammad Mossadegh & Bahaian.

3 In 1903, in an effort to engage Western countries in defense of the Baha'is of Iran, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote a

treatise about the tragic events of that summer, a translation of which is available at Rabbani, "'Abdu'l-Baha's

Proclamation on the Persecution of Baha'is in 1903."

administration of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq (May 19, 1882–March 5, 1967), the nationalistic

prime minister from April 28, 1951 to August 19, 1953 (except for a brief period July 17–20,

1952).

Discussion of the history of this event and an analysis of documents pertaining to it are

the subject of Dr. Choubine's first essay appearing in this monograph. This essay was

completed in March 2009 and published in Persian the summer of the same year.

However,

to aid the reader, it may be beneficial to outline the indisputable facts of

this incident:

- During the night of January 3, 1950, a Muslim woman named Sughra and her five children were brutally killed in Abarqu in their own home;
- All evidence suggested that the murderers were three men who perpetrated this crime at the instigation of Isfandiyar Salari, an influential landlord of this town. Media outlets, including the nationwide Dad newspaper, stated the same;
- Arrival of an inspector from Yazd by the name of Sadiqi changed the course of the investigation. He selected Sergeant Khakpur—a close friend and an associate of Salari—to investigate and prepare the police file;
- Khakpur initially arrested several innocent men and tried to place the blame on them;
- He then went to Yazd and upon returning claimed that Baha'is had had a hand in this murder;
- Several Baha'is found in nearby villages were arrested;
- The entire nine-member Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Yazd was arrested as well;
- Widespread anti-Baha'ism engulfed the region, resulting in the pillage of many Baha'i homes and causing dozens of Baha'is to become homeless;
- The involvement of influential 'ulama in directing the events was evident;
- Recognizing that the events were orchestrated by the Shi'i clerical establishment to undermine his authority, Prime Minister Razmara ordered that the Baha'i complaints be disregarded, so that he would not be charged as a Baha'i sympathizer by the clerics;
- At every stage of the investigation, the initial inspectors who had reported the charges against the Baha'is as baseless were dismissed and replaced with fanatical judgments;
- The government changed, and Dr. Musaddiq assumed premiership;
- When Dr. Musaddiq was in the United States, the American Baha'is appealed to him for the administration of justice and protection of religious minorities; despite his promise to do so, Dr. Musaddiq was unable to deliver;

- The highest criminal court in Iran tried the case in 1952 and again in 1954, and twelve Baha'i and three Muslim defendants were sentenced to various terms of incarceration. An innocent Muslim, on the false charge of being involved with the murders and of being a Baha'i, was executed.

This incident thus aptly demonstrates the nature of anti-Baha'ism in Iran when the state and the clerical establishment colluded against the Baha'i community and serves as a microcosm for understanding the dynamics of social relations concerning the Baha'is in that land.

Throughout the entire twentieth-century, every opportunity has been seized upon by the fanatical clergy, at times with the alliance of the authorities, to falsely blame misfortunes and

crimes upon beleaguered Baha'is, who have remained completely defenseless in protecting themselves by any appeal to the law. In a number of instances, most notably in 1950s, and more recently during the Islamic Republic, the authorities have used this religious minority group as a means of distracting public opinion away from real problems confronting the nation.

Suppression of the Baha'is of Iran in 1955

In introducing 'Ali Dashti's seminal work, *23 Sal* [23 years], Bahram Choubine has penned an enlightening essay that places the events of twentieth-century Iran in their fuller perspective. This essay has been made available on the Internet.⁴ More recently, the erudite author has considerably expanded this essay and included more analysis and documentation, offering it as a preface to *Dashti's 23 Sal*, distributed by Alburz Publishing, in Frankfurt, Germany. A section of this expanded essay (pages 34–42), appearing under the heading, "Sarkub Baha'iyān" [The suppression of the Baha'is], is provided below in translation.

Technical Details

Footnotes by the author are marked (BC). Remaining footnotes are by the translator.

Clarifying remarks in square brackets [...] are by the translator. Subheadings have been

added in the translation to provide clarity and assist the reader's understanding. Most names and Persian terms have been transliterated in accordance with academic standards, except some commonly recognized names, such as Khomeini, which have been written in their popular rendering.

4 See for example:

http://www.jamali.info/minorities/index.php?page=111206_A1;
http://www.negah.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=382&Itemid=15;
<http://www.cyrusnews.com/news/fa/?mi=2&ni=17649>.

Preface

Aequum et bonum est lex legum.

[What is good and equal, is the law of laws.]

Events during the past three decades have drawn attention to the continued existence of an important Baha'i community in Iran—perhaps the largest minority group of that country and most likely the largest non-Muslim body of people in the Middle East—the plight of which under the Islamic Republic has provoked widespread comment in the world's press, merited attention and action in the United Nations and its various international agencies, and drawn condemnation in a number of national parliaments. Since the Islamic Revolution, the activities of the Baha'i community of Iran have been severely curtailed. Physical, psychological, legal, social, and economic persecution of the community has been relentless, nationwide, malicious, and closely coordinated by the state and clerical establishment. Several hundreds of its membership, including much of its leadership, have been put to death, some by formal execution, others as a result of mob violence; hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others have been imprisoned—many of these have been tortured, often with the aim of extracting a denial of faith, and the vast majority have been deprived of access to legal representation; properties owned by Baha'is, both communal and personal, have been seized, looted, and destroyed; holy places and cemeteries of the community have been desecrated and demolished; assets of Baha'i companies have

been confiscated and their operations halted; a large percentage of adherents have been dismissed from private and public employment, and none have been permitted to work in governmental agencies or educational sectors; Baha'i pensioners have been barred from collecting retirement funds; members of the faith-community have been disallowed access to public health facilities; Baha'i children have been subjected to abuse at schools and Baha'i youth denied access to institutions of higher education; the Baha'is in particular, and minority groups in general, have been made the target of a systematic campaign of lies and slander and libel by the national media, such as the infamous Kayhan newspaper, and the subject of countless polemics and anti-Baha'i seminars; Baha'i administrative bodies have been dismantled and much of their membership incarcerated; Baha'i publications of all forms have been seized and the Baha'i residents targeted for regular raids by the agents of the Ministry of Intelligence. Perhaps most grievously, tens of thousands of Baha'is—maybe more—have been forced to leave their native land, mostly without any of their possessions, and to seek a new life in diaspora. The intense persecution of the last thirty years did not occur in a vacuum. Behind it lies a history of decades of continual harassment and discrimination against the beleaguered Baha'is of Iran. Perhaps to better understand the matrix within which these events—and also the events of 1950–54, which are the subject of this monograph—occurred, it would help to briefly survey the history of this community.

Historical Background

The Babi movement, a precursor to the Baha'i faith, began in 1844 when a young merchant in Shiraz by the name of Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad proclaimed that he was “the Bab” [the Gate], the personification of the much-anticipated hidden Twelfth Imam, a Messiah-like

figure whose appearance had been expected by Shi'i Muslims for exactly one thousand years.

The Bab further claimed that his appearance was to prepare the way for the

advent of another prophet, whom he styled “Him Whom God shall make manifest,” whose teachings would establish unity, peace, and order on earth.⁵ In short time, the Bab’s proposed reforms attracted many followers, but the embryonic community soon met with intense hostility from the social élites of the nation—in particular the Shi’i clerical establishment.⁶ The Bab’s followers were organized and actively pressed their program forward, and in several instances they engaged in armed clashes with government forces.⁷ Over the next several years, thousands of Babis were imprisoned, tortured in public, and eventually murdered on the order of religious and political authorities.⁸ The Bab was imprisoned and eventually executed on July 9, 1850. Suppression of the Babi movement often precipitated as a result of collusion between the clergy and the political authorities. The former opposed the new faith on religious grounds, while the latter believed that the Babi reforms were a threat to the security of the state. This latter belief was considered further confirmed by an assassination attempt on Nasiri’ d-Din Shah following the Bab’s execution. The failed attempt on the Shah’s life provoked a renewed assault on the Babi community. Abrahamian notes that the Babi prisoners were “paraded in chains through Tehran, given a final opportunity to recant, and then portioned out for execution to various groups—to the royal family, the Qajar tribe, the clergy, the ministries, the military, the merchants, and the bazaar guilds....Some were blinded before being shot; others were stabbed repeatedly, then decapitated; yet others were beaten mercilessly before being strangled.”⁹ In an article dated November 16, 1852, the New York Times reports that “upwards of 400 Babis were put to death in Tehran, as accomplices in the recent attempt against the life of the Shah....The unhappy sufferers were all tortured in the most cruel manner.”¹⁰ In the midst of this fiery ordeal, and deep in the Siyah-Chal dungeon of

Tehran, a young nobleman by the name of Mirza Husayn-‘Ali, and known to history as Baha’u’llah [the Glory of God], who had been wrongly accused of being party to the assassination attempt, discovered that he was the fulfillment of the promised “Him Whom God shall make manifest.” After release from prison in 1852, Baha’u’llah spent much of his subsequent life

5 For an academic discussion of the Babi religion, see Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*; pp. 375–77 contain

discussions of the Bab’s prophecies about the next prophetic figure.

6 For instances of hostilities towards the Bab during the early years of his ministry, see Afnan, *The Genesis of the*

Babi–Baha’i Faiths in Shiraz and Fars.

7 See Zarandi, *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha’i Revelation*, pp. 324–414, 465–95,

and 527–80. For a detailed discussion of one such incident, see Rabbani, *The Babis of Nayriz: History and Documents*.

8 See Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 401 and 405. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, p. 26, describes “a

vicious pogrom against real and suspected Babis inside Iran, with much public torture of those accused,

resulting in several thousand deaths,” and asserts that “the truly gruesome aspect of church-state entanglement

was demonstrated in the joint efforts of officials and clergy to invent ever more ingenious ways of inflicting pain on those branded heretics.”

9 Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran*, pp. 20–21. As a child, ‘Abdu’l-

Baha was an eyewitness to these Babi killings and has recorded some of his observations; see Mu’ayyad, *Eight Years near ‘Abdu’l-Baha*.

10 Wagner, “Babi Attempt on the Life of the Shah, 1852: Coverage in the *New York Times*.”

in exile and captivity until his death in 1892, however, the religion he founded and headed

until his death continued to spread and grow into a worldwide community.

The claim advanced by the Bab and Baha’u’llah to be messengers of God is the principal

reason why the Baha’i faith is considered to be heretical by Muslims, who believe the

Prophet Muhammad to be the final prophet that will ever be sent by God. This has crystallized into a widely held belief that Baha'is are "public enemies who must be controlled, punished or...forcibly reconverted."¹¹ Moreover, the interpretation of Shi'i law practiced in Iran (based on the Qur'anic teachings) asserts that conversion from Islam into another faith—that is, apostasy—is an offense punishable by death. This prohibition is also used to justify punishment of individuals who, under duress, agree to convert to Islam, but subsequently resume the practice of their own faith. Influenced by the Shi'i clergy and fueled by nationalism, Iranians generally view the global message of the Baha'i faith as an alien, even pro-Western, interference in Iran.¹² During its entire history, the Baha'i community of Iran has faced repeated cycles of persecution, varying in intensity. Since its inception, the Baha'is of Iran have not enjoyed any measure of liberty to practice their religion and have suffered concentrated, widespread economic and social exclusion. Great numbers of its members have been subjected to execution, thousands have suffered arbitrary imprisonment, and many smaller Baha'i communities of that country have experienced periodic pogroms. Another recurring aspect of anti-Baha'i campaigns has been the confiscation and destruction of Baha'i property, including holy sites, cemeteries, personal property, and community institutions. In Shiraz, the house occupied by the Bab, one of the Baha'i community's most sacred religious icons and a site of obligatory pilgrimage for future Baha'is, was attacked on several occasions and was finally totally demolished in 1979 by the country's Islamic Republic. All these waves of persecution have been carried out with the support of national judicial, administrative, and law-enforcement systems. The Baha'i community has suffered most severely when the clerical influence in national affairs has been strongest. The 1950s witnessed organized anti-Baha'i campaigns resulting in mob violence, destruction of religious sites, and the formation of private

anti-Baha'i

organizations, approved and assisted by senior civil, military, and religious leadership figures.

The propaganda used to cultivate and justify social persecution created negative stereotypes

that continue to have repercussions to the present day. Clerics who gained an influential

public voice during these campaigns later attained powerful positions in the post-1979

Islamic Republic.

11 MacEoin, "The Baha'is of Iran: The Roots of Controversy," p. 77.

12 See MacEoin, *A People Apart*, for a detailed discussion of perceived objections to the Baha'i movement.

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Bahram Choubine, PhD

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Part 1

Dr. Musaddiq and the Baha'is

Introduction:

Iran and the Cold War

Preamble

The lives of Baha'is in Iran are constantly under threat and filled with interminable dangers.

Theirs is an unceasing struggle to achieve human rights and legitimate

recognition. Let us lift our vision to a new perspective of liberty and justice based on the code of law.

The period spanning from 1941 to August 19, 1953 was filled with days of mystery and secrets in modern Iranian history. By the late 1930s, Reza Shah had become increasingly despotic and disliked. Parliament assented to his decrees, the free press was suppressed, and the swift incarceration of political leaders like Dr. Musaddiq and the murder of others like Taymurtash and Davar halted the formation of any democratic process. The situation continued to worsen, and in August 1941, Britain and the Soviet Union occupied Iran by a massive assault, subsequently forcing Reza Shah to abdicate in favor of his son, Muhammad-Reza Shah. In 1951, under the leadership of the nationalist movement of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq, the Iranian parliament unanimously voted to nationalize the oil industry. This shut out the immensely profitable Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), which was a pillar of Britain's economy and political influence in the region. A month after that vote, Musaddiq came to power as the prime minister, committed to reestablishing democracy and constitutional monarchy, and to nationalizing the entire Iranian petroleum industry. From the start he erroneously believed that the Americans, who had no apparent stake in AIOC, would support his nationalization plan. He was buoyed in this hope by Henry Grady, the American ambassador to Iran. However, during these events, the Americans supported the British, and, fearing that the Communists with the help of the Soviets were poised to overthrow the government, they decided to remove Musaddiq. In late 1952, the British government invited Kermit Roosevelt of the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to London and proposed that they cooperate under the code name "Operation Ajax" to bring down Musaddiq. Under the direction of the CIA and the British Secret Intelligence Service, a covert operation took place to depose Musaddiq with the help of military forces loyal to the Shah. Despite high-level coordination and planning, the coup

initially failed, causing the Shah to flee first to Baghdad, then to Rome. After a brief exile in Italy, the Shah returned to Iran, this time through a successful second attempt at a coup on August 19, 1953. The deposed Musaddiq was arrested, given a show trial, and sentenced to solitary confinement for three years in a military prison, followed by house arrest for life in his estate at Ahmadabad, where he is now buried. General Fadlu'llah Zahidi was installed to succeed Prime Minister Musaddiq, and he quickly reversed most of reforms brought about during the Musaddiq era. The purpose of this essay, however, is not to investigate all aspects of this period; it only aims to offer short glimpses and brief insights into the political thoughts of Dr. Muhammad

Musaddiq, Iran's champion of the nationalist movement. This monograph is not written for impatient individuals. In this brief essay, I am a fellow-traveler of Confucius, who said, "I can never teach the person who tries with all his might not to understand anything" and when he admonished us not to "judge historical events by our present standards." Therefore, I invite the reader to patience and forbearance, so in this way we can find our way to knowledge and a station worthy of our humanity.¹³

Systematic Anti-Baha'ism in Contemporary Iran
In September 1941, Iran fell under the military occupation of the Allied forces of the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States. From the time Hitler came to power in Germany and World War II commenced, tendencies favoring Hitler's ideas and extreme nationalism could be seen in Iran. Although Iran clearly and unambiguously declared her neutrality on two separate occasions, this declaration did not save Iran, nor did it prevent her from being occupied by Allied forces. After Hitler's war machine attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalin's Red Army, along with the British and American forces, invaded Iran in accordance with Article 6 of the 1921 treaty between Iran and the Soviet Union, which gave

the latter the right to enter Iran in the event of threats from Iran. In September 1941, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate his throne in favor of his son Muhammad-Reza Pahlavi and was exiled to Mauritius, an island nation off East Africa that was one of the British colonies.¹⁴ In truth, Muhammad-Reza Shah came to power through the consent of the British and the farsightedness of Muhammad-'Ali Furughi.¹⁵ Iran's invasion and occupation by foreign governments, along with the collapse of her military, police, and security apparatus, coupled with extremely poor economic conditions brought about to a large measure by the occupying forces, in addition to constant hate incitement and profit-mongering interference by the Allied regimes, created favorable conditions for the orthodox elements and those aligned with foreigners to come to power. Moreover, powerful entities, in particular the British and Americans, began to compete with one another over the region's natural resources, especially the oil reserves in Iran and the Middle East. Therefore, they endeavored to extend their political, military, and economic spheres of influence in Iran. Naturally, the activities of the British and American governments in Iran and the Middle East did not escape the notice of Stalin, the autocrat of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Therefore, he began to pursue the Soviet Union's strategic objectives through Iran's Tudeh [Communist] Party—a Party he had a significant role in creating—in the hope that Iran would not turn into a base against the interests of the Soviet Union. In this confused but relatively free atmosphere, many parties, organizations, and groups were formed in Iran with the support of the Soviet Union and England, and a little later with backing from the United States, and people gained certain individual and societal liberties. Political prisoners were freed. Once again, newspapers, political parties, and religious

¹³ See appendix 1. (BC)

¹⁴ See Mahdavi, *Tarikh Ravabit Khariji Iran: Az Ibtida-yi Duran Safaviyih ta Payan Jang Duvvum Jahani*, chapter 9, pp.

375–453. (BC)

15 Better known by the title Zika'u'l-Mulk, he was a learned prime minister during the reign of Reza Shah, who

wrote several important publications in the field of philosophy. It is said that he was a leading Babi during his generation.

organizations, which during the reign of Reza Shah had gone underground into a dark social substratum, reemerged and gained much strength.

The mullas themselves confess that the departure of Reza Shah and the beginning of the

Cold War presented them with their most favorable historical juncture: “With Reza Khan

gone, the religious orthodoxy was more pleased than others and beat the drum of joy.

During this entire period of the suppression of intellectual proclivities, the clerics had kept

silent too. But now with the departure of Reza Khan, they were like doves freed from their

cage and were winging their flight.”¹⁶

However, Ahmad Kasravi (1890–1946), the noted linguist, historian, and brave critic of

the Shi'i sect and of the corrupt clerical apparatus, had a different view:

“Those [i.e., the

mullas] who had changed their clothing, came back to the 'aba and turban. And those who

had gone into hiding in corners, came out into the open, and once again started to battle

with secular law, knowledge and all things good. Once again, young seminarians, bred on

begging and indolence, appeared on the field.”¹⁷

With the conclusion of World War II, Stalin used the same Article 6 of the 1921 agreement as a pretext not to remove his Red Army from Iran. With the deceitful support of

the Democratic Party in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, he further fueled insecurities and created

disturbances in northern Iran. However, England and the United States well remembered

what they had witnessed in the Balkans and commenced to openly and strongly oppose the

designs of the Soviet Union; they even had to threaten atomic attack upon that country. This

was reckoned as the first encounter and reaction by the West against the Soviet Union

during the Cold War.

Eventually, with the departure of the Red Army from Iran and the disgraceful

defeat of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan in 1946, relative peace and tranquility was established in Iran. However, the Cold War had commenced; Iran, with its 2,700-kilometer border with the Soviet Union, became one of the unexpected opponents of that country and a major pillar of the Cold War in the Middle East, and indeed in the entire world. The Soviet Union had emerged from World War II weak, but victorious thanks to the help of the United States and England. Nevertheless, from the perspective of revolutionaries in those days, that country was considered to be the center of global socialism and was seen as if it had a magical luster. The aim of the Cold War in the West, and also in the Middle East, particularly in Iran, was to oppose the spread of Communist-Marxist revolutionary ideas. Strengthening Islam by promoting religious proclivities and superstitions was one of the most fundamental instruments in waging the Cold War. This was a precious gift for the Shi‘i clerical establishment, which in the past had had an intimate and cozy relationship with the British imperialist regime. The only difference was that now, with the arrival of the United States on Iran’s political scene, Shi‘i clerics had gained even more power and influence. From this time, the clerical hierarchy became the closest ally and the most unified and cohesive support for the Cold War and the powers of global imperialism. Through collaboration with foreign governments, the entire structure of [Shi‘i] religiosity and the clerical establishment was placed at the service of anti-nationalistic policies and opposition to the principles of constitutional rule in the country. Once again, the clerics regained their traditional position, which they had lost with the victory of Iran’s Constitutional Revolt [1905–11] and the

16 Ja‘farian, *Jaryanha va Sazmanhayi Mazhabi-Siyasi Iran (1941–1979)*, p. 23. (BC)

17 Kasravi, *Dadgah*, p. 55. (BC)

subsequent wise and sensible policies of Reza Shah that had prevented mullas

from
interfering in affairs of state.

The Allied forces' blueprint and design for winning the Cold War in Iran, which stemmed from consultation and discussion with leading clerics and governmental figures, was based on three principal pillars:

1. Opposition and conflict with Iran's Tudeh Party and, in general, combating any revolutionary thought, change, or innovation that had socialist or communist underpinning;
2. Opposition and a campaign against the Baha'is because through their belief in the appearance of the Lord of the Age and the manifestation of Siyyid-i Bab in 1844, and his claim to Mahdaviyyat [the station of being the Mahdi, the "Rightly Guided One" of Islam], they have proclaimed that the appearance and resurrection of the Mahdi [in the future] is null and void; moreover, they do not believe at all in the role of clerics in politics and their influence on people's lives. The spiritual teachings and the administration of this newly founded religion were completely at odds with traditional Islam and naturally opposed to the clerical hierarchy, the involvement of the 'ulama in politics, and their participation in the propagation of the Cold War. This point was well known and understood by the Shi'i ecclesiastics and clearly stated in their writings after the Islamic Revolution.
3. Opposition and protestation against Kasravi and his anti-Shi'i ideas, and against the somewhat anti-Islamic tendencies of Kasravi and his followers. Kasravi's ideas had directly targeted the intellectual foundation of the supporters of the Cold War—that is, the clerics and Islamist members of government—and there was no other remedy but to destroy Kasravi himself and his notions. For this reason, his assassination by Fada'iyan Islam was greatly welcomed and cheered by both the government and the clerics. The message of Kasravi and the influence of his following were limited to Iran. However, the Baha'i faith had members throughout the entire world, having long since transcended Iran's

geographical

boundaries, and therefore not all of its members were within the reach of the mullas.

Furthermore, people other than Iranians had also discovered this religion and had converted to it.

After the passing of Ayatu'llah Aqa Siyyid Abu'l-Hasan Isfahani and the sudden death of his successor, Ayatu'llah Haji Aqa Husayn Qumi in Najaf [in Iraq], the marja'iyat [leadership] of Shi'i Islam once again returned to Iran. Ayatu'llah Haji Aqa Husayn Burujirdi became the marja' [source of emulation] and assumed the administration of the newly established seminary in Qum. For nine years, he studied and was a student of Akhund Mulla Kazim

Khurasani, and he had become thoroughly familiar with all the details of political Islamism.

Akhund Mulla Kazim Khurasani had intimate and profitable ties with Britain's imperialistic

regime.¹⁸ Memoirs and documents published after the Revolution clearly demonstrate that

Ayatu'llah Burujirdi and the clerical establishment were shrewdly pursuing the recovery and

strengthening of their reactionary powers. They illegally interfered in all aspects of the

country's administration and showed their enmity towards Iran's constitution and laws.

Beneath the same cloak of religious leadership and clericalism, the terrorist organization

Jam'iyat Fada'iyān Islam [the Society of the Devotees of Islam] commenced operation under

the guidance of a young seminarian who had not benefited from Islamic knowledge, but who

was a religious fanatic beyond all sanity.¹⁹ The founding of the terrorist organization Jam'iyat

Fada'iyān Islam under the leadership of Siyyid Mujtaba Mirlawhi, known as Navvab Safavi,

¹⁸ See appendix 3. (BC)

¹⁹ See appendix 7.

and a number of other large or small religious organizations, precipitated a decade of

bloodshed and persistent insecurity. Ultimately, it resulted in an open and purposeful

disregard for the constitutional law of the country, and various

administrations—all based on worn-out ideas and connected to imperialism—came and went one after another, without any regard for the calamity that they were causing for the people of Iran. In Tehran and other towns, widespread attacks began on the offices and centers of the Tudeh Party, of the Baha'is, and of Ahmad Kasravi. In full daylight and in front of police officers and security agents, Ahmad Kasravi, that fearless and headstrong critic of the Shi'i sect, and his secretary Haddadpur were assassinated March 11, 1946 in the national Palace of Justice by terrorist members of Fada'iyān Islam in the most brutal manner. This first murder over religious differences during the Cold War and inside Iran's principal judicial building was a clear warning to the Shah and to the government of [the Prime Minister] Qavamu's-Saltāni, who considered themselves the defenders of Iran's constitutional law. However, this momentous warning went unheeded by all those serving in the government. Siyyid Husayn Imami, the murderer of Kasravi and his secretary, was freed from prison accompanied by the cries of Allah'u' Akbar ["God is Great"]—a liberty which emboldened and encouraged the instigators and masterminds of this bloody terror. From this point onward, the Shi'i leadership and the clerical establishment, along with the political leaders of Iran, became partners in all the bloodshed and ensuing political, social, and economic instability and chaos. Because of the deep-rooted religious and superstitious attitude of Iranian society, the financial and moral support of the clerical establishment, and the shortsighted and reckless policies of various governments after World War II, the Jam'iyat Fada'iyān Islam gained unprecedented influence. There was no limit or bounds on the creation of religious-political groups and societies in the capital [Tehran] or other towns. For instance, Anjuman Tablighat Islami [the Society for Islamic Propagation] was formed in 1942 by 'Atau'llah Shahabpur and through the assistance of the Ministry of Education gained widespread support. The formation of the Ittihadih Muslimin [the Union of Muslims] by Haji Mihdi Saraj-Ansari and of the Jam'ih Ta'limat

Islami [the Society for Islamic Teachings] by ‘Abbas-‘Ali Islami, both of which had formed branches throughout Iran, were other notable examples of the all-encompassing efforts of the mullas to participate in the Cold War and involve themselves in the government’s affairs and leadership. Ayatu’llah Siyyid Hasan Chahrsuqi revived the Hay’at ‘Ilmiyah Isfahan [the Scientific League of Isfahan], which had been forgotten and disbanded for many years.

In Shiraz, where the Babi movement began, Hizb Bardaran [the Brothers Party], otherwise known as Hizb Nur [the Light Party], was formed by a resolute enemy of the

Baha’is, of Kasravi’s ideas, and of the Tudeh Party, namely, Ayatu’llah Siyyid Nuri’d-Din

Shirazi, who collaborated with Ayatu’llah Baha’u’d-Din Mahallati in this work. Ayatu’llah

Siyyid Nuri’d-Din Shirazi became so aggressive in pursuit of his objectives that when the

Shah was visiting Shiraz and making a pilgrimage to Shah-Chirag, he issued a fatwa [religious

ruling] for the destruction of the home of Siyyid-i Bab, which for the Babis, and particularly

for the Baha’is, was a sacred and historic site. He himself placed a chair in front of this

spectacle and observed the attack on the house of the Bab. This incident caused a great

uproar in Shiraz and brought about unrest in the city. Since it was feared that it would result

in a massacre of the Baha’is, martial law was imposed over the city to ensure calm and

order.²⁰ Initiating a new tactic, the mullas eventually formed Nihzat Khuda-Parastan Socialist

20 Ja’farian, *Jaryanha va Sazmanhayi Mazhabi-Siyasi Iran (1941–1979)*, p. 23. (BC)

[the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists], which was a mixture of Islamic and socialist ideas and concepts.

These are but a few minor examples of a long list of extremist Islamic groups formed to

agitate against the Tudeh Party, the Baha’i community, and every form of progressive and

modern thought in Iran. A large number of daily newspapers, monthlies, or quarterlies, with

either a prefix or suffix of “Islam,” were established in these same years and were published

with the financial and moral support of the government and the clerical apparatus.

It is noteworthy that the foundation of all these moneymaking enterprises with the cover of religion was to combat the Tudeh Party and “in particular to prevent the spread of the activities of the Baha’is and other corrupt social groups.” Openly and overtly, they spoke of the suppression of the Baha’is, and even of their planned massacre in Iran. In their publications, they repeatedly called people to support these objectives, and the unlettered people were provoked and instigated by them. Moreover, government officials who outwardly appeared constitutionalist, directly or indirectly, openly or covertly, backed their extremist deeds and words.

It is astonishing that whenever the clerics were not able to achieve their immediate goals or wishes cloaked in Islamic piety—though in truth they were thoroughly misanthropic—they would criticize Muhammad-Reza Shah or political figures by accusing them of not following the constitutional law of the land. Whereas, based on documents published by the Islamic Republic itself, it is clear that it was the clerics themselves who exerted constant pressure to that effect on the Shah or government apparatus, even urging and encouraging them to disregard the constitution or overlook it altogether.

The politics of the Cold War, which led to Europe’s and America’s supporting clerics against every form of ideas that were not reactionary, made religious and tribal minorities, as well as leftist and nationalist parties, persistent targets of abuse, harassment, and persecution in all Muslim countries, particularly in Iran. The instigators of these constant mistreatments were those who made their living from religion or who were politicians set on deceiving the public. This dark period was a propitious time for Shi’i clerics to redefine the theory underlying their medieval ideas and to strengthen their own position with an eye to profiteering.

The notion of the vilayat faqih [the guardianship of jurists] is an ill-conceived effort by some mullas to present the teachings of an Arab religion as logical and modern.

Moreover, Islamic government is a dream leftover from the age of ignorance, by men whose thoughts are rooted in a medieval era. It is a reflection of Cold War policies, fostering unwise and injudicious conspiracies that were far from any farsighted policies envisioned by the government, political leaders, and intellectuals of Iran. One of the imprudent decisions of that time can be mentioned as an example. Due to enormous pressure from the clerical establishment, Siyyid Husayn Imami, the murderer of [Ahmad] Kasravi, was released without suffering any consequences for his act and in fact was loudly greeted by a large welcoming party. Soon after that, on November 4, 1949, he assassinated the Court Minister [‘Abdu’l-Husayn] Hazhir.²¹ Grand Ayatu’llahs Kashani,

21 Hazhir (1899–1949) served as minister on ten occasions and eventually served as the prime minister from

June 13, 1948 to November 9, 1949. He was then appointed as the court minister, when he was assassinated as the consequence of a false accusation that he was a Baha’i.

Bihbahani, and others spread a report among the ignorant masses that “Hazhir was a Baha’i!”²²

A month after the assassination of Hazhir, during the administration of Prime Minister

Muhammad Sa’id Maraghih’i, the murders in Abarqu and the brutal killing of Dr. Sulayman

Berjis, a well-regarded and deeply caring physician, took place February 3, 1950.²³

Muhammad Sa’id Maraghih’i was the son of Mulla Shaykh Ahmad Qazizadih. He was

appointed the prime minister twice, was the foreign minister eight times, the interior minister

once, and for many years was a member of the parliament, an ambassador, or a minister-at-

large. When Hazhir had been prime minister for only a few months, Muhammad Sa’id was

appointed in his place. During his ill-fated administration, which also lasted only a few

months, Sa’id resigned three times; eventually ‘Ali Mansur, who was a weak old man without

the strength to walk and who was renowned for corruption, was appointed prime

minister.

He started office March 23, 1950, and on June 26th, that is, after three months—he resigned.

Lieutenant-General Haji ‘Ali Razmara was then appointed as prime minister of Iran.

Regarding the latter’s personality and manners, Dr. Baqir ‘Aqili has offered the most concise and complete opinion:

Razmara was a clever, hard working, serious and ambitious man.... To achieve his objectives, he would demonstrate great bravery and constancy. He had no regard for his agreements or treaties, and would sacrifice everything in order to achieve his end. He was able to use every incident to his own benefit.²⁴

Razmara’s progress and advancement, whether in the military or political arena, was always based on secret agreements and conniving. When he was 44-years-old, during the premiership of Sadru’l-Ashraf and the military command of Major-General Arfa’, Razmara was forced into [early retirement and] staying at home. After Sadru’l-Ashraf, the Qavamu’s-Saltanih became prime minister in January 1946. Immediately, Razmara was returned to military service by the leaders of the Tudeh Party and by Muzfar Firuz, who was accounted an enemy of the Shah. His return was based on a widespread rumor that he had close connections with the Soviet Union. Eventually, after a series of connivances, tricks, and schemes, and through betrayal by the Qavam and others, he became prime minister.

22 See Mohajir, “Kard-Ajin Kardan Doctor Berjis.”

23 See appendix 4. (BC)

24 ‘Aqili, *Sharh Hal Rijal Siyasi va Nizami Mu‘asir Iran*, vol. 2, pp. 714–20.

Haji ‘Ali-Razmara should not be confused with Brigadier-General Husayn-‘Ali Razmara, who was a learned man and who created devices such as a Qiblih-locator and compass for the blind, which often are erroneously attributed to Lieutenant-General Razmara. (BC)

Lieutenant-General Haji ‘Ali Razmara

Two significant incidents marked Razmara’s premiership. First, through

trustworthy officers, he arranged for ten leaders of the Tudeh Party who had been incarcerated in Qasr Prison to escape. Through this deed, he endeared himself to the leadership of the Soviet Union. Second, through his opposition to the nationalization of the petroleum industry, he won the deep gratitude of English imperialism. It should be noted that the Tudeh Party was among the staunchest supporters of Razmara during his tenure as prime minister. We should ask, Was the news of the coup d'état against the Shah and Iran's constitutional regime of that time the only rumor spread by enemies of the state? With plans for a coup d'état, Razmara was planning a bloody calamity. It should be a cause of much joy that he did not succeed. In fact, I am convinced that he was planning a military coup and the establishment of a military dictatorship in Iran.

Chapter 1 The Crime

Historical Background

On Tuesday, January 3, 1950, a heinous crime took place in the village of Robat, two kilometers from Abarqu. What happened in that village was that during the night, in the most brutal manner, Sughra, an ill-fated mother [age 50], and her three daughters, ages 15, 11, and 8, and her two sons, ages 14 and 6, were murdered.²⁵ To this day, sixty years later, the perpetrators of this murderous tragedy have not been brought to justice. The inheritors of such crimes and inhuman activities, after having established the "Government of God" in Iran, are seated upon the throne of authority, and in their revolutionary accounts recall these crimes in different ways and shamelessly confess their pride and satisfaction in having committed these deeds.²⁶

Motive for the Murders

Muhammad-Hasan Khan Salari, a well-known landlord in Abarqu, suddenly died while still relatively young. After his death, his widow, Maryam Salari, a beautiful and charming woman, was left with a vast estate and great wealth. With the death of her father, she inherited more land and affluence, but she was alone. To earn a living for her

family, who were without a provider, Sughra became Maryam Salari's maid.²⁷ Even though he was already married and had children, Isfandiyar Khan Salari, a brother of Muhammad-Hasan Khan, yearned after his brother's beautiful and rich widow, who also happened to be his paternal cousin. He decided to marry Maryam. But she refused the greedy and insistent suitor, and did not heed the repeated marriage proposals and many efforts of her cousin, Isfandiyar Khan. The reason that Maryam Salari was disinclined toward her cousin was due to Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi. Sughra—Maryam's maid—was the neighbor of the Siyyid, who was a rawdih-khan [a teller of the story of the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn] in Abarqu, and Sughra was the intermediary between him and Maryam. It was rumored in Abarqu that at times Maryam and the preacher Siyyid, who was a tall, well-proportioned, and handsome young man, would secretly meet in Sughra's modest home to engage in merry-making and smoking opium in the courtyard by the pool. In such a romantic atmosphere, the Siyyid would discard all self-restraint, and with his warm, charming, and pleasant voice, which until then had not found an opportunity to express its full range except in rawdih-khanis, he would whisper tender melodies and would sing passionately in his intoxicated state. The curiosity of the Robat villagers was so aroused that quietly and secretly they would go over the connected roofs. From the rooftops of Sughra's neighbors, they witnessed the courtship of the widow of the Khan and Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi, who

25 See appendix 2. (BC)

26 One instance is Kayhan newspaper, January 25, 2006. In this issue, Kayhan published an article on the Abarqu

incident filled with libelous lies and slanders.

27 Sughra's husband and family provider, Rida, had died some time earlier.

was a resident of Abarqu. This love story and the tale of their exploits were on all tongues in

the town of Abarqu. Those who have lived in small towns understand well that deeds, sayings, and even the thoughts of every resident are well known to neighbors and are the currency of the town—this is a characteristic of all small communities in Iran and other places.

There is no doubt that the report of these nightly merry-making and romantic activities by Sughra's pool had reached the ears of the disappointed and thwarted Isfandiyar Khan Salari, and had caused him further anxiety and agitation. On several occasions, he had threatened to kill Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi and Sughra. From what can be learned from the pages of the investigation and judicial files related to the murders in Abarqu, Qayyumi had several times taken his complaint to the police in Abarqu and Yazd, stating that if one day he or Sughra came to harm, then the instigator and responsible person was none other than Isfandiyar Khan Salari. Eventually, Maryam Salari consented to marriage with Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi, who also already had a wife and children. Because Maryam's family opposed this marriage, and the couple feared Isfandiyar Khan Salari, a large landowner and influential citizen of Abarqu, the couple secretly drove in Maryam's automobile to Eqlid, which is located twenty-four kilometers from Abadeh.²⁸ It was in Eqlid where they recorded their marriage at the town registry.

Abarqu in relation to Abadeh, Yazd, and Eqlid

²⁸ Abarqu is 218 kilometers from Yazd and 120 kilometers from Dehbid. It is also 72 kilometers from Abadeh.

Abarqu has approximately 20,000 inhabitants. Eqlid is on the way to Abadeh from Abarqu and is 24 kilometers from Abadeh. (BC)

The news of the marriage of Maryam Salari and the Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi went through Abarqu like a whirlwind and reached the ears of Isfandiyar Khan Salari. From this moment, plans were hatched to avenge this union by taking the life of the

ill-fated Sughra and her children, and to conspire to ascribe these murders to the Baha'is of Shiraz, Abadeh, Yazd, and regions around Abarqu, which naturally would lead to the persecution of Baha'is all across Iran. The demonic impulse of religious prejudice and anti-Baha'ism that resides at the core of Iranian society became a vital and powerful underpinning and foundation for implementation of this evil and bloody scheme—a pattern and mindset that lives to this very day in a most reprehensible form in Iran.

Initial Investigation

On the same day, January 3, 1950, the report of the murder of Sughra and her children reached the police chief in Abarqu, Sergeant-Major Husayn Sadripur. While examining the crime scene and the remains of the slain, Sergeant-Major Sadripur observed that the murderer or murderers had not brought a weapon of any kind, but instead had used a shovel and hammer on the victims' faces, particularly on the mouth, to kill Sughra and her children. In pursuing his investigation and the preliminary questioning, Sadripur learned that instruments used in the killings actually belonged to Sughra and still remained in the corner of the house, covered with bloodstains. Sergeant-Major Sadripur concluded with near certainty the reason that the entire household had been slain was that during their struggles the victims had probably cried and called out for help, and knew the identity of the killer(s). In order not to be identified and arrested, the murderer or murderers resorted to killing the entire household, then with blood-soaked hands had searched through Sughra's meager furnishings and wrapped clothing, and had escaped during the dark of the night. It can be learned through the pages of the crime file that after the initial investigation, Sergeant-Major Sadripur immediately arrested three individuals: 'Ali, who was Sughra's son-in-law and the husband of Ruqiyih, Sughra's sole surviving daughter; Ja'far ['Ali's father]; and his brother, Ramadan. They had been at Sughra's home well into the night of the incident,

but, when questioned by Sadripur, had offered contradictory accounts. Also, since the crime had taken place at night and the instruments of the killings were found inside the house, it stood to reason that the three of them had committed these murders. It is noteworthy that after the news of the killings was disseminated and 'Ali, Ja'far, and Ramadan were arrested in Abarqu, Isfandiyar Khan Salari had fallen under greater suspicion for having instigated Sughra's murder. Generally, the inhabitants of Abarqu considered him to be the true perpetrator of this incident. Dad newspaper in Tehran published by Abu'l-Hasan 'Amidi-Nuri, who later was one of the ten tort lawyers representing Ruqiyih, the sole survivor of Sughra, reported the following under the heading, "Heinous Crime in Abarqu":

In Abarqu, a woman and her four [sic] children were murdered in a heart-wrenching and brutal manner. The perpetrators of this crime were arrested through the efforts of Baniadam, the Governor of Yazd. It became known during the course of the investigation that the murderers were her son-in-law and his father, who committed this crime through the incitement and instigation of several brothers who are residents of Abarqu [i.e., the Salari brothers], who bore enmity towards the aforesaid woman.

From what has been learned, the brother of one of the instigators had passed away. He had an attractive wife and was very wealthy. One of his brothers [Isfandiyar Khan Salari] had wanted to wed the widow. The murdered woman [Sughra] had been instrumental in the marriage of this beautiful woman with a resident of Abarqu [namely, Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi].

At this time, that is, on January 3, immediately after the remains were discovered, interrogations were conducted by Abarqu's chief of police, Sergeant-Major Husayn Sadripur, his official file was prepared, and details were reported in Yazd and Tehran newspapers, where no allegation of the involvement of Baha'is in the murder of Sughra and her unfortunate five children was made. However, the scheme to involve and ascribe this bloody tragedy to Baha'is was already in motion. Following his customary practice, and uninformed of the events during the

preceding
night, a Siyyid, shortly after the murder of Sughra and her children, went by
the brook near
his house to perform his ablutions at dawn on January 3, 1950. According to the
remaining
pages of the police file from that time, that Siyyid, known as Siyyid Sabbagh,
reported the
following to Sergeant-Major Sadripur:

Very early at dawn, when the light had begun to break, I went by the brook near
my
house to perform my ablutions. Suddenly, I saw Isfandiyar Khan [Salari] coming
out
of his house, looking worried and in a hurry, and appearing to be leaving on a
journey [out of town]. I stood up and greeted him. Isfandiyar Khan said,
“Last
night, Muhammad Shirvani, who is Sughra’s neighbor, along with his son and
brother, Muhammad [-Hasan] Niku’i, has slain Sughra and her hapless children,
and
has escaped.”

According to this testimony, Siyyid Sabbagh—a devoted Muslim resident of
Abarqu—
shortly after the murders in their town, had seen Isfandiyar Khan Salari
“looking worried
and in a hurry,” who had then spoken the names of the supposed perpetrators.
Since the
murders had taken place during the night, and according to various testimonies,
Ruqiyih’s
husband ‘Ali; his father, Ja‘far; and his brother, Ramadan, had been in the
home of Sughra
into the night, and at a time when no one knew of this heinous incident (even
the prayer-
offering, early-rising Siyyid Sabbagh was unaware of the occurrence) we note
that Isfandiyar
Khan Salari, “looking worried and in a hurry,” appeared to be on his way on
a journey and
that he knew the names of the supposed offenders.

- Siyyid Sabbagh was the first person who heard Isfandiyar Khan Salari state,
“Muhammad
Shirvani, who is Sughra’s neighbor, along with his son and brother, Muhammad
Niku’i”
had “committed this crime” and had taken their flight. Therefore, a
conspiracy to
commit the murders and ascribe them to guiltless men, instead of to the actual
perpetrator[s], was laid in advance.

- Most likely, Isfandiyar Khan Salari was not only the instigator of this

incident but also the main character involved in the murders, and his partners in crime were ‘Ali, Ja‘far, and Ramadan. During the night, after killing Sughra and her children, Isfandiyar Khan had returned home to destroy his bloodstained clothing. He had quickly left his residence, when “looking worried and in a hurry,” he had unfortunately run across Siyyid Sabbagh and thereafter had commenced a journey to Yazd.

- Perhaps the reason that the murderer or murderers searched through Sughra’s meager furnishings was in the hope of finding documents or other items entrusted to Sughra and belonging to Maryam or Hujjatu’l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi. It appears that Maryam thought that her paternal cousins, that is, the Salaris, planned to rob her.

- Also, it can be supposed that searching through Sughra’s furnishings with bloody hands was a ruse by the perpetrators to pretend that the real motive for the murders was robbery. Since Sughra was employed as a maid by Maryam Salari, clearly she did not own valuable things, so this deception likely was authored by Isfandiyar Khan Salari.

Role of Yazd’s Judiciary Surrounding the Murders in Abarqu

Reports of these murders were conveyed to Yazd’s judiciary. Siyyid Muhammad Jalali-Na’ini, the town’s prosecutor, instructed Javad Sadiqi, the town’s investigator, to gather all the information pertaining to this case. That very day, Sadiqi left Yazd for Abarqu in the company of Yazd’s police chief. However, en route, he changed direction, and instead of proceeding to Abarqu he went to Mehriz, where he stayed two nights and a day. The purpose of this detour was for him to consult and confer with Sergeant-Major Khakpur Faraghih’i, the police chief in Mehriz, and a devotee and confidant of Isfandiyar Khan Salari. They wanted to make plans for Isfandiyar Khan and others who had committed this crime to escape punishment and legal pursuit, and instead for the blame to be placed on the shoulders of innocent others. This

group arrived in Abarqu on January 5th; it soon became clear during this interval in Mehriz what an evil scenario was being conceived. The two men, namely, Javad Sadiqi, who was Yazd's investigator, and Yazd's chief of police, who was also Sergeant-Major Khakpur's chief, arrived in Abarqu. The police chief immediately dismissed Sergeant-Major Sadripur from any further investigation—Sadripur being the person who had conducted the initial investigation, who had issued the arrest notices for the primary suspects 'Ali, Ja'far, and Ramadan, and who had caused "worry" and "hurriedness" in Isfandiyar Khan Salari. In place of Sadripur, Sergeant-Major Khakpur (the police chief of Mehriz and an intimate of Isfandiyar Khan) was appointed. At once, he released the three imprisoned men without any investigation or even securing sureties. In their place, he immediately arrested and imprisoned Muhammad Shirvani, a Muslim neighbor of Sughra, and his 17-year-old son named 'Ali-Muhammad, and Muhammad-Husayn Niku'i. Moreover, he destroyed all evidence and police files associated with the previous suspects and left no trace of their involvement in official records. Unlike the initial investigation by Abarqu's police chief, Sergeant-Major Sadripur (who considered the motive for this crime to be revenge and enmity by Isfandiyar Khan Salari towards Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi), the direction of the inquiry completely changed at the behest of Javad Sadiqi and his accomplice, Sergeant-Major Khakpur, who now maintained that the motive was religious differences between the Baha'is and Muslims. At this point it is critical to note that on the strength of Sergeant Sadripur's report and that of Abarqu's mayor, Baniadam, the governor of Yazd, informed Tehran of the motives for these murders and had given this information to such local and national newspapers as Bakhtar Imruz, and Dad—the latter was cited earlier in this monograph. In addition, the inhabitants of Abarqu knew that the entire population of Abarqu, without exception, was

Muslim, and that not even one single Baha'i lived among them. This was because several

years earlier they had killed three Baha'is in extremely brutal ways, and ever since no Baha'i

dared live in Abarqu. How could they then ascribe this crime to the Baha'is?

After dismissing Sergeant Sadripur and installing in his place an officer who was in the

pocket of the conspirators, Javad Sadiqi and Yazd's chief of police then returned to Yazd.

They had connived with Isfandiyar Khan Salari and designed a plan to entrap Baha'is in this

incident and attribute the murders to them. They entrusted Sergeant-Major Khakpur with

implementing the steps that remained to complete the police crime file.

From their initial inquiries, Officer Khakpur knew that Muhammad [-Hasan] Niku'i had

a brother named Ahmad who was Baha'i. It was common in Iran that many families could

be found in which some members were Baha'i and the rest Muslim. The Niku'i family was

one such family.

Even though Ahmad Niku'i lived long ways from Abarqu, this was not important to the

conspirators. Officer Khakpur announced that on the night of the incident, Muhammad-

Husayn Niku'i had taken the stolen property from the home of the deceased to the home of

his Baha'i brother, Ahmad Niku'i, in Dehbid, and had returned that very night to Abarqu.

The fact that he did not own an automobile, nor did he possess any other means of making a

journey of 300 kilometers that night in one direction, then turn around and be in Abarqu

again by early morning, never mattered. What was important was that the name of a Baha'i

had at last entered the arena.

However, Isfandiyar Khan, who continued in all minds as the suspected perpetrator of

this crime, but who had no legal responsibility or standing in this investigation, left behind

his home and work, and went to Dehbid, where he searched the meager residence of Ahmad

Niku'i. From there, he traced the footsteps of Ahmad Niku'i and went to Qeshlaq. But

learning that Ahmad Niku'i was in Shiraz, and not having found anything in his house,

Isfandiyar Khan proceeded forthwith to Shiraz to arrest Niku'i. However, Ahmad Niku'i was in Shiraz on the night of the murders; moreover, for a week preceding the murders he had been engaged in selling goods in the streets there. The doorkeeper of the caravansary where he lived and other travelers testified to his uninterrupted stay in Shiraz. When Isfandiyar Khan was unable to secure a warrant for the arrest of Ahmad Niku'i from Captain Thurayya, the chief at police station no. 3 in Shiraz, he hastened to Yazd, where he was able to secure a warrant from his comrade Javad Sadiqi. He returned to Shiraz, arrested Ahmad Niku'i, took him to Abarqu, and placed him under the charge of Khakpur. The latter sent Niku'i to Yazd to be incarcerated.

Motives for Murders from the Schemers' Perspective

Two major obstacles remained in the path of the schemers. First, no Baha'i resided in

Abarqu; second, they did not know what to present as a motive for the murders—though by

itself this was not a difficult task in the past or the present for those who were scheming

against the Baha'is.

To solve the first problem, Sergeant-Major Khakpur initially attempted to subject

Muhammad Shirvani—a Muslim and one of the prisoners—to the most brutal torture in

hope that he would “confess” to being a Baha'i and to having committed the murders.

However, Shirvani, a Muslim, was determined and steadfast in his convictions.

Failing this, Khakpur attempted a different approach. He placed

'Ali-Muhammad, the 17-

year-old son of Shirvani, under severe torture. At first, they hung the young and innocent

youth from the ceiling of the prison, but that proved fruitless. Then they flogged him; that

too proved unproductive. They branded him with a hot iron, but the young Muslim endured

that as well. At last, they stripped him of all his clothing and in the depth of winter put him

outside on ice. The 17-year-old youth was unable to endure such intense, sustained torture

and confessed to whatever Sergeant Khakpur wanted him to say, namely, that the three

Baha'is of Isfandabad had come to Abarqu during the night and, together with his father [Muhammad Shirvani], had slain Sughra and her children. The motive for the murder that they concocted was: Whenever Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi recited rawdih in Abarqu and insulted Baha'is, Sughra, who was among the attendees, would also curse and slur Baha'is. It is interesting to note that after consulting and reconciling with Isfandiyar Khan, Siyyid Muhammad Qayyumi's fanatical Muslim proclivities were provoked, so that he enrolled among the companions of Isfandiyar Khan and testified to the truth of what was claimed about Sughra. Sergeant-Major Khakpur quickly went to Isfandabad, arrested the three Baha'is of that village on the charge of murder, and sent them to Yazd prison. However, as bad coincidence would have it, Muslim witnesses came forward and testified that on the night of the murders these three individuals were in Bavanat, located many kilometers from Abarqu. When the case investigator discovered that ascribing these murders to these three men was impossible, he had no choice but to free them. Meanwhile, Baniadam, the governor of Yazd, who initially had taken the path of fairness and equity, and who had been the first to truthfully write about the incident, was dismissed from office through the influence of Isfandiyar Khan and his accomplices in Yazd and Tehran. Ahmad Mu'avinzadih, the chief of judiciary in Yazd, who was completely trusted by the conspirators, then assumed the governorship.²⁹ In this way, all major posts came under the control of the connivers. Since the idea of painting the Baha'is of Isfandabad as murderers was unsuccessful, the conspirators found a weak excuse to accuse and imprison Haji Mirza Hasan Shams, the chairman of Isfandabad's Baha'i Spiritual Assembly, [who had refused paying a bribe to Khakpur]. He was sent to Yazd prison. Gradually, the thought of implicating the Baha'is of Yazd in this crime gained currency. Through the excuse that there had been a connection between [Haji Mirza Hasan] Shams

and the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Yazd, all nine members of Spiritual Assembly of Yazd were summoned to the judiciary [for interrogation].³⁰ At the end, Javad Sadiqi, Yazd's inspector, named four individuals as having committed the murders: Muhammad Shirvani, a Muslim; Muhammad-Husayn Niku'i; Ahmad Niku'i; and 'Ali-Muhammad Shirvani. He also named the following eleven as instigators and planners of these murders: Haji Mirza Hasan Shams; 'Abbas-'Ali Purmihdi; and the nine members of Spiritual Assembly of Yazd.

It is incredible that the indictment issued by Yazd's prosecutor states that the three Baha'is of Isfandabad had remained unidentified until that time but participated in the murders. One has to ask: How is it possible that even though Isfandabad had so few Baha'is, it was clear and unequivocal to the prosecutor that three of these Baha'is had participated in

29 Nikravan, "Barrasi," states that Mu'avinzadieh and his accomplice, Lutfi, were entrenched enemies of the

Baha'is and launched a determined attack against them in the media.

30 The nine members of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Yazd were: Badi'u'llah Afnan, Dr. Rasti, Dr.

Malakutian, Salikian, Mishki, Muhammad-'Ali Afnan, Ra'fati, Majzub, and Dr. Manshadi.

this crime, even though he had been unable to identify them? This question remains unanswered to this day.

About this time, the orders for the arrest of another Baha'i by the name of Jalal Binish, who was an ailing merchant, was issued. The charge against him was that he had written a letter to Haji Mirza Hasan Shams in which he had advised regarding the receipt of a load of tobacco from Abarqu. The judiciary in Yazd concluded that this was a secret message about the occurrence of these murders; therefore, he was arrested as having been involved in the killings. After eleven months of incarceration, having withstood enormous difficulties, Jalal Binish passed away in prison prior to the trial [on January 2, 1952].

Kerman Prison

On the night of January 7, 1951, the arrested men were conducted to the prison in Kerman.

At this time, 'Abdu'llah Razi, the ranking member of the Bar Association, was appointed to defend them. From the beginning, Razi realized that the case against his clients was fabricated and twisted so as to be consistent with the conspiracy plotted subsequent to the incident. He also noted that many pages of the file from the early stages of the investigations were missing. Razi presented this information to Husayn Furughi, the head of the judiciary in Kerman, who was also the presiding judge in [Kerman's] High Criminal Court. The latter agreed and added, "I too have noticed the same; for this reason, and other considerations, I have requested that the case be transferred to Tehran's High Criminal Court." At any rate, it was determined to transfer the accused to Tehran [and this took place on February 26, 1951].³¹

Salari Family

Undoubtedly, the curious reader would raise this question: How is it possible that an Abarqui feudalist, through the collaboration of various authorities and high-ranking officials in the magistrate of constitutional Iran, could create such an evil and bloody plot and never face punishment, nor suffer consequences for his malicious doings? To gain insight into this issue, one needs to know something about the Salari family. The Umid-Salari family was among the most powerful and affluent landlords in Abadeh and Abarqu. In particular, Muhammad-Rida Khan Umid-Salar, the only son of Salar-Nizam and the son-in-law of Haji Shaykh Ahmad, who was Abadeh's Imam-Jum'ih, enjoyed a special trust and following. He had been elected to the national parliament on several occasions. He always boasted that Ahmad Shah Qajar and his entourage, which included Sardar Sipah [the highest ranking military officer in Iran's army], had paused in Abadeh and had lunch at the home of his father, Salar-Nizam, and that in 1938, Reza Shah and the heir to throne had visited his father's home, and that in the spring of 1941, Reza

Shah and his

wife, Fuziyih, and their entourage had stayed in Abadeh and had been their guests.

Eventually, this opportunist managed to secure a Taj Medal from Muhammad-Reza Shah.

Knowing this background gives us insights to the sixty-year-old question and shines a

small light on the darkness of religious and political despotism in Iran. It makes it clear why

31 The number of defendants at the trial in Tehran was eighteen, of whom fourteen were Baha'is.

such a powerful person could command the power to dismiss or install ministerial officials

and authorities in Abarqu, Shiraz, and Yazd, and to interfere in governmental affairs.

His sister, Maryam Salari, was the wife of his paternal cousin, Muhammad-Hasan Khan

Salari, who became a widow at a young age. The criminal and love-struck Isfandiyar Khan

Salari was yet another paternal cousin of this woman who had been raised in the lap of luxury.

We do not know why the judiciary chief in Kerman, namely, Husayn Furughi had "reasons and other concerns," nor why he sent the case of the innocents accused of murders

in Abarqu to the magistrate in Tehran. However, with some historical awareness, we can

perhaps ascertain what "reasons and other concerns" he may have had. Let us proceed to

study the internal and external factors that influenced everything related to this crime.³²

32 The present author has a nearly completed monograph in which he discusses roots of this unfortunate and

ill-fated episode. It is hoped that this book will soon be published. (BC)

Chapter 2

The Government's Reaction

Taking the Accused to Tehran

Muhammad-'Ali Buzari, the minister of justice in Razmara's administration, was from

Taleqan. In his youth he had been an akhund [a junior cleric], and he had very close ties with

the clerical establishment and its leadership. More important, he had an excellent relationship

with the Fada'iyan Islam. After Hazhir's assassination, based on

recommendations from Taleqan, Navvab Safavi, the leader of the terrorist organization Fada'iyan Islam, went into hiding in villages around Qazvin and Taleqan. While there, he would deliver secret speeches against the Baha'is in which he would inveigle and urge the villagers to massacre and persecute the Baha'is of that region.

Navvab Safavi

It is astonishing that during the reign of Lieutenant-General Razmara, Baha'is were subject to harassment throughout the entire country—many of them lost their jobs, particularly in the Education Ministry at the instructions of Shamsu'd-Din Jazayiri, the minister of education. The latter was a descendent of Siyyid Ni'matu'llah Jazayiri, a renowned akhund in the royal court of Shah Sultan-Husayn Safavi, and generation after generation, family members ranked among the clerics. For many years, Shamsu'd-Din Jazayiri, Iran's education minister, was also a cleric: for this reason, he was for many years the leader of the pilgrims going to Mecca. At this point, it should be noted that from the time of Reza Shah until the concluding years of the reign of Muhammad-Reza Shah, almost without exception, all ministers, and political and cultural figures of Iran, particularly high-ranking officials of the country's judiciary, came from the ranks of clerics, or were sons of clerics, or were from the feudalistic class, or numbered among the thousand families of the Qajar tribe. Anti-Baha'ism and opposition to progressive and modern ideas among these court loyalists had a long and deep-rooted history. During the premiership of Razmara, an unprecedented attack on the Baha'i community of Iran commenced, and anti-Baha'ism was evident throughout the country in a pronounced way, which completely destroyed any serenity among this minority community. There was nothing that could be done, although the Baha'is, as was their habit, appealed to the authorities about this discrimination and persecution in hope of gaining a

measure of human
and civil rights.

Accordingly, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran wrote several times to Lieutenant-General Haji 'Ali Razmara, the prime minister, and requested that he investigate and stay the waves of persecution against Baha'is that were sweeping the country. However, Haji 'Ali Razmara was busy preparing for his planned coup d'état and paid no attention to these letters by the Baha'is. It is deeply surprising that some of his ministers considered him a fanatic and a believer in the Baha'i religion. In their proclamations against Razmara, Fada'iyān Islam always used the slur "Baha'i Dog" after mentioning 'Ali-Akbar Muhtadi, the deputy prime-minister and the translator of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*.

The Prisoners Sent to Tehran

Earlier, we saw that the chief of the judiciary in Kerman decided to send the file of the Baha'i prisoners to Tehran. Now we will examine his evidence and documents. As noted by Baqir 'Aqili, Lieutenant-General Razmara had a tendency to "use every incident to his own benefit." He now decided to use the accused Baha'is who were imprisoned in Yazd to his own benefit. For this, Razmara telephoned his minister of justice, Muhammad-'Ali Buzari, and urged him, "Try to make sure that the accused are killed on the way from Yazd to Tehran: this way, we will all be freed from all the tumult, difficulties, and the ensuing trial." The Baha'is became aware that Razmara entertained ill-thoughts towards the Baha'i prisoners in Yazd. Therefore, in their third long letter to Lieutenant-General Haji 'Ali Razmara, after enumerating many horrific acts that had been perpetrated against the Baha'is throughout the nation, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran wrote about the transfer of the Baha'i prisoners in Yazd to Tehran and their deep worry over this:

The other matter that is extremely important and should be brought to Your Excellency's attention is that in accordance with legal provisions, the trial

of these innocent men [accused of murders in Abarqu] should take place in Kerman. For this reason, the prisoners have been transferred to that town, and their lawyer has also proceeded to that region. Therefore, it is not clear for what reason the judicial authorities have suddenly changed their minds and referred the case to Tehran. It is clearly evident to the officials in charge that in Tehran there are antagonistic and fanatical individuals, who through the provocation and influence of certain elements [i.e., the Fada'iyān Islam] who caused clamor and tumult in the trial of the murderers of Dr. Berjis, would once again array themselves and cause mischief. All the evidence and indications—dispensing with efforts to find the true killers of the woman in Abarqu, the arrest of a number of innocent men who had no involvement in this incident whatsoever, the initial transfer of the accused to Kerman and then the transfer of their case to Tehran, the publication in a number of newspapers in Tehran and other locations of a number of inflammatory articles and essays all contrary to the truth and all against the Baha'i community, the incendiary talks by a number of preachers and priests in religious settings, the silence of the police authorities, and the consent of the high officials of the judiciary to the legal proceedings in Yazd and Kerman—all of these events have firmly convinced this Assembly that a well-planned and carefully orchestrated scheme, based on conscientiously calculated steps against the innocent Baha'is of Iran, is unquestionably being carried out, and self-interested individuals wish to implement their evil plots through these tactics....

Since this Assembly has always wished and will continue to hope that during the administration of that distinguished person [i.e., Haji 'Ali Razmara], such ill-conceived incidents would not take place, we have submitted the above evident facts with utmost sincerity and cherish the expectation that your office will issue clear and effective instructions for the proper remedy of this discrimination and these difficulties.

Once again, Lieutenant-General Haji 'Ali Razmara paid no attention to the petition of the Baha'i community and busily continued to implement his plan [for a coup d'état]. At any rate, in accordance with the instructions of Razmara and his minister of justice, the accused were put on a bus and sent to Tehran with considerable fear and trepidation. There were persistent rumors on people's tongues that the bus was to be attacked on the way and the accused Baha'is harmed. Sometimes it was also said that Razmara wished to use this assassination attempt [of the Baha'is] as a pretext to proclaim military rule and then stage a coup d'état, all as an excuse that he was preventing an attack on the Baha'is and suppressing tumult in various cities.

Intercession of Habib Mu'ayyad

The Baha'is attempted a different approach. Dr. Habib Mu'ayyad, who was one of the closest friends of Razmara, was sent to see the prime minister. While Razmara was serving in the military in Kermanshah, he had been severely ill. The only competent and skilled physician there was a Baha'i by the name of Dr. Habib Mu'ayyad, who had been trained overseas; he had been brought in to attend to Razmara.³³ With great effort, Dr. Mu'ayyad was able to remedy his condition; this precipitated a close friendship between the two, to the point that Razmara would call Dr. Mu'ayyad "father," and Dr. Mu'ayyad would call him "son."

In August 1941, Dr. Habib Mu'ayyad moved from Kermanshah to Tehran, where he reestablished his residence and medical practice. One of his patients was Razmara. Dr.

Mu'ayyad was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, and that body asked him to meet with Razmara.

For this reason, Habib Mu'ayyad went to see his "son," Haji 'Ali Razmara, who was a lieutenant-general and the prime minister of Iran, and recounted for him the story of the wretched Baha'is of Yazd from the beginning. The prime minister not only disregarded the supplication and justice-seeking of the "father," he was further provoked

and refused to issue instructions for a fair investigation of the situation of the accused. With a face betraying his deep ambitions, at once he asked Dr. Habib Mu'ayyad, "Father, do you foresee that I would attain my objectives?" Dr. Mu'ayyad responded, "Son, I am not aware of your inner thoughts and aspirations. But, I will fatherly counsel you to see that Almighty God beholds all your deeds under all conditions, and to act with equity. Do not build the foundation of your government on the blood of innocents." With a heart full of sadness and hopelessness, Dr. Mu'ayyad left the office of the premier and reported the details of the meeting to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran. At this time, on the instructions of their institutions, the Baha'is of Iran commenced prayer vigils, as they had no other recourse but patience and perseverance. The mullas'

33 For a fascinating memoir of Dr. Mu'ayyad, see *Eight Years near 'Abdu'l-Baha: Diary of Dr. Habib Mu'ayyad*.

unceasing propaganda that suggests the Baha'is enjoyed the support of Muhammad-Reza Shah and his government was so frivolous and comical that it cannot be accepted by rational thinkers.

Change of Government

Irony and the mystery of history intersected at this moment. Razmara was assassinated by Khalil Tahmassbi, a member of the terrorist organization Fada'iyan Islam, which harbored great enmity and hatred towards the Baha'is.³⁴ In contrast, the bus bringing the innocents accused of the murders in Abarqu arrived in Tehran with no notable incident as had been feared. But this was not the end of the events. In recent times, much has been written and published about Razmara's assassination by Fada'iyan Islam. At any rate, we know that this assassination took place with the knowledge, and likely the previous consent of some of the leadership of the Jibhe Milli [the National Front].³⁵ The Kremlin was saddened by General Razmara's murder and issued a strongly

worded and harsh statement against the United States and England. In 1952, when the National Front had reached the apex of its power in parliament, a number of parliamentarians who were members of that party drafted a resolution, which was passed by the national parliament and according to which Khalil Tahmassbi was freed from prison. This resolution had only one article:

Since the treason of Haji ‘Ali Razmara and his support by the foreign powers is evident to the people of Iran, even if his murderer is Ustad Khalil Tahmassbi, he is recognized as innocent by the people, and is hereby acquitted.

“With the passing of this parliamentary motion and its approval by [Muhammad-Reza] Shah, Razmara’s family registered its protest by writing a letter to the Shah, stating, ‘How is he considered mahduru’d-dam³⁶ when his family was granted posthumously the Javidan Medal [eternal medal], and he was accounted as one of the martyrs of the military?’”³⁷

Since there are individuals who, with good reason, wish to know the identity of those

who participated in passing a parliamentary resolution to free Khalil Tahmassbi, the names

of these twenty-seven members of parliament are recorded here: Shams Qannatabadi, who

was an akhund, disciple of Ayatu’llah Kashani and a member of the Fada’iyan Islam; Nad-‘Ali

Karimi; Haji Siyyid Javadi; Engineer Hasibi; Dr. Shaygan; Siyyid Baqir Jalali; Angaji, Dr.

Baqa’i; ‘Ali Zahri; Husayn Makki; Engineer Zirakzadih; Dr. Malaki; Parsa; Muddaris; Dr.

Falsafi; Nazirzadih; Ha’irizadih; Iqbal; [Siyyid Hashim] Vakil; Purakhgar; Milani; Shapuri;

Farzanih Mu’tamid; Damavandi; Nasir Dhulfaqari; Dr. Sanjabi; and Nariman.³⁸

The drafting and passing of the resolution to free Khalil Tahmassbi, Razmara’s murderer,

which fundamentally was against all principles of the constitutional law and the criminal and

penal code of the country, took place during the premiership of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq.

³⁴ This assassination took place March 7, 1951.

³⁵ For more details on the National Front, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Front_\(Iran\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Front_(Iran)).

36 Someone whose blood can be spilled on religious grounds with no sanction or consequence.

37 Amini, *Jam'iyat Fada'iyān Islam va Naqsh an dar Tahavulat Siyasi*, pp. 219–20.

38 Qannatabadi, *Khatirat Shams Qannatabadi: Siyri dar Nihzat Millishudan Naft*, p. 219; and Amini, *Jam'iyat Fada'iyān*

Islam va Naqsh an dar Tahavulat Siyasi, pp. 219–20. (BC)

Dr. Musaddiq was a politician, not a holy man. What impelled parliament to take up this resolution is an important discussion that must be explored dispassionately but which must be relegated to another occasion, as it is unrelated to the current study. That research is being written in detail by the present author in another monograph.

The Murder of Nuri'd-Din Fatha'zam by Fada'iyān Islam

I am compelled at this juncture to discuss a crime that took place during the premiership of

Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq—Iran's national hero and the unconditional defender of

constitutional law. This incident took place after the August 7, 1952 passage of the law

freeing Khalil Tahmassbi, the renowned terrorist of the Fada'iyān Islam, but before he was

freed from incarceration on November 15, 1952. I am of the belief that Dr. Musaddiq and

his interior minister, Dr. Ghulam-Husayn Sadiqi, did not have a hand in this horrific crime.

However, individuals, such as Ayatu'llah Kashani, Jamal Imami, and Dr. Baqa'i, who were

from a faction of the National Front, had close relations with the organization of the

Fada'iyān Islam.

We know that after the assassination of Court Minister Hizhar on November 4, 1949,

and the immediate execution of his assassin, Siyyid Husayn Imami, on November 8, 1949,

Siyyid Mujtaba Navvab Safavi, the leader of the Fada'iyān Islam, at once escaped to the

villages around Qazvin and Taleqan with the help of Ayatu'llah Taleqani and other citizens

of Taleqan, and hid in that region. During this time, he delivered speeches against the

government of Prime Minister Sa'id; he was also provoking a few Muslim families against the

Baha'is. These activities continued; eventually during Dr. Musaddiq's

government, Nuri'd-

Din Fatha'zam, a Baha'i landlord in the village of Ramjin, near Qazvin, was brutally killed at

night by the Fada'iyani Islam using shovels, pickaxes, and knives. It is astonishing to note that

the police officer who witnessed the villagers' attack on Fatha'zam ran away and left the

victim alone with his assailants.

Nuri'd-Din Fatha'zam was a humanitarian; at his own expense, he had built a bathhouse

for the villagers. More importantly, he had also built a mosque at his own expense so that his

Muslim farmers would have no difficulty in offering their obligatory prayers or attending

religious ceremonies. All of these good deeds did not prevent the occurrence of this crime;

the ignorant population gave in to the prejudice and deception of the Fada'iyani Islam.

On May 16th, a few months before the coup d'état of August 19, 1953, the trial of those

accused of the murder of Nuri'd-Din Fatha'zam took place in Tehran. The agent of the

Intelligence Office shared with the country's police headquarters a confidential report of the

court proceedings, which is instructive:

With respect, this is submitted. Supplement to reports of special agents Qasim and

Taqi Samavarsaz, the activities of the Fada'iyani Islam on Saturday, May 16, 1953,

and Sunday, May 17, were as follows:

At 9 A.M. on May 16, about 20 members of the Fada'iyani Islam under the leadership of Aqa Siyyid Hashim Husayni arrived at the Court for Misdemeanors and the trial of 17 farmers in the village of Ramjin accused of participating in the

murder of the late Fatha'zam commenced. Dr. Pad was appointed by the members of Fada'iyani Islam to defend the accused, and commenced his arguments. As a result, the 17 defendants were completely acquitted of all charges and immediately freed.

Members of Fada'iyani Islam sacrificed six sheep in front of the prison of the judiciary building when the former defendants were leaving. Special agents explained

that Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn Vahidi [the number two man in the Fada'iyani Islam

organization] had raised a sum of 400,000 rials in the bazaar in the name of the 17

freed farmers, stating that they had killed a Baha'i. Of this sum, 60,000 rials were given to Dr. Pad as his remuneration. Fada'iyān Islam even threatened the family of the late Fatha'zam who had gathered outside [the courthouse].³⁹

This report is long; I have only cited its opening paragraphs and not included the remaining portion, which states that during the following night, 500 members of Fada'iyān Islam gathered at Gumruk Square, with Navvab Safavi presiding. That evening until midnight, food and drinks were served at the home of Haji Yusufian-Muqaddam to celebrate this mighty victory.

Husayn 'Ala was appointed to the office of prime minister after Razmara's assassination.

On March 15, 1951, representatives of the National Front submitted to the full parliament the draft law for the nationalization of the petroleum industry, and the law was passed unanimously. To celebrate this, great festivities were held in Tehran and other cities, and everyone was most joyful.

Protests fomented by Ayatu'llah Siyyid Abu'l-Qasim Kashani, the leader of the terrorist organization Fada'iyān Islam, increased, and resulted two months later in Prime Minister 'Ala's resignation from office and his assumption of the post of court minister.

It was during these days that the book, *Rahnama-yi Haqayiq* [Guide to the Truth], which is the manifesto of Fada'iyān Islam, was published in large numbers. How this book was published and who paid for its expenses will be told at another time, as it is one of the untold aspects of the history of modern Iran.

³⁹ Gul-Muhammadi, *Jam'iyat Fada'iyān Islam bi Ravayat Asnad*, vol. 2, p. 467, no. 253. It should be noted that the

police headquarter reported through the Interior Ministry. (BC)

Chapter 3

The American Baha'is

Premiership of Dr. Musaddiq

In an emergency meeting of parliament on April 28, 1951, Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq, the

leader of Iran's National Front, came to the premiership. He was nominated by Jamal Imami and had the support of the majority of representatives. Immediately, the two chambers of parliament adopted a resolution that was the basis for the nationalization of the petroleum industry throughout the country and sent the resolution to the administration for implementation.

On another occasion, we must pursue the story of various schemes and conspiracies of those days, since we know that Dr. Musaddiq, the champion of the National Front, did not have a restful moment. Every single day was busy dealing with various tricks and connivances by internal and external enemies.

Eventually, on October 7, 1951, he led a delegation of government officials on a mission to defend the rights of the people of Iran before the Security Council of the United Nations.

The delegation that accompanied Dr. Musaddiq consisted of: Senator Matindaftar; Senator

Bayat; Allahyar Salih; Dr. Shaygan; Dr. Karim Sanjabi; Dr. Muzaffar Baqa'i; Dr. Husayn

Fatimi; Dr. 'Isa Sipahbudi (interpreter); Javad Bushihri; Husayn Navvab; Muhsin Asadi

(interpreter); 'Abbas Mus'udi, the chief-editor of Ittila'at newspaper; Senator Dr.

Misbahzadih, the editor of Kayhan newspaper and a member of parliament; Shujau'd-Din

Shafa, the chief spokesperson; and Dr. Ghulam-Husayn Musaddiq and Zia-Ashraf Musaddiq, who were Dr. Musaddiq's two sons.

On October 11, 1951, Dr. Musaddiq delivered an enthusiastic speech to the Security

Council of the United Nations and defended the decision to nationalize Iran's oil industry;

he also spoke of many cruelties of the imperialist British government. That historic day will never be dimmed in the memory of the people of Iran.

The next day, after having sought the permission of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq, representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States (an

elected governing council of the Baha'is of America) came to meet the prime minister where

he was staying, so they could discuss the deplorable condition of the Baha'is accused in the

Abarqu murders as well as the violation of the rights and denial of justice for

the Baha'is of
Iran. With a pleasant demeanor, Dr. Musaddiq received and listened to them, and
it is
noteworthy that he offered sincere and prudent counsel to the Baha'i
representatives.

The following is a report to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is
of the United
States of this friendly meeting between representatives of the American
Baha'i community
and the leader of the National Front and the prime minister of Iran—a close
and
unprejudiced study of which in these days can clarify some of the efforts of
Iranians both
inside and outside of the country, particularly Iran's National Front,
against the Islamic
Republic's anti-Baha'ism.

Report of Audience with Dr. Muhammed Mossadegh, Prime Minister
of Iran⁴⁰

Time: 11 o'clock a.m., Friday, October 19, 1951 (Birthday of the Bab)
Place: Suite of the Prime Minister at Ritz Tower Hotel, Park Avenue & 57th
Street,
New York.

Report: Great care was exercised to secure an audience under circumstances that
would permit as much freedom of expression as possible, so that the timing was
an
important factor in our considerations.

Through the excellent offices of Dr. Fazly A. Melaney [Milani], we were granted
an audience at the time mentioned. Representing the National Spiritual Assembly
were H. Borrah Kavelin and Dr. Melaney. We were ushered in by Dr. [Husayn]
Navab, Iranian Minister to Holland and presented to His Excellency, the Prime
Minister.

Also present were Dr. [Siyyid 'Ali] Shayegan, member of Parliament in Iran
and

Assistant to the Petroleum Commission, and the daughter of the Prime Minister.
Dr. Navab and the Prime Minister's daughter were occupied with a group of
photographers who were preparing their equipment, so that our audience with Dr.
Mossadegh was held under ideal conditions.

Dr. Mossadegh does not speak English, and he asked Dr. Melaney to serve as his
interpreter, which was extremely fortunate in my being able to convey
accurately to
the Prime Minister not only the substance but also the spirit of my
presentation. Dr.

Shayegan who speaks English very well was an interested listener, but entered
very
little into the discussion.

I informed His Excellency that I had the honor to represent the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, as well as thousands of American Baha'is in welcoming him warmly to our country and expressing our best wishes for his good health.

He expressed his cordial appreciation of these sentiments and said he was very pleased to receive us.

I then told him that the American Baha'is have a special interest and faith in the welfare of his country not only because it is the birthplace of the Baha'i World Faith but also because it is the home of so large a number of our brother Baha'is; that Baha'is in every country, when given the opportunity, endeavor to serve the best interests of their country; that a just government is a true servant of God; that Baha'is never enter into the politics of their country but are concerned chiefly with insuring justice for all peoples; that if given the opportunity, Baha'is are ardent supporters of just government.

He showed deep interest in my remarks, and replied that in Iran, there is a better

and more cordial balance with the Baha'is than with other minorities.

I then stated that the American Baha'is are deeply concerned over the incident of persecution of the Iranian Baha'is, and he asked if we knew of any such incidents. I

informed him that we have documented evidence of these incidents, and he replied that he was extremely sorry to hear of this. He stated that he places the blame for

40 The present translator is grateful to the Archives Office of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of

the United States for a copy of this report, which is recorded in this monograph exactly as it appears in the original English, with the exception that "Persia" has been replaced with "Iran" (private communications, December 2009).

these incidents on some of the religious leaders who are under the influence of some of the political movements, particularly the Communists.

He stated that his Government has nothing against the Baha'is, and he hopes that just as throughout the world, religion is free, the same condition will

take place
in Iran; that he will personally do all he can to assist the Baha'is in his
country and
will never resist an opportunity to see that justice is done. He said he hopes
that
these incidents of the past will not be repeated.

I expressed deep appreciation for his cordial sentiments and told him the
Baha'is
would pray for his good health. He replied that he too would pray for the
success of
those who have good thoughts for the progress of Iran.

I expressed regret at not having received the souvenir from the National
Spiritual Assembly which had not yet arrived, but that I would have it
delivered
upon its arrival. Meanwhile, I showed him the article that appeared in Life
Magazine,
and gave him copies of the Baha'i Peace Program and Appreciations of the
Baha'i
Faith. Dr. Shayegan was very much interested in the Life article, and I
presented it to
him.

The spirit of the audience was one of extreme friendliness; it was entirely
unhurried, and I had full opportunity to say all that I considered necessary
and
important. Dr. Melaney and I both felt that the Prime Minister was fully
sincere in
his expressions. He personally accompanied us to the door upon leaving and
shook
my hand very warmly on two occasions.

Early Friday evening, Dr. Melaney received a telephone call summoning him to
Dr. Mossadegh's apartment. In the meantime, the souvenir package from the
National Assembly had arrived and I had given it to Dr. Melaney to deliver.
Upon
arriving, he presented it to the Prime Minister who seemed very pleased to
receive
the beautiful leather folder with the photographs of the exterior and interior
of the
Temple [in Wilmette, Illinois]. Dr. Melaney also read to him the letter of the
National Assembly and the enclosed statement documenting numerous incidents of
persecutions of Baha'is of Iran.
Dr. Mossadegh informed Dr. Melaney that he knew of the imprisonment of
Baha'is of Yazd and other incidents; that General Alahi ['Ala'i] has
approached him
and reported to him that the Baha'is have not been treated justly. The Prime
Minister then said that he wants to help the Baha'is in Iran; that it would
not help

him to have a letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States in which the spread and influence of the Faith are recorded, because that would be disliked. What he needs is a formal representation in which the incidents of persecution are documented, and a request and appeal made for help for our fellow

Baha'is in Iran who have been persecuted.

He then actually dictated the following statement which he suggested should be inserted at the close of our formal representation: "We wonder that in a country

which has an ancient civilization and possesses constitutional laws, a group of people is treated in a manner which conflicts with these fundamental laws. The latter

proclaim that the people are equal before law."

He stated that this representation should be written on the letterhead of the National Assembly, signed and sealed, so that he can use it in his efforts to help the

Iranian Baha'is.

He emphasized the extreme importance of keeping this matter a secret, as otherwise, his hands will be bound. He asked Dr. Melaney various questions, among

them the number of Baha'i students in this country from Iran. He was told that

there are very few—perhaps ten to fifteen in all.

Dr. Melaney and I both feel extremely grateful for this providential opportunity,

which coincided with the Birthday of the Blessed Bab, and that it may inaugurate a

period of greater freedom and justice for our brother Baha'is in Iran.⁴¹

An Analysis of the Above Report

According to the above report of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the

United States, an official meeting with Iran's Prime Minister Dr. Musaddiq took place in an

"extremely friendly" atmosphere. The Minister knew well that the wrongs inflicted on the

Baha'is predated his assumption of the office and cherished the hope that these tyrannies

and injuries "of the past will not be repeated." He gave his assurance that he would help the

Baha'is and said that "he will personally do all he can to assist the Baha'is in his country and

will never resist an opportunity to see that justice is done." According to the testimony of

the representative of the American Baha'is, Dr. Musaddiq was "fully sincere in his

expressions” and speech, for he was the prime minister of a Muslim nation, but more importantly, the prime minister of a country under constitutional law. The Baha’is of America who were “deeply concerned over the incident of persecution of the Iranian Baha’is” were happy to have had an opportunity to discuss their anxiety and to appeal for justice with the prime minister of Iran, who enjoyed a considerable international appeal and popularity at that time. It appears that they alluded to the Baha’i prisoners of Yazd and expressed concern over the incident of murders in Abarqu. In response, Dr.

Musaddiq stated that he “knew of the imprisonment of Baha’is of Yazd and other incidents”

since one of the Baha’is of Iran, Major-General ‘Ala’i,⁴² had met with him, and had reported that Baha’is were not treated with equity.

It is noteworthy that the representative of the American Baha’is confirmed and emphasized in his report that Dr. Musaddiq sincerely recommended to them that he write him an official letter and then immediately, unmistakably, and clearly reminded them not to write him a letter promoting the Baha’i Faith or “in which the spread and influence of the Faith are recorded,” since, as emphasized by the representative of the American Baha’is, “that would be disliked.” “What he needs is a formal representation in which the incidents of persecution are documented, and a request and appeal made for help for our fellow Baha’is in Iran who have been persecuted.”

41 A handwritten note appears at the bottom of the report, which states:

I transmitted this information to [the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the United States] Horace Holley, and explained the type of letter requested by the Prime Minister. Horace sent me the letter, enclosing a copy of a printed letter written in Persian, being a translation of a letter written to the chiefs of Islam by the NSA some years ago.

The letter from Horace had to be re-written, and in the meantime, the Prime Minister had left for Washington. I therefore asked Horace to send the final draft to

Mr. [Paul]

Haney, who was requested to deliver the documents to Dr. Mossadegh in care of the Iranian Embassy.

Mr. Haney reported that he delivered them to the secretary at the Embassy with the

statement that the Prime Minister was awaiting these documents, and he was assured that

they would be placed in the hands of Dr. Mossadegh.

42 Major-General Shu‘a‘u’llah ‘Ala’i (1889–1984) was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Baha’is of Iran; on February 29, 1952, he was appointed to the rank of the Hand of the Cause of God, a high administrative office in the Baha’i community.

Dr. Musaddiq, the leader of the Nationalist Movement of Iran, was so sincere and

truthful that he clearly explained the reasons for his recommendation and told the

representative of the Baha’is what to write “on the letterhead of the National Assembly,

signed and sealed” so that it was “a formal representation” and could be used “for help.” He

even went so far to dictate the actual wording to be used at the conclusion of the letter, “We

wonder that in a country which has an ancient civilization and possesses constitutional laws,

a group of people is treated in a manner which conflicts with these fundamental laws. The

latter proclaim that the people are equal before law.”

The meeting ended with great cordiality, and the Baha’i representatives assured him that

“the Baha’is would pray for his good health.” It is also noted, “The spirit of the audience was

one of extreme friendliness; it was entirely unhurried.” And when the representatives left the

prime minister, “he personally accompanied” them “to the door upon leaving and shook”

their “hand very warmly on two occasions.”

Letter of the American National Spiritual Assembly

Three days later, the letter that was sent on the recommendation of Dr.

Musaddiq on the

letterhead of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the United States arrived at

the Iranian Embassy in Washington. In this letter, the Baha’is provided a detailed account of

anti-Baha'ism and widespread massacres of Baha'is throughout Iran during the 1940s, and urged the prime minister to administer justice.

This letter is not merely a request for justice or an account of the cruelties of the mullas.

Rather, it is a report filled with sorrow, condemning the government [of Iran] and its society, which disregarded the rights of individuals and the civil rights of religious and tribal minorities.⁴³

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States
The Office of the Secretariat
538 Sheridan Rd
Wilmette, IL 60091

October 23, 1951

Care of the Embassy of Iran in Washington, D.C.

[Your Excellency Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq, the Prime Minister of Iran:]

On behalf of the American Baha'i community, the National Spiritual Assembly welcomes Your Excellency to this country and considers it timely to respectfully

submit before you, as the head of the government of Iran, a brief account of the

wrongs inflicted upon the Baha'is of Iran in recent times.

Regarding the issue of tribulations perpetrated against the Baha'is of Iran, a 24-

page report is available in the archives of this Assembly, in which many incidents of

torture, tyranny, persecution, and harm against members of that community is

⁴³ In a communication dated December 3, 2009, the Archives Office of the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Baha'is of the United States informed the present translator that the original of this letter in English was not

available in their files. Therefore, the following rendering from the Persian should be considered as

approximating the original communication.

recorded. In accordance with this report, this Assembly can justly state that followers of the Baha'i Faith in Iran have been deprived of their civil rights in

governmental agencies, that their possessions and property have been plundered by

unregulated elements, and that their lives are the targets of attacks, even death, while

police officers and security agents have offered no assistance.

The National Spiritual Assembly [of the Baha'is of the United States] has copies of various letters and documents prepared by administrative agencies of the Baha'is of Iran, which have been submitted with great urgency to the government of that country, but which have remained unanswered and have resulted in no remedy. This Assembly is confident that Your Excellency, aware of the impoverishment of public opinion [in Iran] and the ill-behavior of officials, will take effective steps towards ensuring the safety and security of Baha'is under the protection of the law. What will be briefly outlined in this presentation relates to current events that commenced in 1944; reference to other events or enumerating the most critical details in these historical documents has been avoided. The instigators of persecution against Baha'is are in reality members of an active group known as Anjuman Tablighat Islami [The Society for Islamic Propaganda], whose activities have greatly increased since 1941. Members of the aforesaid group are active in various parts of the country and provoke the public against Baha'is; moreover, they urge the police to neglect the protection of these wronged citizens in the face of public abuse. Moreover, this Society has been engaged in publishing lies against the Baha'is and in fueling the fire of public enmity and prejudice, to the point that the populace now considers Baha'is to be enemies of religion and the nation, destroyers of Islam, and opposers of civil law. Wherever the Baha'is are under attack, the Muslim 'ulama—in other words, mullas—have an active hand in events. They assure people in the mosques that if they were to massacre and completely annihilate the Baha'is, they would receive a worthy prize in paradise. They instruct people to kill Baha'is and plunder their possessions. These records indicate that in many instances, local authorities have considered any attempt to suppress this prejudicial incitement to be most dangerous. For this reason, despite the fact that Baha'is are most brutally subjected to attack and their possessions are pillaged, the nation's administrative apparatus is also rendered

impotent.

In 1944, mosques and other Islamic institutions in Shahrud provoked the population to persecute the Baha'is. The people set the entrance to the Hadiratu'l-

Quds [Baha'i Center] on fire, and plundered all the furnishings and provisions

inside. A few days later, a tumultuous mob, five-thousand strong, armed with rocks,

clubs, knives and meat-cleavers, attacked Baha'is. Several of them [Baha'is] took

refuge in the police station, but were confronted by an officer's cry, "Kill these

infidels!" With that, the police officers assaulted the Baha'is with their rifle-butts.

Simultaneously, the crazed mob attacked the homes and shops of the Baha'is, forced

their way inside, and plundered all that there was, leaving these Baha'is naked and

dispossessed—and not one soul came to their aid.

A Baha'i by the name of Muhammad Jazbani was severely beaten and left injured and unmoving. His unconscious body was taken to a physician's office in that vicinity, but the mob forced their way inside, seized the Baha'i, and threw him down

from the second floor window. His dying body was so brutally assaulted in the streets that he soon expired.

Among the Baha'is whose homes and shops were pillaged and then set on fire were the following families: Khuda'i, Aqazadih, Muhajirzadih, Tabataba'i, and

'Attari. After destroying their shops, the mob attacked the homes of these Baha'is

and killed several of them.

The Baha'is appealed to the governmental authorities; however, the investigators

who were sent to Shahrud reported to the Justice Ministry that the real offenders

were the Baha'is themselves! Another examiner submitted a prejudicial report filled

with lies against the Baha'is. None of these non-Baha'i witnesses had the courage to

testify about what they he had observed.

Eventually, 34 individuals were arrested on charges of murder and pillage, and their case was sent to the High Criminal Court of Tehran. Of these, 31 were sentenced to misdemeanors and other minor offenses. The manner of this trial and

the way it was conducted greatly offended public sentiment.

Despite all existing evidence and witnesses, the murderers were freed, and the

looters were sentenced to just one month of imprisonment.⁴⁴ This resulted in the encouragement of lawlessness and the erosion of people's confidence in the judiciary. This in turn resulted in a new wave of persecution against Baha'is. "Go, kill Baha'is and confiscate their possessions! Did the government punish the people of Shahrud? You too can act like them!" Such was the call to arms of the mischief-makers and rabble-rousers!

The following is the text of a Ministerial Decree, no. 744, dated July 4, 1944:

Among the Baha'i teachers and leaders are commonly found those who work in governmental offices. The activities of these individuals and their involvement in the affairs of the nation are destructive and a cause of harm and loss. With the utmost care and seriousness they must be kept under surveillance; should they fail to follow instructions, they must be dealt with in accordance with the law.

This document provided the mischief-makers with the necessary pretext to further harass, persecute, and attack Baha'is, and to expel them from various government offices.⁴⁵

Other incidents that have been briefly reported are as follows:

- A home in Abadeh, which served as the Hadrat al-Quds [Baha'i Center], was set on fire, and a number of the Baha'i residents were beaten. Their books and papers were burned and their homes plundered. Two local clerics incited people to slay the Baha'is and confiscate their possessions. Police did not make any effort to prevent these actions.
- In Aran, in the vicinity of Kashan, a mob burned the entrance of a Baha'i shop and then marched in the streets while shouting insults and abuse against Baha'is.

⁴⁴ After the Baha'i killings in Shahrud, a cleric by the name of Shaykh 'Abdu'llah Shahrudi published a book

under the title, *Dasa'is va Fitnih-Angizihayi Baha'ih*, printed by Daftar Nashriyat Dini Nur. The appearance of this book came to the attention of one of the witnesses of these brutal killings and awakened his conscience.

He decided to write a rebuttal and disclose the lies, untruths, and deceits in Shahrudi's book. It so happened that this person was a supporter of Ahmad Kasravi, the famous author of the [polemical] monograph, *Baha'igari*

[Baha'ism], and who by his own account, was a Pak-Dinan [lit. pure-religions, a reference to the followers of Ahmad Kasravi], and stated that "I have no connection to the Baha'is," and who was even critical of the Baha'is. Under the title of Haqayiq Guftani, this book was first published by Daftar Parcham, in Tehran, on Azar 1324 [December 1945]. This monograph is an undeniable document of the crimes of mullas against Baha'is and clearly documents anti-Baha'ism in the Iranian culture. Haqayiq Guftani was published a second time by Payam Publishing and distributed by Alburz Press in Frankfurt, Germany. I recommend this book to all Iranians. (BC)

[A rendering of this book in English is underway by the present translator.]

45 In the original text, it appears that this sentence is erroneously included with the ministerial proclamation.

- In Bandar-Gaz, people brought down the wall of the Hadiratu'l-Quds.
- In Bushru'i, in Khurasan province, a number of Baha'is were injured, and two shops and seven homes were destroyed. The entrance to the Gulistan Javid [Baha'i cemetery] was burned, and the cemetery was completely ruined. Baha'i women and children were treated with great brutality; not only did governmental officials not take any action, they even forced the Baha'is to pay money to the attackers. Thirty individuals raided a home and severely beat the owner and his wife. The furnishings of that home—estimated to be worth 20,000 tumans—were looted. Among the attackers, the chief of police, Ghulam-Rida Jamshidi, employed violence against the wife of the Baha'i resident.
- In Bandar-Shah, the shops of Baha'is were looted, and the Baha'is were subjected to harm and injuries, and attacked with knives. Police did not pursue the matter at all.
- Similar incidents were reported in Bujard, Bam (Kerman), Rafsenjan, Zabul, and Sirjan.
- In Tehran, people were ceaselessly urged to persecute Baha'is.
- Azadegan newspaper published the following statement: Our laws regarding denying employment in governmental offices for [members of] this apostate sect [Baha'is] is completely clear. Therefore, by our official tradition, that is, by Islamic jurisprudence, the killing of Baha'is is permitted—nay, is considered a religious obligation.

Likewise, incidents of persecution, harassment, and discrimination against Baha'is, including bodily harm and injuries, as well as the pillaging of property and possessions, have been reported in: Tabas and Ferdaws (in the province of

Khurasan), Qasr-Shirin, Qum, Kulaveh-Dareh (near Qazvin), Mahmud-Abad, Gulpaygan, Mahmudabad of Yazd, and Nahavand. All of these occurred in 1944. The following year, 1945, witnessed the wider spread of persecution and harassment in places such as Ardestan, Imamzadeh Hashem, Zabol, Isfand-Abad, Kengavar, Nayriz, Sirjan, Rubat-Turk, Asiaban, Fasa and Sarvestan. In Jahrum, Colonel Shirvani provided protection and security to those who had instigated these

cruel and oppressive deeds. Other cities where Baha'is were subjected to various

forms of harassment and maltreatment include Zavareh, Yazd, Eqlid, Isfahan, Geshin-Jan, and Fasa.

For marrying in accordance with Baha'i rites, Baha'is were imprisoned throughout the province of Khurasan, and some were fined for this reason as well.

In Isfahan, Baha'i sacred places and burial sites considered sacred and blessed by the

Baha'i community were desecrated. In the same city, a Baha'i student was expelled

because of his religion. In other towns, Baha'is were barred from attending public bathhouses.

Documents and files of events related to 1946 are particularly disturbing. For instance, in Birjand, a section of the city that was a neighborhood of Baha'is was

attacked and raided by a mob. The possessions of the Baha'is were plundered, their

papers and documents destroyed, and several residents assaulted. It is estimated that

this incident caused a loss in excess of 1,500,000 rials. The police and security forces

were unable to withstand the onslaught of the attackers. Women and children were

overcome with deep fright, while the men took refuge in the mountains and fields.

In the same year, in cities such as Yazd, Sari, Pul-Sefid, Shabsavar, Beh-Shahr,

Shahi, Nasrabad, Sarvestan, Mianduaba, Ardestan, Rafsenjan, Chenar, and Daryun,

Baha'is were violated and made targets of violence. It is noteworthy that in Brujen,

near Isfahan, the chief of the Education Department, along with officials of the

telegraph office and municipality, provoked Muslims against Baha'is. In Zahedan, a

Baha'i youth aged 20 was so brutally beaten and his head smashed in with a hammer, that he lost the sight in one eye. In Khash (Zahedan), two Baha'is were

assaulted with rocks and clubs, and their merchandise was pillaged. At Sar-Chah, a 60-year-old Baha'i woman was so mercilessly attacked that she was at death's door because of the loss of blood. Thereafter, all Baha'i residents of that region were expelled.

Moreover, records indicate that in that same year, 1946, in Kashan, Aran, Nayriz, Khuramabad, Bandar-Gaz, Jahrum, Dughabad, Dahaj, Riz, Zavarih, Chal-Khames, and Natanz, Baha'is sustained great losses to their persons and prosperity.

In Zavarih, a cleric compelled people not to enter into business transactions with Baha'is and not to repay debts to them. In Natanz, near Isfahan, a Baha'i child died when her home was set on fire.

In 1947, the unceasing efforts to exterminate the Baha'is failed in their objective.

For this year, we refer to two horrific incidents, in which Baha'is in an area were violently attacked and compelled to leave their homes and the Spiritual Assembly was dissolved. In Bandar-Shah, the chief clerics barred any commercial interaction with Baha'is. In Gulpaygan, after Baha'is were beaten and injured, the local authorities incarcerated both groups, that is, both the assailants and the Baha'is.

However, the public uproar reached such heights that they were forced to free the offenders and banish the Baha'is who had suffered through this ordeal.

In Nameq, one of the towns in the province of Khurasan, police officers confiscated the Haziratu'l-Quds of the Baha'is and made it their own headquarters.

As far as we are aware, the case involving the murder of a woman and her five children in Abarqu in 1950 has not yet been concluded. Although the local villagers knew who the real wrongdoer was and identified him to the authorities, and even though newspapers in Yazd published the real motive for this crime, nevertheless, through pressure exerted by influential citizens, the path of the investigation changed until eventually two Baha'is were accused and arrested. The Baha'is of Yazd informed the government that fanatical elements in Yazd were readying themselves to attack and assault Baha'is, and that if the authorities did not intercede, there

would be grim consequences. At last, the case was sent to Tehran for adjudication.

Based on what has been heard, uproar and noisy propaganda could greatly sway [official] decisions and hide the truth, and turn this case into a broad condemnation

of the Baha'is and their religion.

We are confident that this brief outline will suffice to establish our assertion,

since in various parts of Iran, Baha'is have been ruthlessly made the target of assault

and injury, some have been mercilessly killed, the possessions of many have been

plundered and pillaged, and they have been deprived of their civil rights.

Baha'is are not allowed to print books or journals. When the enemies publish lies, it brings disrepute upon the Baha'is.

In the official government census, even though the Baha'is forthrightly declared

their religion, nonetheless the census-takers registered them as Muslim.

Fifty-eight Baha'is were discharged or suspended from work in the Education Ministry or other governmental offices by October 1950, and we have their names on file.

At a time when the fanatical Muslims accused the Baha'is of atheism, Satan-worshiping and apostasy, and proclaimed them as the true enemies of Islam, our

Spiritual Assembly wrote to the leaders of Islam throughout Iran on March 21, 1928.⁴⁶ That letter included the truth about the Baha'i teachings and the close

connection between the Baha'i Faith and Islam, and the high regard by Baha'is for

the Prophet Muhammad, which may aid Your Excellency in becoming more aware of the reality of the Baha'i Cause. For your information, we attach a copy of that

communication, which has been translated into Persian, and submit it to your presence.

The National Spiritual Assembly has copies of twelve publications appearing in Iranian media regarding violent attacks on the Baha'is of that country:

1. Dad newspaper, no. 1737, February 6, 1950.
2. Naysan newspaper, no. 8.
3. Mahan newspaper, no. 20, 1949.
4. Iran-Tehran newspaper, no. 9004, February 6, 1950.
5. Ittila'at newspaper, no. 7147, February 6, 1950.
6. Ittila'at newspaper, no. 7151, February 11, 1950.
7. Ittila'at newspaper, no. 7146, February 5, 1950. [Ittila'at newspaper, no. 7151, February 11, 1950, has been listed a second time.]
8. Bakhtar-Imruz newspaper, no. 156, February 5, 1950.
9. Kayhan newspaper, no. 2046, February 5, 1950.

10. Haraz newspaper, no. 24, February 11, 1950.
11. Millat-Iran newspaper, no. 90, February 9, 1950.
12. Khandaniha Journal, no. 44, February 14, 1950.

What has been described will of necessity reach the public outside Iran's borders.

Dissemination of these news items has not come about because Baha'is have spoken

about them, but is due to travelers and visitors to Iran who have learned of these

incidents, have written about them, and have shared those with the media. For instance, on October 4, 1950, the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper, a reliable and

influential American media outlet, published a detailed account under the title, "An

Iranian Religion is under Threat and Danger of Religious Fanatics." That article

discussed the verdict of acquittal rendered in the trial of the eight murderers who

had confessed to killing Dr. Berjis, a Baha'i in Kashan.

Dr. Musaddiq, we consider it essential to submit to your presence the truth of the Baha'i teaching, which emphatically enjoins upon Baha'is to be faithful to their

government, obedient to the laws and not to participate in any antagonistic political

parties. With utmost effectiveness, these teachings compel Baha'i citizens to praiseworthy conduct.

We are deeply astonished and puzzled as to why a country like Iran, with its brilliant ancient civilization, which enjoys the benefits of constitutional law, can

nevertheless deal with a minority group like the Baha'is in ways that are against

decency and opposed to the provisions of the law, when its Constitution has clearly

and with foresight provided for the equality of all people before the law.

We submit this petition to your honor not only for the sake of religious fraternity and unity with, and affection for, the Baha'is of Iran, but also because of

our Faith's teachings, which enjoin upon us to have a special regard for Iran.

We ask that with confidence you accept our well-wishing prayers.

With loving regards,

Horace Holley, Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly

46 See appendix 8.

We do not know the exact effect that the reading of this complaint and its demand for

justice had on Dr. Musaddiq. However, we are confident that he was completely against any extra-legal treatment of Baha'is, which was against the principles of the country's constitutional code—and his enemies, particularly the mullas, have stated as much in their memoirs.

Chapter 4 The Military Tribunal

Falsafi and Musaddiq

The famed preacher Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi writes in his memoirs about his first visit along with a contingent of other clerics to the home of Dr. Musaddiq:

We went to the home of Dr. Musaddiq on Kakh Avenue, which is the present Palestine Avenue. He was lying in bed under the covers. We sat on chairs near him.

Musaddiq asked with perplexity, "Do you go each day to mosque to perform your obligatory prayers?" It appeared that he was not aware to the necessary extent of the details of congregational prayers in the country's mosques....

Even more bewildering was the incident that took place during the second meeting between Dr. Musaddiq and me. The background was that Baha'is in various towns had voiced complaints and were showing strength. At the instruction of the Grand Ayatu'llah Aqa Burujirdi, I went to see him. As he had been the last time, he

was in his bed under the cover. I conveyed the message of Aqa Burujirdi and added,

"You are the head of the Islamic government of Iran; presently the Baha'is are active in various towns and have caused complications for the Muslims.

Therefore, constantly complaint letters are received about them by Aqa Burujirdi, and he considered it imperative that you take steps in this regard."

After I had concluded my remarks, Dr. Musaddiq gave me a mocking look and with a resonant voice started laughing, saying, "Aqa Falsafi, in my view, there is no difference between Muslims and Baha'is. They are all one nation and Iranian."

This reply was most astonishing for me since if he had asked, "What is the difference between Baha'is and Muslims?" I would have explained. But with that mocking laughter and comment, there was no room for further discussion or explanation. Therefore, I became silent, and the next time I met Ayatu'llah

Burujirdi,
told him of what had transpired. He listened with great wonder and
astonishment.⁴⁷

Opposition to Musaddiq

It is important to repeat a point that fairness and conscience demands of us,
and perhaps by
mentioning it we will become better acquainted with an aspect of Iran's
contemporary
history. We know—and there is no need to deny it since the youth of
yesteryear, the present
author included, were themselves close witnesses to it—that a few months
before the coup
d'état of August 19, 1953, at the instigation of the British and the United
States, who were
the leaders of the Cold War in Iran, the entire clerical and political
establishment
commenced opposition to the government of Dr. Musaddiq. Each day, through
extensive
and vociferous marches in the streets and bazaars, they expressed this
opposition. Their
newspapers and proclamations were widely published and disseminated. These
opponents
were declaring everywhere that the country was on the verge of falling into the
Soviet camp
and that soon the reins of power would be in the hands of the Communists and
the Baha'is.

47 Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu'l-Islam Falsafi*, pp. 138–39.

It suffices to cite one among the countless articles that were published
against the
Nationalist Movement and in favor of the suppression of Baha'is in the effort
to implement
the policies of the Cold War, so that we may become more thoroughly familiar
with the
clergy's involvement in sedition and conspiracies.
Hujjatu'l-Islam Siyyid Shamsu'd-Din Qannatabadi has written in an article:
Musaddiq's anti-religious activities and his conspiracies against the
Constitution, his
changes [in the Constitution], his plans to alter the regime, his support of
the Baha'is
and the Tudeh Party, and his implementation of a plan to divide Iran and
establish a
dictatorship, ...all caused the highly distinguished community of the clerics,
from
Ayatu'llahs Burujirdi, Kashani and Bihbahani, to the plain seminarians, to
array

themselves in a single row in accordance with their religious and national duties, and in conformity with their consciences, against the mischievous, untruthful, anti-religious, anti-clerical, and cursed government of Musaddiq.⁴⁸

The opponents of the Nationalist Movement were hoping to provoke the sentiments of

Ayatu'llah Burujirdi, who harbored profound enmity towards the Baha'is, by saying that Dr.

Musaddiq supported and protected not only the members of the Tudeh Party but also the Baha'is.

Ayatu'llahs Burujirdi and Kashani, as well as the preacher Muhammad-'Ali Falsafi, and

indeed the entire ecclesiastical establishment, never understood the meaning of "the people

and the government," and never accepted the premise of constitutional law in a

constitutional monarchy; for this reason, they threw in their lot with those planning the coup

d'état, and the calamity of August 19th took place.⁴⁹

The anti-imperialist uprising of the people of Iran was not an unplanned event, nor

was it without a prelude. Similar to all other movements and revolutions, it came

about as a historical necessity after a series of occurrences resulting from social and

global developments after World War II, and led to great victories. The failure of

this uprising was not unplanned nor without a precedent either, and many events and causes precipitated this fall.⁵⁰

Dr. Musaddiq's response to the query of his defense counsel, Colonel Jalil Buzurgmihir,

stating that certain elements considered the growing power of the Tudeh Party to be

dangerous and therefore brought about the August 19 bloody revolt, can be expanded, and

we can also refute the slanderous and false charges against Dr. Musaddiq that he supported

and promoted the Baha'is and the Tudeh Party. It is through this review of the facts that we

learn about Dr. Musaddiq's view of "nation," "constitutional government," and "liberty and

democracy." And it is because of his broadmindedness that we discover why the preacher

Falsafi thought it was most astonishing when Musaddiq remarked, “Aqa Falsafi, in my view, there is no difference between Muslims and Baha’is. They are all one nation and Iranian.” In truth, Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq believed in parliamentary democracy and supported the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

48 Rahnama, Niruhayi Mazhabi bar Bistar Harikat Nihzati Milli, p. 996. (BC)

49 For details, see “Suppression of the Baha’is of Iran in 1955” included in this monograph. (BC)

50 Nijati, Tarikh Siyasi Bist-u-Panj Salih Iran, p. 17. (BC)

Hujjatu’l-Islam Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi

Let us consider Dr. Musaddiq’s response to Colonel Buzurgmihr:

Those who think this way do not possess political sense and acumen. What have these Tudeh members done? As that man said,⁵¹ they yelled slogans or printed newspapers. We did not give them permission to do anything else, and I always instructed the security forces to prevent them [i.e., the communists] from doing any

harm.... Essentially, one should ask: What was the cause of coming into being, of

the formation, and continued existence of my government? Was it something other than the fact that people supported me? Do governments have any other support other than the people? No, not at all.

The foreigners were not happy [with my premiership]. Some others, who were servants of the foreigners and whose hands were completely cut off from affairs,

were not happy with me either.

Did the Senate willingly vote for this government? Was it out of fear of the people that I received a vote of confidence whenever I went to the National Parliament or the Senate?

Therefore, when the people bring a government to power, that government is appointed by the people and cannot silence the voice of the people or prevent the

people from speaking out. To suffocate the voice of the people is the work of imperialism. It is their way to ensure that no one can breathe a word so they can do

whatever they wish, such as arranging for oil exports, or creating consortia and such things.⁵²

With all its internal conflicts, the Nationalist Movement was not a harmonized political and

historical phenomenon, but the premiership of Dr. Musaddiq was a harmonizing historical

and political necessity. It was because of this reality that the people before

the August 19th
coup would shout in the streets, “Death or liberty,” followed by shouts of
“Death or
Musaddiq.”
After the August 19th coup d’état, a description of which is beyond the
scope of this
monograph, a military tribunal was convened, at which Dr. Musaddiq gave a
historic self-
defense. This tribunal resulted in the disgrace of the government of
Major-General Zahidi
and eventually of Muhammad-Reza Shah, and to this date is considered one of the
most
important political trials in the contemporary history of Iran. Dr.
Musaddiq’s testimony and

51 A reference to Brigadier-General Husayn Azmudih, the prosecutor at Dr.
Musaddiq’s military tribunal. Later,

he became a dervish, and his critics, such as Almuti, referred to him as
“Eichmann ‘Ali Shah.” (BC)

52 Nijati, *Tarikh Siyasi Bist-u-Panj Salih Iran*, p. 20. (BC)

the defense of his lawyers in this tribunal caused a deep divide among the
political elites of
Iran, which neither the supporters nor the opponents of the Shah have been able
to bridge.
Colonel Jalil Buzurgmihr was Dr. Musaddiq’s defense attorney—a trustworthy
and
faithful man—who until his last breath kept the memory of Dr. Musaddiq true
and
exhilarating by publishing his valuable memoirs and documents. For reasons that
are not
clear to us, Dr. Musaddiq, however, did not fully trust him, and this fact is
clearly revealed by
Colonel Buzurgmihr in his own words in his *Musaddiq dar Mahkamih Nizami*
[Musaddiq in
the Military Tribunal].⁵³ It appears that gradually, with great calmness,
effort, and openness,
he was able to win the trust of Dr. Musaddiq. At any rate, based on the court
proceedings
that Colonel Buzurgmihr has published himself and which are available to all,
it appears that
he had a minor role in the military tribunal. Nonetheless, we should remember
him with
much respect and praise him for being true and open during those perilous days.

Colonel Shahquli in the Military Tribunal
Astonishingly, Brigadier-General Riahi, the head of the military’s Joint
Chiefs prior to the

August 19th coup, selected for his own defense counsel one of the most renowned Baha'is, who was highly regarded in all military courts. The skilled and learned defense of Dr. Musaddiq offered by Colonel Shahquli, the attorney of Brigadier-General Riahi, remains one of the most brilliant, and without any exaggeration, the most significant and precise defense ever offered in Iran's military courts. Regarding Shahquli, the following is noted by Colonel Jalil Buzurgmihr:

In the fifth session, Lieutenant-Colonel Shahquli, the attorney of Brigadier-General Riahi, began the defense of his client. Given his thorough knowledge of the criminal code, particularly the military justice code, as well as his extensive experience and expertise in military legal defense, Colonel Shahquli commenced by questioning the [court's] jurisdiction over this trial. With a face beaming with smiles and self-confidence, with wise and learned expressions spiced with humor, with occasional charming smiles and great calmness and total control over his emotions, he conducted his deliberations with the utmost skill. The main line of his argument was a fundamental justification of Dr. Musaddiq's views. In fact, he delivered this so well that Brigadier-General Azmudih [the prosecutor] in response to Lieutenant-Colonel Shahquli accused him of defending Dr. Musaddiq⁵⁴—and this was true.⁵⁵

Dr. Musaddiq knew Colonel Shahquli from earlier associations and had complete confidence in him. With some melancholy and perhaps with a touch of disappointment, Colonel Jalil Buzurgmihr writes:

At times during court recesses, he [Dr. Musaddiq] would put his head on the shoulder of Lieutenant-Colonel Azmin, who was one of the defense counsels of Brigadier-General Riahi. He would close his eyes and pretend to be sleep. At other times, he would put his head on the shoulder of Colonel Shahquli, the other defense attorney of General Riahi. Through their joint work and involvement on the

⁵³ See appendix 5. (BC)

⁵⁴ This was not the trial of Dr. Musaddiq, but Shahquli was laying the

groundwork for the later trial of the

prime minister.

55 See appendix 5. (BC)

commissions appointed to reform the criminal code within the military, Dr. Musaddiq and Colonel Shahquli had established deep bonds of friendship and fraternity.

They would peacefully and with smiles whisper certain words between themselves, though they did not exchange any comments with me. The court recognized me as the Prime Minister's tort attorney, but he bore no expressions of

gratitude or of being happy with this fact, and did not even bother to pretend.⁵⁶

When his case was appealed, I was appointed by him to be his lawyer, and for outward appearances he would uphold the lawyer-client relationship.⁵⁷

Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq and Colonel Shahquli in the military tribunal

Regarding Colonel Shahquli, Muhammad-'Ali Muvahhid, the author of the well-documented and enjoyable monograph, *Khab Ashufteh Naft* [The nightmare of oil], writes the following:

"Among the attorneys defending Brigadier-General Riahi, Colonel Shahquli was the most eloquent, with the best command of arguments, and he was remarkably distinguished."

Elsewhere, he restates the same view, "With an irrefutable and solid logic, and vast knowledge of the law, Colonel Shahquli was the most eminent among the legal counselors in the military tribunal of Dr. Musaddiq."⁵⁸

With legal deductions and sufficient evidence, Colonel Shahquli established that the military tribunal against Dr. Musaddiq, the [former] prime minister, was unlawful and against the provisions of Iran's Constitution and its criminal and penal code. From the perspective of law, he did not consider the presiding judge to have jurisdiction over the trial, and his deduction was correct. That is because during the premiership of Dr. Musaddiq and after the passage of the Military Court Reform laws, the man serving as the judge had been forced into early retirement. [Shahquli argued that] such a person could not serve as the presiding judge in a tribunal.

After the August 19th coup, almost all officers who had been forced to retire on the

instructions of Dr. Musaddiq and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Riahi, were

56 Colonel Buzurgmihr had been appointed by the court to be Dr. Musaddiq's legal representative. (BC)

57 Nijati, *Tarikh Siyasi Bist-u-Panj Salih Iran*, p. 22. (BC)

58 Muvahhid, *Khab Ashuftih Naft: Az Kuditay 28 Murdad ta Suqut Zahidi*, ch. 6, "The Most Significant Trial in

Iran, the Defense Proceedings of Colonel Shahquli," pp. 173–82, and p. 475.

The present author highly

recommends this book to all, since it is well documented and learned, and, unlike other political writings in

Persian, it is unbiased. It should be noted that Colonel 'Abbas-Quli Shahquli later became a member of the

National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran. (BC)

returned to active duty on the recommendation of General Zahidi. Colonel Nasiri and other

officers forced into early retirement were even promoted to a higher rank by General Zahidi

prior to the August 19th coup and before the Shah's return to the country.

Thus, they

received their reward for their collaboration with the organizers of the coup.

Colonel Buzurgmihr writes, "Shahquli's defense in the military tribunal certainly attracted

considerable attention. He had participated in the Commissions for drafting Dr. Musaddiq's

reform legislation concerning the military courts and the military in general, and had exerted

influence on these issues in which he deeply believed."

After the trial of Dr. Musaddiq was referred to the Military Court of Appeal, Colonel

Shahquli prepared a forty-page statement in which he raised numerous objections to the

ruling of the preliminary tribunal. Buzurgmihr writes, "It appears that the government of the

day considered the forthrightness and intelligence of Shahquli to be inappropriate; he was

instructed to feign illness [and to withdraw from the case], and he did as bidden."

After the initial session of the court, Colonel Shahquli did not participate in its later

sessions. Buzurgmihr adds that pretending to be ill and the subsequent withdrawal of

Shahquli was ordered [by the government] and politically motivated, but he also notes that

he went to see him and saw "evidence of actual illness in him."⁵⁹

At the conclusion of the military tribunal, as a means of payback for defending Dr.

Musaddiq and raising logical objections to the jurisdiction of the military court [in trying the former prime minister], Colonel Shahquli was immediately retired from active duty on the instructions of Muhammad-Reza Shah, and Iran's military lost one of its ablest and most devoted officers, loyal to the army and to the nation.

59 Muvahhid, Khab Ashuftih Naft: Az Kuditay 28 Murdad ta Suqut Zahidi, pp. 174–75. (BC)

Chapter 5

The Trial and the Verdict

Everything we know about Dr. Musaddiq has firmly established that he was against any form of suppression of ideas, anti-Baha'ism, or aggression towards unorthodox thinkers.

Nonetheless, despite the promise that he had given to the representatives of the American Baha'is, Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq was unable to bring about a fair trial, nor was he able to effect the liberty of a number of innocent Muslims and Baha'is who had fallen victim to the connivance of religious clerics and Fada'iyān Islam. He himself was thoroughly consumed with political upheavals as well as internally and externally conceived conspiracies and plots.

It was most unfortunate that those accused of the murders in Abarqu were entrapped in this sad spectacle during one of the most chaotic moments in the history of Iran.

Collection of More Evidence

The trial of those accused of murder in Abarqu was convened on May 7, 1952, about two months before the resignation of Dr. Musaddiq from the premiership on July 16, 1952.⁶⁰

Before the court was convened and the trial took place, No. 1 Division of the Central Criminal Court studied the case dossier and, recognizing the inadequacy of the evidence, decided to take steps to complete the file. It wrote:

- Where are the three unidentified Baha'is of Isfandabad who have been accused of being the real murderers? Bring them so we can sentence them to execution and also convict others of

being accomplices.

- There is not a shred of evidence in the file about the activities of ‘Abbas-‘Ali Purmihdi. You must investigate further and state what his role has been in this murder.
- What is the source for Sergeant-Major Khakpur’s assertion that the furnishings of the slain were taken to the village of Dehbid to Ahmad Niku’i by Muhammad-Husayn, the brother of Muhammad Shirvani? How could Muhammad-Husayn have killed Sughra at night, then traveled to Dehbid, and returned to Abarqu by the morning?

Nevertheless, many essential elements of this case were disregarded. For instance, the [supposed] religious motivations for these murders; the inspector’s decision to set the

60 An incident took place in Yazd that caused considerable problems for the Baha’is of that region. The following is recorded in *The Baha’i World*, vol. 12, p. 705:

In March 1951, in Yazd, a young man was discovered dead in a desolate part of the town. A

few enemies of the Baha’i Faith spread false rumors about, to the effect that the boy had

been murdered by Baha’is. They placed his body in a coffin and carried it around the town

lamenting the death of the youth and speaking vehemently of the cruel deed of the Baha’is.

While this incident was taking place, two men who were members of the Faith, were severely

beaten in a neighborhood shop because of their religious affiliation with the Baha’i group.

At the same time another group of enemies of the Faith went about the town of Taft

destroying the gardens and damaging the homes of Baha’is. One Baha’i with a Parsi

background, named Barham Seroosh Rawhani, complained to the police about these persecutions. On the way back to his home that night he was attacked with knives and

martyred by enemies of the Faith.

primary suspects, who were Sughra’s guests that night, free without any bond; the role of

Isfandiyar Khan Salari; the sudden dismissal of Commander Haqqgu from his post in Yazd;

the dismissal without cause of the chief of police in Abarqu, Sergeant-Major Husayn

Sadripur, etc.

At any rate, [inspector] Asadu’llah Zamanian was appointed to complete the

legal file.

He went to Yazd, raided the home of the Baha'is and their Hadiratu'l-Quds [Baha'i Center]

in the same city, and confiscated a large quantity of notebooks, papers, Baha'i writings,

books, some commercial documents of Jalal Binish, and even personal records and family

pictures, as well as treasured manuscripts—in short, many documents that had nothing to do

with the Abarqu case. He sent these to Tehran as irrefutable evidence of the case. He then

traveled to Isfandabad and briefly questioned Sergeant-Major Khakpur.

However, what he presented as his final report in response to the questions raised by the

court as a means of completing the file is very interesting:

- Regarding the three Baha'i farmers in Isfandabad, they had been freed, since even the inspector in Yazd, Sadiqi, had no choice but to let them go. However, Zamanian summoned them again, confounded them with kindness and trickery, and placed a paper before them, in order that those illiterate individuals should place their mark on it.⁶¹ Immediately afterwards, though, he arrested these three individuals—Muhammad Rafahi, Hasan Himmati, and Husayn Karambakhsh—and sent them forthwith to Tehran. In this way, he taught a new lesson in treachery and deceit to Khakpur and his master, Sadiqi.

- Regarding 'Abbas-'Ali Purmihdi and his connection with Muhammad Shirvani, no matter how they tried, they could not find the smallest evidence to establish their connection.

However, eventually they located two individuals in Abarqu who testified, "Three days after

Sughra's murder, we saw 'Abbas-'Ali, who seemed agitated, in Abarqu, saying that he wanted

to go to Yazd." This became their "strong" evidence for his involvement in the murder.

- Regarding the impossibility of Muhammad-Husayn traveling all that distance that night, this too is very interesting. Khakpur had responded to Zamanian, "I do not remember who told me about this. But, Mr. Inspector, praise be unto God, you are very smart, so how do you not disbelieve that Muhammad-Husayn had killed Sughra, and that night traveled

kilometers to Dehbid, returning by daylight?”

In such frivolous ways, responses to the court’s preliminary queries were arrayed and sufficient evidence for commencing the trial were assembled.

The Principles⁶²

As noted earlier, the court convened on May 7, 1952, at No. 1 Division of the Tehran Criminal Court.

The accused were as follows:

61 According to Nikravan, “Barrasi,” in this document, the three Baha’is had confessed that the night before the

murder they had met with Shirvani and conceived the plans for Sughra’s murder.

62 This section has been added by the translator based on the report of the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Baha’is of Iran, July 16, 1952, reproduced in appendix 9, document 2.

- The nine members of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Yazd: Badi’u’llah Afnan, Muhammad-‘Ali Afnan, Majdhub, Dr. Malakutian, Dr. Manshadi, Mishki, Rafati, Salekian, Dr. Rasti;
- Hasan Shams, a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Isfandabad;
- ‘Abbas-‘Ali Purmihdi, a Baha’i pioneer in Abarqu;
- Husayn Karambakhsh, a Baha’i from Isfandabad;
- Hasan Himmati, a Baha’i from Isfandabad;
- Muhammad Rafahi, a Baha’i from Isfandabad;
- Muhammad Shirvani, a Muslim;
- Ahmad Niku’i, a former Baha’i;
- Muhammad-Husayn Niku’i, a Muslim (the last three were brothers);
- ‘Ali-Muhammad Shirvani, 20-year-old son of Muhammad Shirvani.

The panel of judges consisted of:

- Justice Ashraf Ahmadi, president (a Shaykhi)
- Justice Amir Ibrahim, member (a Shaykhi)
- Justice Vakili, member
- Justice Fakhr Tabatabai, member
- Justice Arshad Amiri, member

Prosecutor:

- Khili Sabri, a Sunni

Tort Counsel pleading on behalf of the relatives of the deceased:

- Shaykh Rida Malik
- Adib Razavi-Yazdi
- Mihdi Razavi
- Khudadad Sabir Astarani

- Abu'l-Hasan 'Amidi-Nuri

Defense Counsel was composed of the following lawyers:

- Naraqhi, a Muslim
- Mahmud Safavi, a Muslim
- Abdullah Razi, a Muslim
- Aziz Navidi, a Baha'i
- Ahmad Nasiri, a Baha'i
- Kazem Kazemzadeh, a Baha'i

After the procedure for the identification of the defendants was completed, the prosecutor's indictment outlining the charges against the accused was read in full at the court. A summary of this indictment is provided in appendix 9, document 2.

The Role of Clerics in the Trial

The most essential point in the course of this incident is that the provocation of people and incitement of public uproar by the clerical establishment and its leadership was due to the clerics' enmity and hatred for the Baha'is, and their actions were done for the purpose of instilling fear in the judicial officials and covering up the glaring holes in the legal file.

The previous pages presented a brief account of political and religious developments in Iran after the conclusion of World War II and the impact of the Cold War on these developments. There is no doubt that Isfandiyar Khan Salari, in order to exonerate himself of the crime he had committed, placed blame on the Baha'is. However, this scheme could not have been implemented without the collaboration and alliance of the mullas. It appears conclusively that since he was a maternal grandson of Akhund Haji Shaykh Ahmad, the Imam-Jum'ih of Abadeh, he had without doubt learned such conspiracies in the seminary classes of the Haji. For a wealthy and affluent man like him, who enjoyed close ties to the mullas, it is likely that through Ayatu'llah Siyyid Nuri'd-Din Shirazi, who was a sworn enemy of the Baha'is and who had established a considerable organization in the province of Fars against Baha'is, that he had made contacts with the office of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi, since it was enough only for the latter to hear the phrase "Baha'i" for him to lose

all his composure. This is not merely a hypothesis or a conjecture; it is something that all the mullas who are presently at the top of the Islamic government confirm and affirm. In fact, there is no need to cite the memoir of Ayatu'llah Husayn- 'Ali Muntazari, inasmuch as earlier we cited a portion of the recollections of Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi, and that should suffice. However, the enmity of this Source of Emulation [Ayatu'llah Burujirdi] was expressed particularly strongly in the case of the murders of Abarqu, as evidenced by the facts that his student, companion, and biographer, Hujjatu'l-Islam 'Ali Davani, has narrated. The latter, who on "numerous occasions" benefited from the highly adorned seminary [in Qum] and who was trusted with the most secret thoughts and doings of the Source of Emulation of the Twelver Shi'is, Grand Ayatu'llah Haji Aqa Husayn Burujirdi, stated that in a similar instance, the Ayatu'llah would immediately write letters to the Shah, the prime minister and Ayatu'llah Bihbahani and send them to Tehran. Several years ago when the wayward sect of the Baha'is had sent several of their mischief-makers to one of the villages of Yazd where with a shovel they tore into pieces a hapless woman named Sughra and her young children, and they connived to escape justice, the late Ayatu'llah did not have a moment of rest by night or day. Constantly, he communicated with Tehran, with the great scholars in the capital, and with governmental authorities, which eventually led to the criminals [i.e., Baha'is] suffering the consequences of their deed. Some were hung and others still remain in prison. Elsewhere, this confidant and companion of the chief of the Shi'is of the world writes regarding another incident in which several innocent Baha'is were arrested on a charge of murder: Several Baha'is had killed one of their coreligionists, and through trickery had presented some devoted [i.e., Muslim] youth to the law. One of these youth was

sentenced to execution, and the verdict was to be carried out in mid-Sha‘ban.

This

news deeply worried the Source of Emulation in Qum. Without any hesitation, he wrote letters to the Shah, to the prime minister and Ayatu’llah Bihbahani and sent

them to Tehran. He then telephoned whomever he thought useful and pursued the

matter, until eventually in the middle of night the news of the verdict’s commutation

was communicated to him. When he heard this news, tears poured from his eyes, and he profusely praised the Lord. At this time, one of his companions came into

his room and asked, “Are you still awake?” The great Source of Emulation of the

Shi‘is responded, “It was a very important matter, but came to pass well.

Every time

I think that the blood of an innocent Muslim might be spilled, my entire being trembles and I am overcome with the worry: How would I answer God on the Day of Resurrection?”⁶³

There is no need to wait until the Day of Resurrection, since we will see in the conclusion of

this book that Ayatu’llah Burujirdi’s hands were covered with the blood of innocents—and

astonishingly, not just the blood of Baha’is, but also the blood of Muslims who considered

him their Source of Emulation. Religious prejudice causes calamity.⁶⁴

Ahmad Nasiri, the attorney representing the three accused from Isfandabad, has mentioned several recollections in his account of the frenzied trial, of which we will cite only

one instance.⁶⁵ This particular recollection is about the involvement of Ayatu’llah Bihbahani,

the fully empowered representative of Ayatu’llah Burujirdi, with respect to the murders at

Abarqu. Because of the clarity of this recollection and its simplicity, there is no need to

provide any commentary or analysis. Nasiri writes:

Before the trial of the accused in the murders of Abarqu, I came across Haji ‘Ali-

Akbar Khan Tih in the courthouse. He was a litigator at the time and later became

the prosecutor for the Bar Association.⁶⁶ In the course of our conversation, he asked, “Are you involved with the Abarqu case?” I replied affirmatively.

Haji ‘Ali-

Akbar Khan Tih said, “I have an experience in this regard, which I should recount

for you.”

He then related, "Some time ago, one of the exalted 'ulama, that is, Bihbahani, sent me a message to meet with him. I went to visit him. He raised the issue of the Abarqu murders and the trial, and instructed me to accept the role of the tort defense counsel,⁶⁷ saying, 'It brings a reward in the next world and also your fee will be paid.' I replied to him, 'So far about ten tort lawyers have been hired for the defense team. Is this not sufficient, that I should participate as well?' "Bihbahani replied, 'No, your involvement is necessary as well. For the sake of protecting the rights of the victims' descendants, you should agree to legally represent them. Your presence will be effective.' I said, 'If it is so, then kindly issue instructions to pay my fee so I can begin.' [Ayatu'llah] Behbahani replied, 'I will advise them to pay you 2,000 tumans and also there is an eternal reward.' I said, 'If I

63 Davani, Zindigani Za'im Buzurg 'Alim Tashay', 'Allamih 'Aliqadr Hadrat Ayatu'llah Burujirdi Quds Sarih. (BC)

64 According to Nikravan, "Barrasi," considerable pressure was also brought upon the Shah and the court by

Ayatu'llah Shari'atmadari in Qum and other high-ranking clerics in Mashhad.

65 The Baha'i defendants were represented by three Baha'i lawyers and several Muslim lawyers. The Baha'i

lawyers were Azizu'llah Navidi (1913–1987), Kazem Kazemzadeh (1898–1989), and Ahmad Nasiri.

66 One of Dr. Musaddiq's reforms was to make Iran's Bar Association independent of the Justice Department.

Although most of the legislation passed during the Musaddiq era was later abrogated, the independence of the Bar Association was maintained.

67 Tort law is a body of law that addresses and provides remedies for civil wrongs stemming from intentional

and negligent acts. A person who suffers legal damages may be able to use tort law to receive compensation

from someone who is legally responsible, or liable, for those injuries. In the Abarqu case, not only were the defendants prosecuted by the Justice Ministry, they were also sued by ten lawyers provided by the clerical establishment.

am asked to take on this case, then kindly instruct them that 20,000 tumans be

paid
as my fee. I will then accept this case.’ Surprised, he stated, ‘The
descendants of the
victims have nothing, and this 2,000 tuman was raised by the believers. You
should
accept this amount.’

“I replied, ‘As far as I have heard, so far 700,000 tumans has been
collected for
this trial, and I will not accept anything less than 20,000 to serve as the
tort counsel.’

When I said that, Aqa Bihbahani became agitated and with much anger said,
‘Such
talk is not true. If you do not want to accept the case, you are free to
decline.’”

Haji ‘Ali-Akbar Khan Tih added, “I did not accept the case, but as long as
such
sums of money can be raised, each year they will accuse a Baha’i for having
murdered someone and on the pretext of hiring tort attorneys, collect and
pocket
large sums.”⁶⁸

In accordance with Ayatu’llah Bihbahani’s instruction, every night the
mullas at mosques and
worship centers cursed, blighted, attacked, and slandered the Baha’is and
convinced people
who did not suspect their deception and conspiracies.
For the sake of history, we should record the names of the ten⁶⁹ tort attorneys
who were
on the payroll of Ayatu’llah Bihbahani, since some of these names are still
current on
people’s tongues: Kishavarz Sadr, Shaykh Reza Maliki, Ahmad Dhu’l-Majd
Tabataba’i,
Hashim Tabataba’i, Pur-Reza, Adib Razavi Yazdi, Siyyid Mihdi Razavi, Khudadad
Sabir
Astarah’i, and most unfortunate of all, Abu’l-Hasan ‘Amidi-Nuri, the
editor of Dad
newspaper, who at first published the news and the names of the real
perpetrators of the
Abarqu murders, but who later after receiving fees for legal services from
Ayatu’llah
Bihbahani spoke extensively in the trial against the innocent defendants.
From this time onward, Iran’s judiciary was under the control of the
collaborators of
Ayatu’llah Burujirdi and his Tehran chieftain, Ayatu’llah Bihbahani, and
the thugs and
ruffians of the terrorist organization Fada’iyan Islam ruled over the Justice
Ministry’s

headquarters in Iran.

Anti-Baha'i Propaganda

During the Abarqu trial, a large number of mullas and preachers, as well as fanatical and angry shopkeepers from the bazaar, sat in the courtroom, not to observe the proceedings, but only to disrupt the order in the court and to instill fear in the defendants' attorneys. With a loud and vociferous uproar, they would demand that the court issue a verdict against the [Baha'i] accused and condemn them to execution.

In order to deflect anti-religious sentiments from himself, Khalil Sabri, the prosecutor in the case who was a Sunni, was extreme in his fervor, and delivered a seditious and regrettable indictment in front of the Shi'i congregation attending the trial. He claimed, "For fifty years, Baha'is have been killing people," and concluded his remarks by stating, "The court must punish the accused to the fullest extent of the law, as otherwise the people themselves will take revenge." In this manner, he incited religious prejudices and brought about a fearful atmosphere in the court, even though the task of the prosecutor was to present factual evidence against the accused.

68 Afnan, Bigunahan, pp. 155–56.

69 Only nine names are given in the text.

Each day outside the courthouse, pamphlets filled with lies, calumnies, reprehensible slanders, and shameful insults were distributed by the terrorist society of Fada'iyan Islam. As an example, in a decorated 32 x 52 cm. flyer, the following was printed:

How were the lady Sughra and her innocent five children killed? Why were they killed? Who are their murderers and instigators?

Each day, from 9 in the morning come to the Criminal Court and observe the trial.

How will the nation's authorities, the judiciary, and the honored judges adjudicate and administer justice regarding this great tragedy? Will they hang the murderers and instigators on the gallows, or will they leave the judgment and punishment to the people to administer? With heavy hearts we will observe the trial until its last day and await its verdict.

In another proclamation by the same Fada'iyan Islam, the following was said:

This is an Islamic nation. The brave people of Iran will drag the evil remains of unpatriotic elements in the dust of abasement.

O nationless Baha'is! O sullied hands! O high authorities in the judiciary! O judges! The eyes of millions Muslims are open to your deeds; from under a mountain of dirt, the blood-soaked bodies of the martyrs of Abarqu, who have been torn and broken with shovels and pickaxes, are now fixed on your judgment! We demand:

1. Execution of those involved in the murder of a woman and her five children;
2. Execution of the evil elements who in the courtroom of this Shi'i nation have openly confessed to their apostasy [i.e., to being Baha'is].

In another proclamation that Fada'iyan Islam disseminated in the same building of Iran's high court, the following was reflected:

Should the court and its judges fail to punish the shameless murderers of a meek Muslim lady and her dear five children, or hesitate or delay in issuing the verdict of execution regarding them, then by the order of the Lord of creation, the brave children of Islam will send, wherever they may be, the criminal Baha'is to hell.

We swear by the Almighty God that should those who have torn asunder our Muslim sister and her beloved children not be hanged from the gallows, not only we will tear each and every one of them into pieces, we will also gravely punish the responsible and conservative authorities.

Dozens of similar proclamations and pamphlets were distributed, all intended to provoke the religious sentiments of ill-informed people and to influence the decision of the court.

Presentation of Tort Attorneys

With the exception of two or three of the tort attorneys who confined themselves to discussion of the law, legal matters, details of the incident and, in fairness, observed decorum and etiquette, the other tort attorneys over several days of the trial consistently caused a huge uproar, and in place of logic and deduction in proving the charges against the [Baha'i] defendants, they launched severe attacks, accompanied by false accusations and the most

abusive language, against the personal beliefs and characters of the accused. Khudadad Sabir Astarani, who bore great enmity towards Baha'is, would bring such books to the court as the Bayan by the Siyyid-i Bab, the Aqdas by Baha'u'llah, and Mufawadat [Some Answered Questions] by 'Abdu'l-Baha. Misleadingly, he would proclaim that Baha'is considered every impure object as clean, or if a Baha'i did not change the furnishing of his house every 19 years, then he would be expelled from the community, or that Baha'is must place their dead in marble coffins for interment, and was it not clear that "if everyone became Baha'i, where would so much marble come from?" In order to deflect charges of being a Baha'i-sympathizer, Abu'l-Hasan 'Amidi-Nuri, the editor of Dad newspaper, who at the beginning of the events had published a true account of the incident and had indentified the actual instigators on the strength of a report by Baniadam, the truthful Governor of Yazd, brought with him the thoroughly fictitious and fabricated Memoirs of Kinyaz Dolgorukii, the former Russian Ambassador to Iran,⁷⁰ and read the entire text in the court and without any evidence or support called the accused, "nationless, spies and murderers."⁷¹ Siyyid Mihdi Razavi, another tort lawyer of Ruqiyih, the sole surviving daughter of Sughra, stated, "By causing uproar and pandemonium in the trials of those who had killed the mahduru'd-Dam⁷² Baha'is in Shahrud or Dr. Berjis in Kashan, we threatened and frightened the judges, and succeeded in gaining acquittals through the court." With such words, he deliberately told the judges and observers what they were expected to do. Adib Razavi-Yazdi said, "Before the Constitutional Revolt, anyone who openly admitted to being a Baha'i in Yazd was a must-be-killed, and by now, hundreds of Baha'is have been killed in Yazd on the basis of fatwas issued by the 'ulama.⁷³ However, after the ratification of the Constitution, 'ulama were not permitted to issue a fatwa sanctioning anyone's death, and as such, the court must find Baha'is guilty and through this means eradicate these people."

Another tort attorney spoke at length about the necessity of giving the Baha'is to different occupational groups for killing—the same thing that Nasiri'd-Din Shah Qajar had done with the Babis of Tehran.⁷⁴ Yet another attorney hired by Ayatu'llah Bihbahani claimed that Mirza Taqi-Khan Amir-Kabir was killed by Baha'is, while another attorney said that the

70 The book, *Memoirs of Kinyaz Dolgorukii*, was a creation of the fiction-writing pen of 'Ali Javaher-Kalam and

was published with the financial aid of Astan Quds Razavi and the encouragement of the Shi'i clerical establishment. (BC)

71 His misfortune was in the fact that after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, all his services were ignored by

the mullas, and he came to an ill end. On Thursday, October 9, 1997, *Kayhan* newspaper printed in London, no.

677, page 11, the following account in Persian:

Abu'l-Hasan 'Amidi-Nuri, the publisher of *Dad* newspaper, who was a flamboyant attorney

and a Member of Parliament, was executed by the Islamic Republic. It was then reported to

his family that his execution was in error, and as such, the instruction to confiscate his estate was withdrawn. (BC)

72 Literally, *free blood*, refers to such groups as Baha'is, the spilling of whose blood is not subject to religious

sanction or payment of blood-money to the surviving family under Shi'i jurisprudence.

73 On the brutal pogrom against the Baha'is of Yazd and its environs, see Rabbani, *Baha'i Martyrdoms in Manshad*

in 1903: *Three Historical Accounts*; and also, Rabbani, "'Abdu'l-Baha's Proclamation on the Persecution of Baha'is in 1903.'

74 A detailed discussion of this incident is given by 'Abdu'l-Baha, presumably based on his firsthand knowledge.

See, Mu'ayyad, *Eight Years Near 'Abdu'l-Baha: Diary of Dr. Habib Mu'ayyad*.

reason that the Baha'is had slain Sughra was because fifty years earlier the Muslims of

Abarqu had killed two Baha'is.⁷⁵

They manufactured the most bewildering statements in the name of the Comte de Gobineau, Edward Granville Browne, and George Bernard Shaw, and openly

insulted,
belittled and abused the sacred beliefs of the accused, accompanied by the most
offensive
language. Along with these, members of the Fada'iyān Islam, who had filled
all the chairs in
the courtroom, would raise the cry of Allah'u' Akbar, or occasionally
proclaim salutations to
the Prophet, as a means of supporting and confirming the outlandish remarks of
the tort
attorneys. The air was so filled with attacks and threats that the defense
attorneys, and of
course the accused themselves, were deeply frightened, and had lost all hope of
surviving
this ordeal; with great trepidation and worry, they awaited the conclusion of
this spectacle.
The insults and accusations against the defendants voiced by the attorneys
bought by
Ayatu'llah Bihbahani, even though they were all completely unrelated to the
Abarqu
murders, and even though not all of the defendants were Baha'i and some were
Muslim,
nonetheless were not met with any objections on the part of the presiding
judges. On the
contrary, time and again, the defendants' attorneys were interrupted by
judges who warned
them about and objected to their statements. There is much to be said on this.
Ahmad Nasiri, one of the defense counsels, stated:

At the end of the third day of trial, Siyyid Mahmud Safavi, who was another
attorney
representing the defendants, and I were leaving the courtroom. Suddenly we were
confronted in the corridors of the courthouse by one of the fanatical elements
whose job was to provoke the spectators into disruption, who was wearing an
'aba
and kippah, and displaying a long beard. He began to chase and threaten us in
the
most abusive and filthy language. Siyyid Mahmud Safavi held my hand and said,
"Do not respond." With great haste we left the courthouse.
Next day, Siyyid Mahmud Safavi sent a note by his physician stating that he was
ill, and he never attended the trial after that.
For a long time after that, whenever he saw me in the court building, he would
avoid me and pretend that he did not know me.

It is likely that Ahmad Nasiri did not know that Siyyid Mahmud Safavi was the
maternal
uncle of Siyyid Mujtaba Navvab Safavi, the founder of the terrorist society
Fada'iyān Islam.
Undoubtedly, Siyyid Mahmud Safavi's life had been threatened by the head of

the Fada'iyan

Islam, and on the pretext of being ill, he had withdrawn from the case. The

Fada'iyan Islam

always sought to conceal the fact that the mother and the maternal uncle of

Navvab Safavi

were deeply appalled by his crimes and always turned their backs on his evil ways.

Lawyers Representing Baha'i Defendants

It is propitious to name those who in the midst of such turbulent times and

worrisome

conditions nevertheless accepted to represent the Baha'is; perchance, their

example of

75 Presumably, this is a reference to the fact that two Baha'is, Aqa Siyyid

Ja'far and Ustad Muhammad Zaman

Sabbagh, were arrested in Isfandabad, taken to Abarqu, and publicly tortured

and killed on April 2, 1901. Later

in the same year, another Baha'i, Aqa Rida, was killed in his own home in

Isfandabad. In 1903, Aqa 'Ali

Muhammad, the brother of Aqa Rida, was shot and killed in Isfandabad. Source:

Rasti, Eyewitness Account of

1950 Persecutions in Abarqu, p. 1.

bravery and humanity would serve as a brilliant lamp for our countrymen in

these difficult

times.

The bravest and most experienced of the attorneys who represented the Baha'is

of Yazd

was 'Abdu'llah Razi. He was a devoted Muslim who believed that Baha'is

did not disrupt the

general order of Iranian society, paid their taxes, and for this reason

Baha'is must be

provided with civil rights, which must be protected, and that their dignity and

beliefs must

be safeguarded from the darts of the ill-wishing. On many occasions, he agreed

to provide

legal counsel to Baha'is, and with utmost sincerity and interest he would

carry out his law

practice. In the Abarqu trial, he agreed to represent the defendants, since he

believed in their

innocence. He was an experienced and skilled lawyer.

In addition to his oral arguments, Razi submitted his remarks to the court in

writing, so

that they could not advance a false claim against him or accuse of him of any

shortcoming.

'Abdu'llah Razi, who had fully comprehended the ill-intention of the court

and knew about

the aggressive actions of the Fada'iyān Islam, placed a copy of the Qur'an over his head and with that commenced his defense. With a resonant voice he swore, "I am a Muslim, and am duty-bound to defend the innocent." He sprinkled his conclusive and well-supported defense with verses from the Qur'an and examples from the history of Islam, as he knew these would be pleasing to the presiding judge and to the Fada'iyān Islam. Fearlessly, he referred to the entire case as a show-trial against some innocent men. Many times, the judge interrupted his energetic and reasoned statements, but 'Abdu'llah Rāzi never hesitated in his able defense of the guiltless defendants. The unceasing cries and threats of the Fada'iyān Islam never overwhelmed or vanquished him, and in utmost bravery and courage he continued to stand by his innocent clients. May his memory be honored.

The Verdict

The trial of those accused in the murders of Abarqu concluded in twenty-one days, on May 12, 1952.⁷⁶ Ashraf Ahmadi, the malevolent and suborned presiding judge in this trial, issued an inhumane verdict intended to please those in authority and power. Soon, he climbed the ladder of success: Husayn 'Ala, the Court Minister of the Shah, took him into his ministry and installed him as his own deputy. [Document 2 in appendix 9 gives considerable details about the court proceedings.]

The verdict of such a court in such an atmosphere was a foregone conclusion.

All the defendants were found guilty:

- Four of them were condemned to death: Muhammad Shirvani (a Muslim), Hasan Himmati, Husayn Karambakhsh, and Muhammad Rafahi—the last three being Baha'is from Isfandabad.

- Three of them were sentenced to ten years' incarceration with hard labor: Hasan

Shams (a Baha'i and member of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Isfandabad), 'Abbas-'Ali Purmihdi (a Baha'i) and 'Ali-Muhammad Shirvani (20-year-old Muslim son of Muhammad Shirvani).

⁷⁶ Iran's National Spiritual Assembly suggests in its report of July 16, 1952, that the trial ended on May 12 (see

appendix 9, document 2). This appears to be in conflict with June 1952 report

by Kazemzadeh (see appendix 10, account 1). For this study, this variance was settled in favor of Kazemzadeh whose report was earlier and who was the leading defense attorney in this trial.

- All nine members of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Yazd were sentenced to three years' hard labor.⁷⁷

Apprising the Authorities

The Baha'i administration in Iran quickly contacted the head of the Baha'i community, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, who issued instructions on June 26, 1952, for the Iranian Assembly to apprise the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada of the situation. On July 28, the American Assembly telegraphed Dr. Musaddiq, informing him that the case of the Baha'is falsely accused in this case was before No. 2 Division of the High Court and requested that an audience be given to the representative of the Iranian Assembly to brief him on the facts of the case. No evidence is known that such an opportunity was ever given by the prime minister to the Baha'is of Iran. On September 4th of the same year, the American Assembly contacted Dr. Parnahad, Iran's chargé d'affaires in its Washington embassy, and provided him with the details of the court proceedings and requested that his office inform the authorities in Iran. Again, no evidence is known that this communication was passed on to appropriate officials in Tehran. Yet once more, the American Assembly on September 5, 1952, wrote a detailed letter to Dr. Musaddiq, providing him with the details of the case, the court's verdict, and an update on the appeal process. Once again, it appears that this communication fell on deaf ears in Tehran.⁷⁸

The Appeal⁷⁹

In accordance with Iran's criminal code, an appeal was automatic in such cases, and within a few weeks the case dossier was sent to the High Court of Appeal. The case went before Judge Ha'iri-Shahbaghi for review. He privately advised the defense counsels that the court verdict in the earlier trial was wrong and had to be set aside. However, he was then pressured

by the Justice Ministry, and all he could do was to commute the death sentence of the three

Baha'is of Isfandabad to fifteen years' imprisonment.

The Supreme Court of Iran then instructed another High Court to review the case, but

this Court procrastinated and did not convene for two years. At last, the political climate

allowed the Court to review the ruling of the lower court and to rescind some of the earlier

sentences. It ordered a new trial for five of the condemned.

The new trial by No. 2 Division of the Criminal Court started on June 13, 1954, and

lasted fourteen days. The defense team consisted of some of the lawyers who had participated in 1952 trial: Kazem Kazemzadeh, Aziz Navidi, and 'Abdu'llah Razi. The

prosecuting team had five lawyers on its staff. Once again, the atmosphere was charged with

77 Nikravan, "Barrasi," states that all those incarcerated with also fined.

The two brothers of Muhammad

Shirvani, namely, Ahmad Niku'i and Muhammad-Husayn Niku'i, were pardoned since they repented and

returned to Islam. This by itself demonstrates that the motive all along was religious bigotry towards Baha'is.

78 These documents were kindly furnished for this study through the kindness of the National Archives of the

National Baha'i Center and appear in appendix 9. The Persian version of these documents is published in

Afnan, Bigunahan.

79 This section and the next have been added by the translator based on documents in appendix 10 and

incorporating some of the author's original materials.

anti-Baha'i sentiments and slogans, but the panel of judges seemed less susceptible to

fanatical influences.

The court ruled that the Baha'is who had been condemned to death at the 1952 trial be

given ten years' imprisonment; one of the members of the Yazd Assembly be released since

his participation in and presence at the meetings of the Assembly had not been proven; and

the sentence of one of the accused be reduced from ten years to five years' incarceration.

Conclusion

Muhammad Shirvani was condemned to execution, and this decree was carried out

in a public square in Yazd known as Amir-Chakhmaq. He wrote a letter to Ayatu'llah Burujirdi, the Source of the Emulation for the Shi'is of the world, and stated his innocence and belief in Islam.⁸⁰ However, the Ayatu'llah was consumed with the thought of destroying the Baha'is, and it did not matter to him that Shirvani was a Muslim. What was important was that he was to be executed in the name of Baha'is, and that this was a victory for the protection of the Muslim congregation. For this reason, he gave no reply to the letter of this hapless and innocent farmer. At the time of his execution, Muhammad Shirvani faced the throng of onlookers, and tearfully and remorsefully said with a resonant voice, "People know that I am innocent and a Muslim." But the conspiracy and collusion of Isfandiyar Khan and the mullas had done its work and had robbed him of life. Other defendants were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor. The elderly Haji Mirza Hasan-Shams, who was condemned to remain in prison for ten years, lasted only a few years and died on April 5, 1955,⁸¹ after having endured immense difficulties and tribulations in the course of his incarceration. It is said that the cause of his death was an unsanitary surgery in prison after he had developed appendicitis. The three innocent Baha'is of Isfandabad were imprisoned for ten years and eventually freed in 1960. Eight members of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Yazd were imprisoned for three years and then were released in September 1953. Now that we have reached the end of this brief analysis, there remains no other recourse for any of us but to honor the memory of Sughra and her innocent and ill-fated children, as well as the guiltless Muslims and Baha'is who suffered in this evil incident because of fanaticism towards religious minorities.

⁸⁰ See appendix 6. (BC)

⁸¹ Nikravan, "Barrasi," records the date of his death as April 1, 1955.

Sources for Studying Dr. Musaddiq

We have gathered much soon to be published information regarding the relationship of Dr.

Muhammad Musaddiq with the Baha'is in particular and with Iranian political parties and religious and tribal minorities in general. Meanwhile, the following learned and noteworthy sources among the wide range of materials and research that has been produced about Dr.

Musaddiq are recommended:

- Fu'ad Ruhani, Zindigi Siyasi Musaddiq dar Matn Nihzat Milli [The political life of Musaddiq in the context of the nationalist movement];
- Homa [Homayoun] Katouzian, Iqtisad Siyasi dar Iran Jadid [Political economy in modern Iran];
- Fakhri'd-Din 'Azimi, Buhran Dimocracy dar Iran [Democratic upheavals in Iran];
- Colonel Ghulam-Rida Nijati, Junbish Millishudan San'at Naft Iran [Movement to nationalize the petroleum industry in Iran];
- Colonel Ghulam-Rida Nijati, Kuditayi 28 Murdad 1332 [The coup d'état of 28 Murdad 1332 (August 19, 1953)];
- Colonel Ghulam-Rida Nijati, Musaddiq: Salhayi Mubarizih va Muqavimat [Musaddiq: The years of opposition and resistance];
- Muhammad-'Ali Muvahhid, Khab Ashuftih Naft: Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq va Nihzat Milli Iran az Kuditayi 28 Murdad ta Suqut Zahidi [The nightmare of oil: Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq and nationalist movement from the 28 Murdad coup d'état until the fall of Zahidi], in 3 volumes.

In addition, those interested in this aspect of Iranian history may wish to peruse the

scholarly, controversial monograph by Dr. Jalal Matini, Nigahi bi Karnamih Siyasi Dr.

Muhammad Musaddiq [A glance at the political career of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq], Los

Angeles (California): Sherkat Ketab.

The plot and elements of the coup d'état against Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq had been

hatched several months before the events of August 16th and 19th. Exactly at the same time

that the royal decree dismissing Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq was signed by Muhammad-Reza Shah on August 13, the military plot against Dr. Musaddiq had reached its concluding planning stages. Because of indecision and communication problems among the plotters, when the coup was launched at midnight on August 16th, they were countered by Dr. Musaddiq. However, the coup continued and eventually succeeded on August 19, 1953. For the information of those who write and lament over the lack of reliable documents regarding the 28 Murdad coup d'état or who refer to that event as an "anti-coup" incident or as a "national uprising," the following source can provide many documents that would cause them to pause and contemplate the broader implications of this moment in history. This extremely valuable collection contains the most important documents surrounding the 28 Murdad 1332 [1953] coup d'état that have been published to date by those who had a principal role in designing and implementing the event. Based on this evidence, there is absolutely no doubt about the interference and the key role of the United States and

England in this incident's design and implementation of the coup up to its final success. By reading this book, the truth surrounding the 28 Murdad coup becomes completely clear, and one notes that without the least hesitation and with complete clarity, the principal actors in this event have described their role and activities. This very interesting and instructive book is Homa Katouzian, "The CIA Documents and the 1953 Coup in Iran," in *The CIA Documents on the 1953 Coup*, ed. Gholamreza Vatandoust, (Tehran: Rasa Publications, 2000), published in English and Persian. See also, *The CIA Documents & the Overthrow of Dr. Musaddiq of Iran*, ed. Gholamreza Vatandoust, (Tehran: Rasa Publications, 2000).

Appendix 2 Primary Sources on the Abarqu Incident

There is a limited-edition, 270-page book entitled, *Bigunahan* [The guiltless], prepared by

Muhammad-Taqi Afnan regarding the murders in Abarqu.⁸² We received from a distinguished person a copy of this book, which has served as the primary source and the foundational document for the present research monograph, On the online site [The Democratic Voice of Iran] Khandaniha, on Sunday, February 22, 2009, “Shintou” has summarized the aforementioned book, which I have considered and used as well. “Shintou” describes the motive for his essay as follows:

[Several] Baha’is were accused of killing a Muslim family in Abarqu, and the judicial apparatus during the reign of the Shah is alleged to have supported the Baha’is.

This accusation was repeated on February 11, 2009, when the Sih-Sima channel broadcast a program under the title “Nufuz Namar’i” [Invisible influence], which is part of their mini-series, “Asrar Tariki” [Dark secrets]—with an emphasis on “darkness.” By showing a photograph of the victims in this horrific incident, the program sought to incite the sentiments of Iranian viewers against the Baha’is.

For this reason, the following essay will seek to clarify through exposition and analysis of this incident that, first, the Baha’is had no role in this murder, and, second, almost all of those involved from the judiciary, whether at a local or national level, through deception, falsification of documents, lies and misrepresentation of evident and undeniable facts, ruled against the Baha’is.

Based on Bigunahan, Behyar Nikravan wrote an article under the title “Barrasi Majira-yi Azar Baha’ian Bigunah Payru Yik Qatl Khunin dar Abarqu” [Analysis of the persecution of innocent Baha’is subsequent to a violent murder in Abarqu], which likewise explains the reason and occasion for writing this article in such words:

Following its widespread activities against the Baha’is during the past two years, in February 2006, Kayhan, Tehran’s morning newspaper, reopened the discussion of murders that took place 55 years ago in Iran, and ascribed them, by blatant lies, to Baha’is. In several issues, it has cited a manufactured case, which had the sole

purpose of concealing the identity of the true instigators of this crime, and persecuting and banishing the Baha'is.

At the time of this incident, they did not give any opportunity or permission to

the Baha'is to explain to the people and in newspapers the true nature of events,

since for some time it had been planned for the identity of the killers to remain

secret, and for the group of wronged Baha'is, once again, be subjected to harm.

Therefore, a thoroughly untrue and slanderous story was told to the people.

Now that Kayhan has renewed the same old tired lies from a half-century ago,

we take advantage of this opportunity to explain the true nature of the events to

fair-minded readers.

82 This book has not been published and is only available as a typed manuscript through private hands.

Since Kayhan, and indeed all the media organs associated with the Islamic Republic, have

repeatedly published blatant lies and continue to do so, then we are forced to rely even more

on the accuracy and originality of Bigunahan by Muhammad-Taqi Afnan. The above-cited

articles are readily available to everyone outside of Iran.

[The following additional articles should also be noted:

- Tooraj Amini, Baha'iyān, Rawznameh Kayhan va Majira-yi Qatl dar Abarqu [The Baha'is,

Kayhan newspaper and the case of murder in Abarqu], 8/11/1384 [January 28, 2006],

<http://www.rooznamehiran.blogfa.com/post-14.aspx>

- Dr. Rostam Nikandish, Mas'ulin Kayhan dar Fikr Faji'ihafarini Hastand [Kayhan

publishers are in the mentality of creating a calamity], 18/1/1385 [April 7, 2006],

<http://negah1.info/articles/332> and [http://www.ohamzodai.com/170606-](http://www.ohamzodai.com/170606-Korrektur/13-%20Fajeeafarini%20Keyhan%20-Abarghu-%20Rostam%20NikuAndish%200306.pdf)

[Korrektur/13-%20Fajeeafarini%20Keyhan%20-Abarghu-%20Rostam%20NikuAndish%200306.pdf](http://www.ohamzodai.com/170606-Korrektur/13-%20Fajeeafarini%20Keyhan%20-Abarghu-%20Rostam%20NikuAndish%200306.pdf)]

Appendix 3

British Support for Shi'i Clerics

The reader is invited to refer to the 1,362-page book Siyahat Sharq

[Exploration of the East],

which is the memoir of Ayatu'llah Aqa Najafi Quchani, published in Tehran by Amir-Kabir

Press, particularly pages 575 to 608; as well as the book Iran dar Jang Buzurg

[Iran in the World War] by Ahmad-‘Ali Sipahr. Ayatu’llah Aqa Najafi Quchani devoted many pages of his long memoir to the close connection between Akhund Mulla Kazim Khurasani and the British. He witnessed many long meetings between the British political envoys or high-ranking officers and Ayatu’llah Akhund Mulla Kazim Khurasani, and provided evidence of an exchange of information and consultation among them. Ayatu’llah Aqa Najafi Quchani also named other first-ranking clerics who had close ties with the Russians.

It appears that Ayatu’llah Burujirdi came to the marj’iyat [leadership] of the Shi‘i through the direct help of the British chargé d’affaires, and the person who paved the way was Muhammad-Reza Shah, who frequently met with him in Firuzabad Hospital. Many photographs of these show-meetings were published in newspapers throughout the nation, and are still available to all. At the time of these meetings, Ayatu’llah Burujirdi had not yet attained to the leadership of the Shi‘is, and many clerics living in Iraq and Iran were qualified from every perspective to assume the office of marja’iyat. However, the British had full confidence only in Burujirdi.

It is astonishing that each year the British and the Americans publish a number of documents related to the political history of Iran. However, they have never published even a single document about the relationship of the clerics in Iran to their intelligence services.

As an example, it might be beneficial to recall the Oudh Bequest.⁸³ There is no doubt that documents pertaining to this endowment, the list of names, and the amount paid to each cleric since 1850, when it was first established, is now available in the Archives of the British government. Although it was well known that this endowment belonged to a governor in India, in truth it was funded by the British government to reassure the clerics and created as a front for this purpose. In the name of this endowment, a sum was deposited in the Bank of England in London, and from the interest earned, each year a large portion

was paid to various clerics and seminarians in the 'Atabat and to other protégés.

To understand the crux of the matter, it is sufficient to cite the confession of a high-

ranking officer of the British Foreign Ministry: Sir Arthur H. Harding, the British

Ambassador in Iran from 1901 to 1906. In his well-known [1928] book, *A Diplomat in the*

East, he writes on page 324, "The right to dispense India's Oudh Endowment in my hand

was like a lever with which I could lift any problem in Iraq and Iran, and solve those

problems."⁸⁴

83 See Litvak, "Money, Religion and Politics: The Oudh Bequest in Najaf and Karbala, 1850–1903." Between

1850 and 1903, the Oudh Bequest channeled over six million rupees from India, through British mediation, to

the Shi'i 'ulama in the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq. The

British became directly involved in the

distribution of the bequest in 1903, on the eve of the Constitutional

Revolution. In view of the 'ulama's

growing involvement in Iranian politics and gross corruption among the distributors, the British saw the

bequest as a means to enhance their influence over the 'ulama in Iran.

84 Translated from Persian.

In his book *Dast Pinhan Siyasat Engilis dar Iran* [The hidden hand of British politics in

Iran], Khan Malik Sasani has recorded his observations of long lines of mullas behind the

doors of British consulate in Iraq and other places, describing how they would wait to be

paid in cash. This book is recommended to the reader.

For more details on this theme, one should refer to the following sources:

- Mahmud Mahmud, *Tarikh Ravabit Iran va Engilis* [History of the relationship between Iran and England], 8 volumes;
- Khan Malik Sasani, *Dast Pinhan Siyasat Engilis dar Iran* [The hidden hand of British politics in Iran];
- Isma'il Ra'in, *Huquq-Bigiran Engilis dar Iran* [Salaried British in Iran];
- Bahram Choubine, *Tut'igaran* [Conspirators];
- Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*, Metropolitan Books, 2005. This book has been translated into Persian by

Firiydun Gilani and discloses many interesting facets of the affiliation of the Americans and the British with the mullas and Islamic organizations in the Middle East. A close study of this controversial book can even more clearly explain how the Islamic Republic came to power.

The reason that the mullas accuse the Baha'is of being agents of Russia and Britain in the past, and more recently of America and Israel, is that they wish to deflect scrutiny from themselves because for many years they have been, and continue to be, in the pockets of foreigners themselves. There is no need to mention the relationship of Ayatu'llah Khomeini with foreigners while he was in exile at Neauphle-le-Château, France, since videos, pictures, documents, and details of these connections have already been published. In accusing others of espionage and being agents of foreigners, mullas reflect their own example of duplicity.

Appendix 4

The Killing of Dr. Berjis

On the edge of the Kavir Desert lies Kashan, an ancient city and one of the earliest sites of human civilization. Evidence has been discovered that people were living in hills around Kashan some 7,500 years ago. In antiquity, Iranian Jews lived in Kashan, Isfahan, and Hamadan, and in some regions they constituted the majority of the inhabitants. With the assault of the Arabs, newly converted to Islam, Kashan, like the rest of Iran, went to wrack and ruin. Kashan never was a suitable place for the Iranians because of its desolation, repeated earthquakes, and proximity to the Kavir [great desert]. However, as a refuge from the wrath of fanatical religious jurists, it was conducive to the spread of diverse tribes and coexistence of followers of different religions. Until the end of the sixteenth century, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Sunnis lived together in this city. According to the unknown author of the Hududu'l-'Alam [The limits of the world], "there are more scorpions" in Kashan than "literati and men of letters."⁸⁵ Soon, many religious fanatics, who had been driven out of other Islamic

regions, came to this far-away desolate town and added to the native scorpions.

Yaqut

Hamvi writes in Ma'jamu'l-Baldan, "A number of fanatics in Kashan were waiting for their

Qa'im to appear the next morning. Each dawn, they armed themselves and rode their horses

outside of town; disappointed [over the nonappearance of the Qa'im], they returned home."

According to the sayings and beliefs of the Babis and Baha'is, the Qa'im appeared in

1844 and was executed in Tabriz, in accordance with the fatwa of the mullas who had

seemingly been expecting him. A number of important and well-respected clerics of Kashan,

Qamsar, Maymeh, Natanz, and Naraq joined the ranks of believers in the Bab and Baha [i.e.,

Baha'u'llah]. From that time until the present, the central government has consistently

consented, through hints and allusions, to the suppression and brutal killing of the Babis and

in the last century, the Baha'is of Kashan, without any prosecution by the government or its

judicial agencies.

When Iran fell to the Allied Forces in 1941, Reza Shah was exiled and the reign of

Muhammad-Reza Shah began, and in the political and social chaos ensuing from the Cold

War in Iran, Kashan once again became the theater of operations for adventurists and

internal and external "scorpions." I have written earlier that after the forced exit of Reza

Shah, the critique of his policies became a cornerstone of the Cold War in Iran. We should

be mindful that during the time of Reza Shah—without losing sight of his dictatorial ways—

a new middle class was created that had very different tendencies, and many widespread

reforms took place. Despite all the debates about the manner in which these reforms were

instituted—debates that are necessary, critical, and

unavoidable—fundamental changes were

implemented in Iran that remain firmly in place. Even after a reactionary and brutal

revolution, thirty years of continuous bloodshed, and the feared apparatus of the vilayat faqih

[guardianship of jurists], these changes gain strength in Iranian thought. With these reforms

brought about by Reza Shah, Iran said farewell to the medieval era, and stepped into the modern world and the new age.

85 For more details on this book, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudud_ul-'alam.

The following are just a few of Reza Shah's many modernization initiatives: consolidation of government's power; peace with rebellious and defiant tribes; limiting the influence of the clergy; removal of women's veils; modernization of men's clothing; elimination of royal titles; mandatory military service; reduction of the feudalists' power; the establishment of public schools and compulsory education; founding of universities; formation of a judiciary with modern laws; creation of the Ministry of Education, Treasury, the Foreign Service and several other ministries; construction of a railroad across Iran funded by taxes collected on sugar, tea, and opium; development of small businesses and industries in Tehran and other cities. All of these will be indispensable supports for a future parliamentary democracy to be established in Iran.

Although Reza Shah can be blamed for disregarding the Constitution, banning the activities of political parties, carrying out certain actions that had grievous consequences in misguided attempts to bring about social and economic reform, the murders of several critics, and amassing vast personal wealth, one must nevertheless also confess that the present generation cannot easily understand the reign of Reza Shah and therefore cannot judge that era without bias. The chaotic and turbulent conditions that permitted Reza Shah to accede to power and which led to his dictatorship were the result of centuries of despotic rule by the monarchs and mullas in Iran. The Constitutional Period had just commenced, and hardly anyone knew its principles or thought about following its provisions. If someone else had come to the throne instead of Reza Shah, no doubt he too would have traversed the same path and would have had no other remedy than to use the power of his office.

At any rate, after Reza Shah's departure from Iran, the servants and hired hands of

imperialism, who for many years had enjoyed close relationships with the colonial powers, came to Iran on the instruction of their masters clothed in the garments of clergymen. The army of ignorance that had previously been arrayed in the cities of Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, and Baghdad, and had been tested, was once again given a new mission. Ayatu'llah Husayn Burujirdi took up residence in Qum and became the marja' of the Shi'is.

Concurrent with his arrival in Qum, various organizations and societies with "Islamic" in their name grew like mushrooms, first in Tehran and subsequently in other cities of Iran, and commenced operation. Using religious funds available to him in addition to the financial and moral aid of the government, Ayatu'llah Burujirdi provided support to all these Islamic entities, even though he cleverly presented himself to the public as being unhappy with some of them.

It is necessary to remember that combating and eliminating the Baha'i community was one of the goals of these organizations and societies. Therefore, it is not surprising that in Kashan, a town which from the early days of the Babi and Baha'i faiths has had followers of those religions, organizations such as the Anjuman Tablighat Islami and the frightful Fada'iyan Islam and Hay'at Du'at Islami were established with the support of Ayatu'llah Husayn Burujirdi and governmental agencies. Through the financial backing of Qum's seminary, Ayatu'llah Burujirdi would dispatch his seminarians throughout Iran in order to combat Baha'is, and he would ask them to preach from pulpits against the Baha'is and to provoke and incite the people in this regard.

Burujirdi sent an akhund to Kashan by the name of Turabi, who was probably born in Kashan. According to the testimony of residents of Kashan, he was "seditious and foul mouthed," and skilled in "causing the fire of agitation and rabble-rousing." In Kashan and its surrounding villages, many times he mounted pulpits and "fueled religious prejudice and provoked enmity" before fleeing the scene. Using powerful loudspeakers which covered

most of the city, he would openly and directly speak slanderously and maliciously of the

Baha'is. He would defame their character, declare their blood free to spill, and use all his

power and might to deceive ignorant and superstitious people.

Simultaneous with the activities of Akhund Turabi, Shaykh Muhammad

Khalisizadih, a

son of Ayatu'llah Muhammad-Mihdi Khalisi, came from Kazimayn and settled in Kashan.

From his youth, in addition to seeking religious education, he had also entertained political

ambitions. He came to Iran after Reza Shah's departure. To mislead the gullible populace,

the British pretended that they had banished him from Tusirkan and had sent him to

Kashan. While in the latter location, he undertook many religious activities and renewed the

seminary. He gathered a large number of youth who were enamored with religious studies

and enabled them to enter into religious-political activities. Some of them were young

seminarians who were already active in the Fada'iyan Islam organization and its opposition

to the Baha'is.

Khalisizadih was an itinerant traveler and journeyed throughout Iran. He had homes in

different towns and would stay in each for a while. It is likely that his real job was to gather

news and information for the British. Otherwise, he did not have a specific occupation, and

it is not clear how one could afford such extensive travel and maintenance of several homes

without a steady income. For this reason, other mullas who could not spend as freely as he,

labeled him "Makhlutizadih" [mix-birthed, a pun on his name]. In particular, he traveled to

towns where Baha'is had congregated and would provoke ignorant and superstitious people

against the Baha'is, and incite and encourage them to persecute and kill Baha'is. He traveled

extensively to Yazd. "Basically, Khalisizadih was most determined to provoke young

seminarians and make them active. He was very charismatic. According to some accounts, in

this city [Yazd], he exerted efforts to reactivate seminaries, expanded religious endowments

and fought against the Baha'is and the Shaykhis.”

According to eyewitness accounts, “Khalisizadih routinely traveled to Kashan, and from

the pulpits would explicitly urge the fanatical and gullible people to raid the homes and

shops of Baha'is, plunder and murder them and burn their residences. He claimed that these

acts by Muslims would reap a great spiritual reward.”

Once at the pulpit he stated, “Bring out Dr. Berjis, who is the leader of the Babis, from

his office and kill him. He is an infidel and atheist. He is an impure Babi.”

In this manner the

seeds of the brutal murder of Dr. Sulayman Berjis were sown.

Persecution of the Baha'is began in the villages and regions surrounding Kashan. At

night, they would cut the trees in orchards owned by Baha'is. They would steal their sheep,

burn their crops, confiscate their farms and homes, and force them to depart, dispossessed.

Every few days, people who had lost all their possessions would come to Kashan seeking recourse and refuge. The Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Kashan, which was

chaired by Dr. Berjis, wrote a letter to the chief of police, Major Fatimi, in which an account

of the wrongs perpetrated against Baha'is were recounted, warning of the dreadful

consequences for the Baha'i community that could stem from these activities and sermons.

In response to the letter, Major Fatimi said to the person bringing the letter,

“Be assured that nothing will happen.”

It is bewildering that hours after this meeting, ‘Ali Naraq, the chief intelligence officer

of the police department, dispatched his colleague to the Baha'is with the message, “Do not

come unwarranted to the police, since we cannot prevent people from giving vent to their

religious sentiments.” The exact same behavior is now taking place across all of Iran by

those enslaved to the Islamic Republic.

The Baha'is conveyed the collaboration of the chief of police and the chief of

intelligence in Kashan with Akhund Turabi and Khalisizadih in a letter to Major-General

Zahidi, the nation's chief of police. In this letter, they enumerated a number of instances in

which Major Fatimi and 'Ali Naraqī collaborated with the mullas, and stated that they had evidence suggesting the chiefs of police and intelligence of Kashan were promoting and inciting the mullas to anti-Baha'ism, and assuring them of their protection and alliance.

Major-General Fadlu'llah Zahidi not only disregarded these reports but also in effect left the police officers throughout the nation free to allow the mullas do as they wished. After the August 19th coup, General Zahidi sent Mujtab Navvab Safavi, the leader of the terrorist organization Fada'iyān Islam, to an Islamic conference with a diplomatic passport and at the government's expense. This was a partial payment from those behind the coup d'état to the Fada'iyān Islam for their support of the coup.

Day by day the activities of the mullas in Kashan expanded, and the air was filled with fear and fright. It was rumored in the city that the life of "Dr. Berjis, the leader of the Babis," was in danger. However, the hand of destiny wished to create a hero of this well-regarded and reputable physician. Patiently, he awaited the divine decree. His friends warned him that it might be best to quit the city, which, as Muhammad-Taqi Damghani has described, had become "a nest of ruffians and thugs." Dr. Berjis was happy and satisfied that fate did not intend the crown of "martyrdom" to adorn his head.

Whenever he went to visit his patients, he was seen in the streets riding his horse, and the enemies would throw rocks at him and curse and threaten him. He was severely castigated and scolded: "Why is a Babi riding a horse?" However, he did not allow himself to become the prisoner of the ignorant, and with patience and compassion born out of his untroubled conscience, would continue on his way. Eventually one night, like the boorish Mafia in *The Godfather*, they cut off the head of his horse in his stable. Nonetheless, he did not allow fear to enter his being; indifferent to the evil ways of his enemies, he would walk to visit his patients or see to the needs of the sick at his office.

Let us come to the end of the story. The fatwa for his assassination was issued. Those

selected to carry out this murder were notified and trained in what to say and what to do after the killing. One Thursday evening, they gathered in the home of Rasolzadhi, and in accordance with the practice of the Fada'iyan Islam, engaged in reciting the Qur'an. At the end, they consulted the Holy Book [for omens] about carrying out the murder the next day.

It appears that the decision to spill the blood of a virtuous and humanitarian physician was reached.

Next day, Friday, February 3, 1950, two of the would-be assassins went to the office of

Dr. Berjis and pleaded with him to accompany them on a visit to an elderly woman in grave

condition. On the way, most likely, Dr. Sulayman Berjis' chief concern was to reach the

woman in time to attend to her ills. The murderers conducted him to a home where a

customary rawdih [mourning] for Imam Husayn was under way. The news of their arrival

reached the ringleader, who came out from the rawdih session with several other offenders.

They all surrounded the town's sole physician and told him to go inside the rawdih gathering.

The intent was to force this lover of humanity to recant his belief in the Baha'i faith. Dr.

Berjis became aware of their deceit and plans. He turned to leave. We can just imagine the

visage of this benevolent man, who was the physician of the downtrodden and the poor at

that time.

It was too late; no other recourse remained but to welcome death as decreed by fate.

The attackers descended on him and assaulted him with fists, kicks, rocks, and knives. Their

struggle continued, and they reached a house with an open door. They shoved the bloodied

and injured Dr. Berjis inside the house. After tearing him to pieces with their knives, they

threw his lifeless remains into the courtyard. The murderers were not finished, but like

vicious and hungry wolves they continued their brutality. At last, Muhammad Rasolzadhi, the

chief of villains, sat on the body of Dr. Berjis, and with his knife cut his neck's artery. Then

he cut the veins in his arm.

They left the torn and blood-soaked body of Dr. Berjis in the courtyard and came

outside, raising the cry of “There is no god but God.” They washed their evil and wicked

hands with the snow on the street.

For many years, Rasulzadieh was proud that he had torn asunder the sole

physician in

their town. It was time for the hyenas to boast. Years later, Ahmad Imami was jealous of

Rasulzadieh’s fame and claimed, “There is no reason to credit the murder of Dr. Berjis to

Rasulzadieh, since he had only brought a small knife, which after a few stabs became bent and

ineffective. I was carrying a large dagger, and it was I who cut the main artery in Dr. Berjis’

neck.” It is a bewildering time in which devoted Muslims pride themselves on holding

cleavers!

Like a flock, the people followed the murderers to Kashan’s police station.

There, drunk

with their crime, they cried out, “We have killed a Baha’i!” They entered the building and

went directly to their accomplice, the chief of police, and confessed, “We have carried out

our religious duty and have sent the chief of the wayward sect of the Baha’is of Kashan to

the nether world. We are of Fada’iyan Islam.” Several months later, on September 17, 1950,

during the premiership of Razmara, the judiciary acquitted and freed the murderers who had

freely confessed to their crime.

I have always esteemed those who do not leave the evil site of battle. I have praised

them—those who outwardly appear very fragile, but when confronted with the challenges of

time, stand like brave heroes. I do not rejoice in the falling of a hero. Dr.

Sulayman Berjis did

not become just a hero for the Baha’is; indeed, he became a hero for all non-Baha’i Iranians

and heterodox thinkers who cherish the wish to see a modern nation one day.

Sulayman Berjis was born into a Baha’i family. His father stepped from one minority

group, namely, the Jewish community, into another minority group, which in the eye of the

public was more dangerous than the Jews. It appears that the phrases “minority” or

“majority” did not carry any substantive meaning for him. He was happy that he had not sacrificed his curiosity and enthusiasm for discovering the truth to the mundane matters of daily life. One must be enthralled to become a Baha’i and not give in to the fear of being in a minority, especially in a country that has never shown any mercy to its minorities.

In those days, after the conclusion of the trial and the release of the criminals, at a time when moral courage and ethics in politics were forgotten and few had the audacity to speak the truth, the freedom-loving Muslim editor of the newspaper Jahan-Ma wrote the following in relation to the murder of Dr. Sulayman Berjis:

[We are] committed to the principles of equity and justice, equality and oneness of all people before the law, and to the existence of an unprejudiced and consistent judiciary, which is able to win people’s confidence and esteem for its judgments while preserving its own independence in the face of inappropriate pressure, by rendering unbiased verdicts. These are attributes of a progressive and free society, which regrettably are utterly missing in our nation.... A judiciary that convicts the innocent, finds the guilty guiltless...[and] fails to carry out its duties...a judiciary that allows in its courtyard, and in bright daylight, one of the most distinguished of its judges and attorneys to be slashed to pieces, and in response frees the villains who committed this crime...no wonder that every day a new scandal takes place under such a corrupt and unjust system, and a new tale of shame is added to its previous chapters.

The tale of the trial of the killers of Dr. Berjis is the latest page written in this book of disgrace. Everyone remembers the tragic story of the slashing to death of one of the citizens of this country—someone who had every right to live in this nation—a story that has been covered in great detail in the newspapers of the governing body. Everyone also has seen or heard about the verdict and demonstrations over the past few days. Undoubtedly, on hearing what has transpired, every observer in possession of a

conscience can have no other feeling but disgust for this system of justice.

Every

man of conscience will discern that only two possibilities could have governed

these

events:

1. One possibility is that we assume the present accused men were innocent, and that therefore the court's verdict was just, in which case the question would be

raised: What sort of justice system is this that without cause throws innocent people into prison and subjects them to trial, causing them financial loss and destitution? Even more importantly, the question would be raised: Where are the true perpetrators of this crime?—because no one can deny that a physician was murdered by being slashed to death. Is it sufficient to just dismiss the accused, or is the justice system established so that it would bring to justice the real offenders?

2. The second possibility is that the justice system has once again, as in so many

previous instances, fallen prey to influence, and issued a verdict accordingly, finding innocent those who perpetrated this crime. Particularly when a person takes into account the demonstrations and animal sacrifices⁸⁶ of the first days,

and continual cow-sacrifices, parades and festivities after the verdict, this possibility gains further strength. This is because one cannot imagine that all these animal sacrifices and demonstrations were merely to celebrate the discovery that the accused were innocent. This is because this justice system has

witnessed many innocent defendants who have gone to the gallows; yet in no instance except the present trial and that of the killers of the late [Ahmad] Kasravi have we observed such demonstrations and festivities.

In addition to the criminal aspect of Dr. Berjis' murder, there are two important

social issues to be considered. First, this incident is related to the rights of minorities

in our nation....At a time when foremost in the charter of the United Nations is

ethnic and religious liberty, and equality and protection of the rights of minorities, it

is a source of much regret for every honorable Iranian who wishes to see his country exalted among the nations of the world, to instead witness that the lives and

rights of minorities are violated in our country in such ways.

When every humanitarian Iranian sees that the Culture Ministry has issued instructions for a list of minority employees to be prepared in order to impose more

limitations on them, when he sees that some newspapers have reported that schools have received instructions to shun the acceptance of minority students, when he sees encouragement and provocation for racial animosity among certain political factions, then he has every right to dread and feel his heart filled with revulsion over the recent reprehensible verdict of this court.

The other issue is related to the spread of superstitious practices. We are under the impression that no honorable Iranian would consent to the spilling and

86 As a form of exhibiting jubilation, Iranians sacrifice a lamb or other animals in honor of the victor.

spoliation of the blood of a citizen of this country—whenever he may be or whatever

he may believe—and barter this blood for the demonstrations of vulgar mobs, animal sacrifices and self-stabbings.⁸⁷

If it were the norm that a bunch of hoodlums, under some name or pretext, was allowed to attack and slash to death others, and judicial institutions, either out of

fear or because of threats, intervention or playing politics, accepted that that blood

had been lawfully spilled, then no one in this country would have any safety or protection! Of what possible use then would be this enormous and expensive police

and judiciary?

At any rate, this incident is most alarming for all progressive-minded countrymen, and no honorable Iranian should remain silent in the face of such injustice. In particular, the forward-looking publications of this nation should never

consent to silence over this fundamental issue.⁸⁸

The main problem confronting the mullas and fanatical Muslims is how to reconcile the

animalistic tendencies of the age of barbarism with the social morality of modern times.

For more details about the calamity of the murder of Dr. Sulayman Berjis and many

other murders during the 160 years of the Babi–Baha’i faiths, one should refer to the

enjoyable and well-documented: Fereydun Vahman, 160 Sal Mubarizih ba Diyanat Baha’i [160

Years of combat against the Baha’i faith]; and Muhammad-Taqi Damghani in his memoir,

Jamih-yi Aludih dar Aftab [Soiled garment under the sun], in addition to a description of the

brutal killing of Dr. Berjis, has left a moving account of his own life.⁸⁹

Regarding the life and activities of Shaykh Muhammad Khalisizadih, one should refer to

Khatirat Ayatu'llah Khatam Yazdi [Memoirs of Ayatu'llah Khatam Yazdi], pp. 51–52; and

Hujjatu'l-Islam Rasul Ja'farian, Jaryanha va Sazmanhayi Mazhabi-Siyasi Iran (1941–1979)

[Religious-political currents and organizations in Iran during 1941–1979],

6th ed., Tehran:

private printing, Spring 1385 [2006], pp. 116–18.

87 During certain anniversaries, such as the observance of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('Ashura),

uneducated Shi'ites resort to cutting themselves with daggers or beating themselves senseless. It creates a most disturbing and unpleasant scene.

88 Jahan-e Ma Journal, 26 Shahrivar 1329 [September 17, 1950].

89 For a detailed discussion of this incident, see Mohajer, "Kard-Ajin Kardan Doctor Berjis." A translation of this

important research article has been completed by the present translator and will be published soon.

Appendix 5

Defense of Dr. Musaddiq at the Tribunal

One of the best sources on the trial of Dr. Musaddiq is Jalil Buzurgmihr, Musaddiq dar

Mahkamih Nizami [Musaddiq in the military tribunal], vol. 2, London: Nashr Tarikh Iran

Press, 1363 [1984]. In this source, it is noted that the defense presented by Colonel 'Abbas-

Quli Shahquli began in the fifth session and concluded on the eighth session of the trial

when further discussions, questions, and answers about the same arguments took place.

According to the above-cited book by Jalil Buzurgmihr, we note that General Muqbili, the

presiding judge, and Azmudih, the prosecutor, greatly respected Colonel Shahquli and his

deep knowledge of the law.

Muhammad-'Ali Muvahhid, the author of Khab Ashufteh Naft [The nightmare of oil],

published in Tehran, 1384 [2005], pp. 173–74, testifies to the skilled and the learned defense

made by Colonel Shahquli. A few aspects of the arguments presented by Colonel Shahquli in

the military tribunal are taken from Musaddiq dar Mahkamih Nizami and cited below:

1. The [military] court does not have jurisdiction over the stated charges: During the past several days, sufficient discussion has taken place, and the text of the indictment is also available. The charges are all political in nature and have been addressed by the Constitution and its supplementary provisions, particularly Articles 72, 74, and 79. The exact text of the Constitution is as follows:

- Article 72: Disputes about political rights are resolved by judicial courts, unless stipulated differently by the law.
- Article 74: No court may be convened, unless directed to do so by the law.
- Article 79: A jury must be present in cases involving allegations of illegal activities of a political or journalistic nature.

...The charge against defendant number 1, Dr. Musaddiq, is that, being the Minister of Defense and the Prime Minister, he refused to follow the instructions given to him. That is, according to the esteemed prosecutor's indictment, the illegal actions commenced at a time when the accused was discharging the office of the premiership. Therefore, the supposition of this charge is that the royal decree was not adhered to by the person of the Prime Minister—and not some ordinary person. As such, this charge is against the Prime Minister; the competent body to investigate such charges is elsewhere and is limited to bodies able to determine such accusations against Ministers.... Now, based on what evidence is he accused of not having obeyed instructions from the Shah conveyed to him, as the Prime Minister? That is, it is supposed that disobedience of the Prime Minister is an offense, and such charges must be adjudicated by bodies competent to charge Prime Ministers. Consequently, the charge against the defendant, who was the Prime Minister, is outside the jurisdiction of this military tribunal.

At that point, Colonel Shahquli alluded to the sphere and limits of the Shah's purview, and stated, "Basically, the point that His Majesty the Shah is authorized to pronounce such a decree is not within the scope of this court, since none of the eminent prosecutors have the jurisdiction to explore the limit and the rights of His Royal Majesty. This is not our job. This is not our mission. This is a matter left for the Constitution and its supplementary laws." Colonel Shahquli also pointed out, "The royal decree dismissing [Dr. Musaddiq from the premiership] is dated August 13. However, on that date the Prime Minister had not seen the

decree.”

As mentioned earlier in this monograph, the order for dismissal was issued on August

13th, but it reached Dr. Musaddiq at midnight of August 16th. Just a few hours later, the

Shah, without the knowledge of the Prime Minister Dr. Musaddiq, flew from Ramsar to

Baghdad and then to Rome. In the morning, the people were informed that the Shah,

without the government’s knowledge, had left the country, and all the newspapers printed

the news of the Shah’s escape. For details, refer to Muhammad-‘Ali Muvahhid’s Khab

Ashuftih Naft: Az Kuditay 28 Murdad ta Suqut Zahidi [The nightmare of oil: From the coup

d’état of 28 Murdad [August 19] to the fall of Zahidi], chapter 6, “The Most Significant Trial

in Iran, the Defense Proceedings of Colonel Shahquli,” pp. 173–82; or refer to Colonel Jalil

Buzurgmihr’s Musaddiq dar Mahkamih Nizami, vol. 1, pp. 204–5.

Inasmuch as we are discussing Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq, it might be of interest some to

mention his interview with a foreign reporter as evidence of his awareness and foresight. The

following was recorded on July 15, 1951, by Andre Brissaud, a French reporter:90

Musaddiq said to me that he had been confronted by the British regarding the nationalization of oil, and mentioned his discussion with Harry Truman, the President of the United States, and the espionage efforts of various organizations against Iran.

After a moment, he added, “I have grown old and do not think I will reach the age 80. (He was 71 at the time, and died at age 87.) Perhaps I can never carry out

what I wish for my country, but I am confident that others will come after me who

will do these things. They will eliminate imperialism and the Russians. They will

destroy the Shah or expel him. Even though he has a soft nature, his great desire is

to take the place of Cyrus the Great and be the absolute autocrat of the country. I

do not think that the Tudeh Party is capable of seizing power and maintaining it.

Likewise, I do not think the military is capable of mounting and establishing a [military] dictatorship.

“I hope that the Shi‘i leadership is not harboring a serious desire to enter into the political arena. If this happens, Iran will be at the door of a calamity which will lead Iran’s neighbors (Iraq, Syria, and Jordan) to declare war on us. I truly fear this religious organization [i.e., the Shi‘i ecclesiastical order]. It is true that we are Muslims, but in truth we are not Arab, and we stand opposite to the Sunnis. As such, if the Shi‘i clerical establishment, with all their ranks and resources, came to power, we would be confronted within the country with a bloody revolution and on the outside would be forced to endure the effects of a jihad against Iraq, Jordan, and Syria. I do not think that Egypt, or even Israel, would interfere. At any rate, if this last prediction came to pass, an Ayatu’llah would enter the arena and would bring about a revolution filled with hatred towards the West, even anti-Semitic, and with

90 In fairness, it should be noted that the veracity of this report has been brought into question by at least one

scholar:

http://www.jebhemelli.net/htdocs/Views/2008/November/Bayatzadeh_Brissaud.htm.

enmity towards the Sunni Arabs. And very likely, our streets would be filled with the dead and with blood.”⁹¹

91 Sahand Journal (26, March 2008): 85–87. (BC)

Appendix 6

The Role of Ayatu’llah Burujirdi

Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi writes:

In one of the villages of Yazd, Baha’is had massacred several Muslims.

Ayatu’llah

Burujirdi took action in this regard also to ensure that the murderers would be prosecuted and punished. This incident caused the people to decide to slay the leaders of the Baha’is, which they carried out through the killing of Dr.

Berjis, a Jew

converted to Baha’i, in Kashan.

At any rate, the widespread activities of Baha’is throughout the nation and

the

inattentiveness of the government and the Shah to the problem of the Baha’is had

caused Ayatu'llah Burujirdi to become sad and despondent. Some time after May 1954, he wrote me a letter [in which he stated], "Meet the Shah and convey my complaint and protest over the situation [i.e., the supposed freedom of the Baha'is]."

The actual text of this letter from Ayatu'llah Burujirdi to the preacher Falsafi is as follows:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

It is submitted to that honored person that some time ago, a letter was received

from some of the congregation of this lowly one in Abadan, in which it was stated

that almost the entire oil industry in Abadan was taken over by the Baha'i sect.

Because of the occurrence of other events, which all were important and required

attention, this lowly one forgot to mention this matter to your presence.

However,

yesterday, another letter was received from some of the congregation that confirmed

the first letter.

I do not know where the future of Iran will lead! It seems that the authorities of

the nation are in such deep slumber that no alarm—no matter how loud—will awaken them. Nevertheless, it is necessary to inform that honored person so that

perchance you will find an opportunity to awaken and admonish some of the authorities to the fact that issues related to this sect [i.e., Baha'is] are

not

insignificant. This lowly one sees a very dark future for Iran because of this sect.

They have such influence in governmental agencies and have assumed such command of the affairs that the Justice Department does not dare to punish one of

them who has been established as the murderer of five innocent Muslims in Abarqu.

It is astonishing that Muhammad Shirvani wrote me a letter, and I enclose that and

kindly consider that as well. Behold for yourself the situation in Iran and with what

hands the Judiciary is administered in this country! I do not know with whom we must speak or with what bell¹⁹² we may awaken the slumbering.

At any rate, if you consider it prudent, ask for an appointment in the royal court

and inform His Majesty of these matters, although I do not imagine that it will have

the least benefit. This lowly one is completely discouraged about reforming

this
nation.

Peace, mercy, and the blessings of God be upon you.

June 10, 1954

Husayn Burujirdi

92 Ayatu'llah Burujirdi misspelled naqus [bell] in the original document.
(BC)

One wonders how an ecclesiastic who is the highest-ranking marja' of the Shi'is could be so hardhearted and disregard the plea of an imprisoned farmer [Shirvani], and instead send this letter to a court preacher. Ayatu'llah Burujirdi could instead have sent a fair-minded Muslim lawyer to Yazd to closely hear the complaints of this hapless old man, so that the death and hanging of a wretched Muslim could have been prevented. However, he did not do so and was content with telling lies and weaving schemes against a small religious minority group.⁹³ Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi in chapter 5 of his memoir, and also other high-ranking clerics who were contemporaries of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi, have recorded the activities and the hostility they exhibited at the encouragement and urging of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi against the Baha'is, which I will enumerate on another occasion. In short, Ayatu'llah Burujirdi and his marja'iyat establishment were the center of conspiracies, enmity, and difficulties for the Baha'is and all other non-orthodox thinkers in Iran.

93 For further details, see Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu'l-Islam Falsafi*, p. 199. (BC)

Appendix 7

Fada'iyān Islam

The Fada'iyān Islam (lit. Devotees of Islam) is an extremist group and perhaps the oldest active pressure faction in Iran. The group was formed in 1945 by Siyyid Mujtaba Mirlawhi, a young Shi'i seminarian, after he became deeply concerned with secularization programs undertaken by Reza Shah.

Mirlawhi (1924–1955, Tehran) was born into a fanatical Shi'i family. Like many others among the orthodox, he was distressed by the influence of Ahmad Kasravi, a

renowned
historian and linguist who was writing books and articles that criticized the
role of Shi'ism in
Iranian history. These concerns grew into a fatwa by senior Shi'i clerics,
who condemned
Kasravi to death—it is said that Ruhullah Khomeini approved this fatwa. In
May 1945,
Mirlawhi attempted to assassinate Kasravi, but only wounded him. Mirlawhi was
imprisoned
for a short time, and from prison he organized the Fada'iyān Islam to fight
Shi'i causes. A
year later, in May 1946, the Fada'iyān Islam succeeded in assassinating
Kasravi. Its agents
were acquitted shortly after their capture.
Over the next several years, Mirlawhi developed a close relationship with
Ayatullah
Abdu'l-Qasim Kashani. He also started the newspaper Parcham Islam [Flag of
Iran] and
adopted the nom de guerre of Navvab Safavi.
In early 1949, the Fada'iyān Islam commenced a large-scale assassination
campaign. The
first target was the young Shah of Iran, but an attempt on his life at the
University of Tehran
in February 1949 was unsuccessful. Shortly thereafter, Husayn Imani, a member
of the
Fada'iyān, was able to assassinate Abdu'l-Husayn Hazhir, a former prime
minister, in central
Tehran. On March 7, 1951, Prime Minister 'Ali Razmara was assassinated in
Tehran's Shah
Mosque by the same extremist group. The assassin, Khalil Tahmassbi, however,
won an
acquittal. After Musaddiq's regime, in 1952–53 the Fada'iyān renewed
their terrorist
activities. An unsuccessful attempt on the life of Prime Minister Husayn 'Ala
in November
1955, however, ended this phase. In retaliation, the government executed
Mirlawhi and four
of the Fada'iyān's leaders on January 18, 1956.
The loss of Mirlawhi was a serious blow to the organization, but the
Fada'iyān
continued to function underground. They reappeared in the early 1960s when
Khomeini
began his public opposition to the Shah. Operating under the name of Jami'ih
Motalifih
Islami [the Islamic Coalition Association], operatives assassinated Prime
Minister Hasan-'Ali

Mansur in January 1965. Even after Khomeini's exile, the Fada'iyān continued close contact with him. They distributed tape cassettes of Khomeini's sermons and writings, and thus endeared themselves to future revolutionary figures. In 1978, the Fada'iyān came out in the open as supporters of Khomeini. Ayatū'llāh Sadiq Khalkhali, a close associate of Khomeini and a member of the group since his seminary days, became head of the Fada'iyān in May 1979. Under his leadership, the Fada'iyān launched a terrorist campaign against Khomeini's enemies. As soon as Khomeini consolidated power in Iran, Khalkhali became chairman of the Revolutionary Courts. However, his brutality earned him such a reputation that he alienated even his supporters, and he was deposed in December 1980. By then, Khomeini had gained complete ascendancy in Iran, and in 1981 the Fada'iyān formally disbanded. The group reappeared during the Khatami regime in the late 1990s. President Muhammad Khatami came to power as a moderate with the idea of reform. His initiative to open dialogue with the West in 1998 caused the defunct Fada'iyān to revitalize. This time the driving force was anti-Americanism. Besides threatening and carrying out attacks on Americans, the leaders of the Fada'iyān turned their attention to moderates. Two victims, husband and wife Darius Furuhar and Parvanīh Iskandari, were murdered in Tehran in November 1998. Other murders followed that had the Fada'iyān trademark. Evidence exists that Iranian intelligence services had a hand in the resurrection of the Fada'iyān, but the suspected leader of the group, Sa'id Imami, allegedly committed suicide in prison on June 19, 1999. A subsequent investigation uncovered little information, but enough found its way to the media to discredit several of the top intelligence leaders, which led to several key resignations.

Sources: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navvab_Safavi; Shahroug Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period, Albany, NY: State

University of New York Press, 1980; Fereydoon Hoveyda, *The Broken Crescent: The "Threat" of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998; Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows: Radical Vigilantes in Khatami's Iran*, Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001.

Appendix 8

Appeals to the Shah and Clerics

The following are texts of two important documents by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada to the government and the clerical establishment in Iran, which documents are of significant importance in understanding the genesis of anti-Baha'ism in that country.

Deeply worried about the condition of the Baha'is in Iran, the American Assembly on July 16, 1926, addressed a detailed letter to Reza Shah Pahlavi appealing for government protection for this religious group. Though this text is available elsewhere,⁹⁴ it is reproduced here as Document 1 for ease of reference and for a fuller appreciation of the historical background of events described in this monograph. After this letter was sent, the situation of the Baha'is of Iran, however, continued to worsen; and when a prominent Baha'i was killed in Ardabil, another appeal was sent, this time to the Muslim ecclesiastics in Iran. The Persian text of this letter has kindly been provided by the National Archives of the United States Baha'i National Center and appears below in translation as document 2.

Document 1: An Appeal Addressed to Reza Shah Pahlavi
Reza Shah Pahlavi, His Imperial Majesty,
Imperial Palace, Tihran, Persia.

Your Majesty:

Moved by the cruel persecutions being inflicted upon the Baha'is of Persia, we address this petition to the supreme authority of that land, confident that when all the facts are assembled, the conditions realized and the consequences understood, your Majesty will straightaway initiate whatever measures are necessary to terminate this long

and frightful
chapter of unmerited woe.

Recent Cases of Murder and Pillage

The latest example of the extreme suffering endured by Persian Baha'is, brought to our attention through sources of unquestionable accuracy, was in the outbreak of public violence which took place in the town of Jahrum on April 7th last. On that day eight Baha'is were tortured and slain under circumstances of unbelievable brutality. The names of these innocent victims are: Siyyid Husayn Ruhani, Ostad 'Abbas, Muhammad Kazim, Muhammad Hassan, Muhammad Shafi, Mashhadi 'Abbas, Ostad Muhammad Hassan, and Muhammad Riza. In addition to those murdered outright, many others were severely wounded, and some twenty homes overrun and looted or burned to ground. Among the atrocious acts committed in the same town we must record also the slaughter of Baha'i women in the most shameful manner and the cutting into pieces of the body of a Baha'i child by the pitiless criminal's knife.

94 The Baha'i World, vol. 2, pp. 287-94. The text reproduced here has been slightly edited.

The survivors of such fanatical outbreaks are perhaps more deeply to be pitied even than those who suffered martyrdom by fire and sword. Against them are closed all doors of mercy, of justice, even of the most elemental human association in any form. The civil authorities deny them the rights and privileges of the law of the land and all protection of local and provincial courts; the chiefs of Islam pronounce association with them a violation of the principles of the religion of Muhammad; they are prevented from having access to shops which supply the daily necessities of existence; their homes, their property, and their persons are abandoned to the will of the insane mob or of the worst criminal element in the community. Such are the conditions existing today in the town of Maraghih, in the province of Adhirbayjan, of your realm. To recount the sufferings of the Persian Baha'is in detail, hundreds of pages would be

required. Sufficient for the moment, to state that twenty of these unfortunate people have been slain within the past few weeks, while three were murdered during the previous year, with fanatical outbreaks more particularly in the towns of Qamsar and Faran and the provinces of Fars, Yazd, and Khurasan. The anti-Baha'i incidents preceding the assassination of Vice-Consul Major Robert W. Imbrie in the streets of Tihran are becoming well known to the American people, through the extensive newspaper publicity following that unhappy but significant case.

If the slightest doubt should arise as to the number or grave character of these anti-Baha'i outrages in Persia, we are prepared to file the complete record with any suitable authority your Majesty may care to name. The essence of the matter is this: at this very hour, under your Majesty's rule, just as has been the case for more than eighty years under preceding sovereigns, the life of a Baha'i in Persia is bereft of all those sanctions and guarantees which are written into the law of every civilized nation, and adhered to as a moral code even by peoples who have not developed to the state of formal law. The Persian Baha'is at any moment are subject to such shameful violence as hunters would not inflict upon beasts of prey. The astonishing record of the martyrdoms undergone by the Bab and His followers, and by those who later acknowledged the spiritual leadership of Baha'u'llah, is extant in the libraries of America and Europe in the works of well-known scholars such as the late Professor Browne of Cambridge University, the late Baron Rosen of Petrograd, and Comte de Gobineau of France. The leading humanitarians and independent thinkers of the West are cognizant of the fact that in Persia during the past eighty years there has occurred the most heroic expression of the religious spirit which has glorified humanity for hundreds, perhaps for thousands of years. Animated by invincible faith, more than twenty thousand men, women and children have during that period of time voluntarily yielded up their

lives to
promote the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

Religious Freedom Guaranteed

If from local and provincial authorities, and from the religious leaders as well, the general justification has been attempted that the Baha'is individually and collectively are dangerous to the public welfare and their extermination a service to the people and state, we must be permitted to ask by what authority has their case been tried? Under what condition has it been established beyond the right of appeal, that a Baha'i as such is synonymous with a vital menace to Persia—nay, apparently, a menace to mankind? For every species of criminal, no matter how vile, the law assigns methods of trial and degrees of punishment. When did the supreme court of Persia, despite the fact that religious freedom is guaranteed by the Persian Constitution, make an exception in the case of the Baha'is?

We know full well that according to the universal standards of morality, the Persian Baha'is are not merely the peers, they are indisputably the superiors, of their fellow countrymen. The Persian Baha'is are truthful and industrious. They are progressive and public spirited. They value highly the benefits of scientific and industrial as well as cultural and religious education. They recognize the equality of men and women. They are bound by the explicit text of their religion to be loyal to the head of their national government and to take part in no movements of sedition. Since the individual Baha'i cannot be condemned according to the prevailing moral or civil standard, and the Baha'is collectively cannot be proven ever to have arisen against the government, it must be that those responsible for their persecution assert that the Baha'i Faith itself, independent of the lives and actions of its adherents, contains some dreadful taint, some mysterious evil, the stamping out of which is required by Divine law! Should this specious vindication be put forward—this condoning of theft, arson, pillage, torture and murder on the part of the officials and clergy as though sanctioned

by the Will of
God—then we assert that either no effort has been made by its enemies to
understand the
principles of the Faith, or those who occupy the seats of religious authority
in Persia can no
longer discriminate between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and
falsehood.

Baha'i Principles and Doctrines

The principles and doctrines of the Baha'i Cause are not subject to changing
interpretation

according to individual caprice or the self-interest of any special group.

These teachings are

to be found in the writings of Baha'u'llah, together with the
interpretations of 'Abdu'l-

Baha—and exist in no other source. For the sake of brevity, 'Abdu'l-Baha
summarized the

essential objects and teachings of the Faith as follows:

[See appendix A at the conclusion of this letter.]

Brief though it be, the foregoing statement of the principles and doctrines of
the Baha'i

Faith is quite sufficient to reveal its comprehensive character, its noble
purpose, and its pure

spirit. What conscientious minister or priest of any religion; what statesman
of any country;

what responsible man of affairs; what scientist or thinker, could assert that
loyalty to such

teachings threatens the true welfare of any person or group? By what logic can
these

principles be claimed a form of heresy to any Divine law or treason to any just
government?

Nevertheless, the Persians themselves, save only the Persian Baha'is, still
ignore the

greatness that came into their midst, repudiate the principles of true progress
and civilization

so lovingly offered them, and even decide that the followers of this Faith,
irrespective of

their personal morality and civic virtue, are deserving of the most implacable
hate, the most

relentless hostility, the most inhuman death!

Outline of Baha'i History

To consider now the circumstances under which Persia gave birth to a Cause
destined to

influence the entire world: On May 23, 1844, a youth of the pure lineage of
Muhammad

arose in Shiraz and proclaimed a new spiritual mission. This personage, known
as the Bab,

based His mission upon truth and fact in exact conformity with the Qur'an of the Prophet Muhammad. The essence of the Bab's teaching was that He proclaimed the coming of One who would be the World Educator foretold in all the Holy Books. He asserted that true loyalty to the Prophet must now consist in awaiting the coming of that One and in preparations for loyalty and obedience to Him. This proclamation produced an immediate far-reaching effect in Persia, attracting many thousands of faithful souls but also creating frantic opposition among the leaders of Islam. Their hatred, in alliance with the power of the government in Tihiran, brought about the martyrdom of this radiant Spirit at Tabriz, July 9, 1850.

Far from extinguishing the light of this new Faith, the cruel execution of the Bab resulted in a great increase in the number and loyalty of His adherents. As the ecclesiastics continued to inflame the civil authorities and the ignorant populace, scenes of indescribable barbarism took place in the public streets and squares of cities and towns throughout the land. Thousands of helpless, inoffensive men, women, and children perished under the sword of the executioner, or the knives, stones, and clubs of the maddened mob. Some of these Baha'is were blown from the mouth of cannon; others were scourged through crowded streets and, as in the case of the glorious martyr Sulayman Khan, lit candles placed in their bleeding wounds. Thus was paid the price of a new spirit of hope and love brought to earth in this age! No attention need any longer be paid to that apparent confusion in the internal affairs of the Cause of God following the Bab's martyrdom. His followers needed and sought a leader able to unite their moral forces, instruct their minds, and point out their spiritual duties under the difficult conditions obtaining throughout the country. Several claimants arose, but He who alone fulfilled the conditions and met the opportunities was Mirza Husayn 'Ali,

eldest son of a family of exalted rank in the realm, known to history as Baha'u'llah.

Baha'u'llah offered Himself as the target for all the blows aimed at the helpless Bab; assumed all responsibility as their leader in the eyes of the government; was imprisoned under heavy chains for their sake in Tihran; bastinadoed, stripped of property and rights, banished to Baghdad with His family; then successively exiled to Constantinople, to Adrianople, and finally condemned to life imprisonment in the barracks of pestilential 'Akka, the Turkish penal colony, situated at the foot of Mount Carmel in Palestine [now Israel].

The rulers of Persia and of Turkey were associated together in this sentence of exile and imprisonment, acting to put down a movement whose inner power they recognized but whose meaning they could not understand. But the spiritual mission of Baha'u'llah could not be eclipsed by any material opposition. Serenely, under the shadow of death, He completed the Book of His religion, and while suffering the treatment of slaves and criminals, predicted the overthrow of both those dynasties conspiring against His Cause. And, as your Majesty so well knows, that which He foretold has come to pass. Students of the Christian and Jewish Scriptures who have become cognizant of the facts concerning the exile and imprisonment of Baha'u'llah recognize that these events fulfill their most glorious prophecy, even as the martyrdom of the Bab fulfilled the prophecy of the Qur'an.

Who, even now, can read unmoved the noble words uttered by Baha'u'llah in the famous letters sent forth from His prison to Sultan and the Shah?

[See appendix B at the conclusion of this letter.]

As history has recorded, these letters were written more than fifty years ago. Today, the Epistles and Books of Baha'u'llah are held in grateful reverence by uncounted thousands of devoted followers throughout the world. In them they have found a source of unity and fellowship overcoming every difference of creed, language, custom, and tradition.

The Books of Baha'u'llah create in hearts the reality of human oneness and the spirit of peace, burning away the veils of indifference, misunderstanding, antagonism.

and fear. They uphold the doctrine of the oneness of God in its universality by revealing the identical mission and power in the origin of all the religions. They bring new assurance as to the mercy and love of God for man, and new confirmation of man's spiritual destiny. The essence of all the Holy Books of the past returns in this Word, stripped of those particular allusions and expressions inevitable under the restrictions of former times. Whoever truly

loves any Manifestation of God, whether Muhammad, Moses, Zoroaster or Christ, will surely turn to Baha'u'llah in joyous devotion, as to the only One capable of bringing his most cherished ideals to fruition in this unsettled, dangerous yet glorious age. Foremost among those who have served the Cause of Baha'u'llah and increased the proofs of its spiritual truth, is His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Baha.

It was as a child of eight years that 'Abdu'l-Baha began to walk in the path of that Light.

From city to city and from prison to prison He accompanied Baha'u'llah, taught only by

Him, inspired by Him to continue the mission when the physical body of Baha'u'llah must at

length be no more. Yet, though confinement and oppressive hardship had been His lot for

more than fifty years, when 'Abdu'l-Baha journeyed through Europe and America there was

not one to match the ardor of his humanitarian service, nor the penetration of His mind into

the essential problems of human life. His voice most clearly sounded the call of religious

unity and brotherhood—His warning most courageously foretold the coming World War

and pointed out what steps must be taken to avert a complete overthrow of civilization, East and West.

He came not as the representative of any institution, the exponent of any creed, the

ambassador of any nation, the defender of any race. Rather did this Personage come as one

sent from the very Kingdom of God, and His thoughts, manners, purpose and methods—

above all, His intense love for every fellow-man—reflected to humanity the conditions of a

higher realm. Though limited human beings cannot honor One from the world of Spirit, nevertheless even according to ordinary standards, such honor was bestowed upon 'Abdu'l-Baha as no Persian ever received in the Occident during the memory of man. By reason of the predominance of Greek thought upon modern education in the West, Persia for hundreds of years has been viewed through the eyes of Greek historians and writers, with the result that your Majesty's nation and people have been victims of instinctive prejudice. By many, Persia would be associated with the idea of complete decadence and corruption, while others would recall the menace of military invasion prevented by the famous victories of Salamis and Marathon. In addition to this burden of prejudice, Persia has also suffered grievously from the antagonism felt by many Christian leaders for every Muslim country. Before 'Abdu'l-Baha journeyed to the West, it would have been difficult even to imagine any influence powerful enough to lift this burden from Persia and replace long-established contempt with sympathy and respect.

Persia Honored in the West

But in 'Abdu'l-Baha, Europe and America learned to honor Persia as the source of true wisdom and love. Were the Persian people aware of what He accomplished on their behalf, they would hasten to raise monuments in His name and seek to acquaint themselves with His truth. Instead of that, the Persians, like wolves, are actually tearing to pieces those among them who testify that Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha lived only to serve mankind. One of the teachings of Baha'u'llah definitely attributes special glory to Persia as the center of devotion for Baha'is of all lands. Should not all patriotic Persians appreciate this as the greatest tribute ever paid to their land? The journey undertaken by 'Abdu'l-Baha throughout the United States in 1912 assumes year by year a larger meaning and a profounder importance. During this journey the great Exemplar of the Baha'i Faith turned the clear, radiant light of His spiritual wisdom upon the

complexity of Western civilization. He made contact with all our problems, conditions, and opportunities. Appreciating those memorable days, His American followers took steps to record permanently the addresses delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha in churches, synagogues,

universities, and other important institutions. The record of His journey survived in two volumes, published under the title suggested by Him: The Promulgation of Universal Peace. To

read these words is to find is to find the very essence of the solution of the sinister problems of war and peace, capital and labor, church and state, science and religion, so gravely menacing the world at this time.

Since 'Abdu'l-Baha is the only Persian whose addresses to the West have gained wide influence and fame; and since it would be impossible to appreciate the full influence and meaning of the Baha'i Faith apart from these two volumes, we take the liberty, your Majesty, of presenting copies of them to you in connection with this petition. Lack of space prevents us from informing you of another work of 'Abdu'l-Baha wherein He deals specifically with the condition of Persia and suggests suitable methods and measures by which the Persian people can regain their ancient, their rightful position of eminence among the peoples of the world. A translation of this work has been published both in England and America; doubtless we can furnish a copy in the original Persian tongue, should we receive a request for the same.

'Abdu'l-Baha passed from this world in 1921, a Light of international friendship and understanding that shall never die. Perhaps another decade must elapse before His wisdom becomes the source of inspiration of the majority of responsible statesmen and thinkers, but the outcome does not stand in doubt. Already a host of grateful people in the all countries acknowledge His spiritual guidance, unified in the one world-movement raised above the reach of economic, political, or religious factions. In Persia alone, the ranks of the Baha'is

today include a considerable section of the population—especially among the most progressive minds—therefore one can appreciate the spiritual power able to make these people prefer death to violent resistance and human revenge. Let none believe that it has been through fear or weakness that the Baha'is of your realm have submitted to the injustice we have mentioned. They have entrusted their lives to God, and who dare assert that they have trusted in vain?

The following words written by 'Abdu'l-Baha in a letter to American Baha'is nearly twenty years ago refer most significantly to Persia and its conditions: [See appendix C at the conclusion of this letter.]

Conditions Indicate Anarchy

We have referred to the long period of time over which these dire persecutions have been spread. We have indicated also that the original antagonism for the Babis and their successor, the Baha'is, emanated not from the mass of the people but from the chiefs of religion and state. Without their deliberate provocation and example, the people would never have become inflamed with the insane spirit of fanaticism and bloodshed. But once this dreadful example was set, the people throughout the land were quick to learn that one could rob, insult, strike, torture, and slay a Baha'i with impunity—nay, even with the approval of those in local positions of power. Therefore, by all too logical steps, conditions in Persia have come to the point where, if public agitation is wanted for purpose, or ambitious leaders desire to divert attention from an issue, all that is necessary is for them to raise a hue and cry against the Baha'is, and behind the smoke of violence the agitators can work unseen. The condition is one of moral and civic anarchy, and if prolonged must seep higher and higher into the structure of the central government until at last the supreme executive, to maintain himself, must become little better than a bandit chief. A patriot like your Majesty, who understands the basis of national order and stability, has surely viewed this problem of local

government as one of supreme concern for the progress, for the very existence of the Persian state.

Very humbly, and as true friends of Persia, we suggest that the question of the Baha'is of your realm has become a vital issue no longer to be postponed or entrusted to prejudiced or incompetent hands. For the cruel treatment being inflicted upon this innocent people is becoming the cause of absolute anarchy and disregard of law. Not until your loyal Baha'i subjects receive full justice and protection will these negative forces be successfully resisted, which will otherwise lead to the total disintegration of civilized customs, manners, and forms. When the supreme authority of Persia today reverses the example its predecessors set over seventy years ago, and protects the Baha'is resolutely instead of condoning their persecution, then at last can the process of anarchy and disintegration be checked, and the national government, the sole hope of any people, be placed on foundations able to endure.

It may well be that the case of the Persian Baha'is has become a vital issue in another direction as well.

Menace to Persia's Economic Development

Aware of the explicit statements made by 'Abdu'l-Baha concerning the future of the relations between East and West, the Baha'is of the United States and Canada have long watched with the greatest interest the signs of an increasing intimacy between North America and Persia. We have felt keenly the need for cordial association and mutual spirit of cooperation between these two lands and peoples, in order to offset by an example of international justice and true morality the grievous effects of that previous contact of East and West so frequently founded on national or sectional greed. Is it not evident that Persia would benefit by direct financial cooperation from this country—enterprises of a non-political character intended to develop the natural resources of that economically undeveloped land? But the consummation of any plan of financial cooperation

between our people and Persians is impossible until real stability has been effected in Persia itself, and those processes of justice and security have been realized which are absolutely necessary as guarantees that large economic developments can succeed. We have direct knowledge of one important enterprise recently abandoned by American interests for lack of these guarantees. But such considerations are entirely secondary to our essential purpose, of requesting protection and justice for the Persian Baha'is on purely spiritual grounds. No other purpose could have induced us to take this unusual step of addressing a petition directly to a head of state. It is because all the circumstances are extraordinary, and the issues supremely important, that we felt compelled to disregard ordinary custom and place this petition directly in your Majesty's hands. The news of your accession to the throne gave us great hope that Persia had now been blessed with a ruler not only firm but imbued with modern standards and ideals. We feel certain that your Majesty will appreciate the gravity of the case and determine to uphold the full responsibility of your exalted position as the founder of a new dynasty by hastening to suppress conditions of terror long crying to Divine Justice for amends.

Baha'i Literature Confiscated

We express the hope that your Majesty will also decide that no useful end can any longer be served by the confiscation of Baha'i magazines, literature, and correspondence sent to Persia from this country, or by the banning of photographs of 'Abdu'l-Baha. It is such imperial regulations which serve indirectly to justify the atrocities committed by your subjects upon the Baha'is.

We await your Majesty's assurance that our respectful appeal has achieved its aim. Our love for these oppressed Baha'i brothers and sisters makes it imperative that we continue our efforts to rescue them from their sea of calamity, until assured that henceforth they shall be

protected by the full power of the Imperial Government, and just restitution made them for losses already sustained.

We transmit this petition in behalf of the Baha'i Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada as follows: Berkeley, Geyserville, Glendale, Los Angeles, Oakland, Pasadena, San Francisco, and Visalia, California; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; Denver, Colorado; New Haven, Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; Miami, Florida; Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands; Chicago and Urbana, Illinois; Eliot, Maine; Baltimore, Maryland; Boston, Springfield, and Worcester, Massachusetts; Detroit, Fruitport, Lansing, and Muskegon, Michigan; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Montclair, Newark, and West Englewood, New Jersey; Buffalo, Geneva, New York City, and Yonkers, New York; Akron, Cincinnati, and Cleveland, Ohio; Portland, Oregon; Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Seattle, Washington; Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine, Wisconsin;—and on behalf of the Baha'i groups and meetings as follows: Clear Lake Highlands, Santa Barbara, and San Diego, California; Toronto, Ontario and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; St. Augustine, Florida; Atlanta and Augusta, Georgia; Spracklesville, Maui, Hawaiian Islands; Keokuk, Iowa; Peoria and Springfield, Illinois; Haverhill and Somerville, Massachusetts; Duluth and St. Paul, Minnesota; Omaha, Nebraska; Asbury Park and Jersey City, New Jersey; Johnstown, Ithaca, and Rochester, New York; Dayton and Sandusky, Ohio; and Spokane, Washington.

National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada

By Horace Holley, Secretary

Green Acre, Eliot, Maine

July 16, 1926

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Appendix A

Summary of Baha'i Teachings

The Oneness of the World of Humanity

“Baha'u'llah addresses Himself to the world of man saying: ‘Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the fruits of one orchard.’ That is, the world of existence is no other than one tree, and

the nations or peoples are like unto the different branches or limbs thereof,
and human
individuals are similar to the fruits and blossoms thereof...while in all past
religious books
and epistles, the world of humanity has been divided into two parts: one called
the 'people of
the Book' or the 'pure tree', and the other the 'evil tree.' One-half
of the people of the world
were looked upon as belonging to the irreligious and the infidel; one-half of
the people were
consigned to the mercy of the Creator, and the other half were considered as
objects of the
wrath of their Maker. But Baha'u'llah proclaimed the oneness of the world
of humanity—
He submerged all mankind in the sea of divine generosity.

Independent Investigation of Truth

"No man should follow blindly his ancestors and forefathers. Nay, each must
see with his
own eyes, hear with his own ears, and investigate truth in order that he may
find the truth;

whereas the religion of forefathers and ancestors is based upon blind
imitation—man should
investigate the truth.

The Foundation of All Religions Is One

"The foundation underlying all the divine precepts is one reality. It must
needs be reality, and
reality is one, not multiple. Therefore the foundation for the divine religions
is one. But we
can see that certain forms have come in, certain imitations of forms and
ceremonials have
crept in. They are heretical, they are accidental, because they differ; hence
they cause
differences amongst religions. But if we set aside these imitations and seek
the reality of the
foundation we shall all agree, because religion is one and not multiple.

Religion Must Be the Cause of Unity Among Mankind

"Every religion is the greatest divine effulgence, the cause of life amongst
men, the cause of
the honor of humanity, and is productive of life-everlasting amongst humankind.
Religion is
not for enmity or hatred. It is not for tyranny or injustice. If religion be
the cause of enmity
and rancor, if it should prove the cause of alienating men, assuredly
non-religion would be
better. For religion and the teachings which appertain to it are as a course of
treatment. What

is the object of any course of treatment? It is cure and healing. But if the outcome of a course of treatment should be productive of mere diagnosis and discussion of symptoms, the abolition of it is evidently preferable. In this sense, abandoning religions would be a step toward unity.

Religion Must Be in Accord with Science and Reason

“Religion must be reasonable; it must agree perfectly with science, so that science shall sanction religion and religion sanction science. The two must be brought together, indissolubly, in reality. Down to the present day it has been customary for man to accept a thing because it was called religion, even though it were not in accord with human reason.

Equality Between Men and Women

“This is peculiar to the teachings of Baha’u’llah, for all former religious systems placed men above women. Daughters and sons must follow the same form of study and the same education. Having one course of education promotes unity among mankind.

Abandonment of All Prejudices

“It is established that all the Prophets of God have come to unite the children of men and not to disperse them, and to put in action the law of love and not enmity. Consequently we must throw aside all these prejudices—the racial prejudice, the patriotic prejudice, the religious and political prejudices. We must become the cause of unity of the human race.

Universal Peace

“All men and nations shall make peace. There shall be universal peace amongst religions, universal peace amongst races, universal peace amongst the denizens of all regions. Today in the world of humanity the most important matter is the question of universal peace. The realization of this principle is the crying need of the time.

Universal Education

“All mankind should partake of both knowledge and education, and this partaking of knowledge and of education is one of the necessities of religion. The education of each child is obligatory. If there are no parents, the community must look after the child.

Solution of the Economic Problem

“No religious books of the past Prophets speak of the economic question, while this problem has been thoroughly solved in the teachings of Baha’u’llah....Certain regulations are revealed which insure the welfare and well-being of all humanity. Just as the rich man enjoys his rest and his pleasures surrounded by luxuries, the poor man must likewise have a home, be provided with sustenance, and not be in want....Until this is effected, happiness is impossible. All are equal in the estimation of God; their rights are one and there is no distinction for any soul; all are protected beneath the justice of God.

A Universal Language

“An international auxiliary language shall be adopted which shall be taught by all the schools and academies of the world. A committee appointed by national bodies shall select a suitable language to be used as a means of international communication, and that language shall be taught in all the schools of the world in order that everyone shall need but two languages, his national tongue and the international auxiliary language. All will acquire the international auxiliary language.

An International Tribunal

“A universal tribunal under the power of God, under the protection of all men, shall be established. Each one must obey the decisions of this tribunal, in order to arrange the difficulties of every nation.

“About sixty years ago Baha’u’llah commanded the people to establish universal peace and summoned all the nations to the ‘divine banquet of international arbitration’ so that the questions of boundaries, of national honor and property and of vital interests between nations might be decided by an arbitral court of justice.

“Remember, these precepts were given more than half a century ago. At that moment no one spoke of universal peace, nor of any of the principles; but Baha’u’llah proclaimed them to all the sovereigns of the world....They are the spirit of this age, the light of this age; they are the well-being of this age.”

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Appendix B

Excerpts from Letters of Baha'u'llah to the Sultan of Turkey and the Shah
of Persia
(Fifty Years Ago)

To the ruler of Persia, Baha'u'llah wrote, in part, as follows:⁹⁵

“O King! I adjure thee by thy Lord, the All-Merciful, to look upon thy
servants with the
glances of the eye of thy favour, and to treat them with justice, that God may
treat thee with
mercy. Potent is thy Lord to do as He pleaseth. The world, with all its
abasement and glory,
shall pass away, and the kingdom will remain unto God, the Most Exalted, the
All-Knowing.
“Say: He hath kindled the lamp of utterance, and feedeth it with the oil of
wisdom and
understanding. Too high is thy Lord, the All-Merciful, for aught in the
universe to resist His
Faith. He revealeth what He pleaseth through the power of His sovereign might,
and

⁹⁵ This section quotes passages from the writings of Baha'u'llah that are
now available in a better translations,

and these more accurate translations are instead cited in this segment.

protecteth it with a host of His well-favoured angels. He is supreme over His
servants and
exerciseth undisputed dominion over His creation. He, verily, is the
All-Knowing, the All-
Wise.

“O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the
breezes of
the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that
hath been.

This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He
bade

Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what
hath caused

the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst
men I studied

not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou
mayest be well

assured that I am not of them who speak falsely....

“The Pen of the Most High addresseth Me, saying: Fear not. Relate unto His
Majesty

the Shah that which befell thee. His heart, verily, is between the fingers of
thy Lord, the God

of Mercy, that haply the sun of justice and bounty may shine forth above the
horizon of his

heart. Thus hath the decree been irrevocably fixed by Him Who is the All-Wise.
“Look upon this Youth, O King, with the eyes of justice; judge thou, then,
with truth
concerning what hath befallen Him. Of a verity, God hath made thee His shadow
amongst
men, and the sign of His power unto all that dwell on earth. Judge thou between
Us and
them that have wronged Us without proof and without an enlightening Book. They
that
surround thee love thee for their own sakes, whereas this Youth loveth thee for
thine own
sake, and hath had no desire except to draw thee nigh unto the seat of grace,
and to turn
thee toward the right hand of justice. Thy Lord beareth witness unto that which
I declare....
“Amongst the people are those who allege that this Youth hath had no purpose
but to
perpetuate His name, whilst others claim that He hath sought for Himself the
vanities of the
world—this, notwithstanding that never, throughout all My days, have I found
a place of
safety, be it to the extent of a single foothold. At all times have I been
immersed in an ocean
of tribulations, whose full measure none can fathom but God. He, truly, is
aware of what I
say. How many the days in which My loved ones have been sorely shaken by reason
of My
afflictions, and how many the nights during which My kindred, fearing for My
life, have
bitterly wept and lamented! And this none can deny save them that are bereft of
truthfulness.
Is it conceivable that He Who expecteth to lose His life at any moment should
seek after
worldly vanities? How very strange the imaginings of those who speak as
prompted by their
own caprices, and who wander distractedly in the wilderness of self and
passion! Erelong
shall they be called upon to account for their words, and on that day they
shall find none to
befriend or help them.
“And amongst the people are those who claim that He hath disbelieved in
God—yet
every member of My body testifieth that there is none other God but Him; that
those
Whom He hath raised up in truth and sent forth with His guidance are the
Manifestations of
His most excellent names, the Revealers of His most exalted attributes, and the

Repositories

of His Revelation in the kingdom of creation; that through them the Proof of God hath been perfected unto all else but Him, the standard of Divine Unity hath been raised, and the sign of sanctity hath been made manifest; and that through them every soul hath found a path unto the Lord of the Throne on high. We testify that there is none other God but Him, that from everlasting He was alone with none else besides Him, and that He shall be unto everlasting what He hath ever been. Too high is the All-Merciful for the hearts of those who have recognized Him to apprehend His true nature, or for the minds of men to hope to fathom His essence. He verily is exalted above the understanding of anyone besides Himself, and sanctified beyond the comprehension of all else save Him. From all eternity He hath been independent of the entire creation....

“I swear by God, O King! Wert thou to incline thine ear to the melodies of that Nightingale which warbleth in manifold accents upon the mystic bough as bidden by thy Lord, the All-Merciful, thou wouldst cast away thy sovereignty and set thy face towards this Scene of transcendent glory, above whose horizon shineth the Book of the Dawntide, and wouldst expend all that thou possessest in thine eagerness to obtain the things of God....Of what avail are the things which are yours today and which tomorrow others shall possess? Choose for thyself that which God hath chosen for His elect, and God shall grant thee a mighty sovereignty in His Kingdom. We beseech God to aid thy Majesty to hearken unto that Word whose radiance hath enveloped the whole world, and to protect thee from such as have strayed far from the court of His presence....”⁹⁶

“We further beseech Him to make of this darksome tribulation a shield for the Temple of His Cause, and to protect it from the assault of sharpened swords and pointed daggers. Adversity hath ever given rise to the exaltation of His Cause and the glorification of His Name. Such hath been God’s method carried into effect in centuries and ages

past...Could
the people but taste that choice Wine of the mercy of their Lord, the Almighty,
the All-
Knowing, which lieth in store for them in the world beyond, they would
assuredly cease
their censure, and seek only to win the good pleasure of this Youth. For now,
however, they
have hidden Me behind a veil of darkness, whose fabric they have woven with the
hands of
idle fancy and vain imagination. Erelong shall the snow-white hand of God rend
an opening
through the darkness of this night and unlock a mighty portal unto His City. On
that Day
shall the people enter therein by troops....
“We beseech God to purge the hearts of certain divines from rancour and
enmity, that
they may look upon matters with an eye unclouded by contempt. May He raise
them up
unto so lofty a station that neither the attractions of the world, nor the
allurements of
authority, may deflect them from gazing upon the Supreme Horizon, and that
neither
worldly benefits nor carnal desires shall prevent them from attaining that Day
whereon the
mountains shall be reduced to dust. Though they now rejoice in the adversity
that hath
befallen Us, soon shall come a day whereon they shall lament and weep. By My
Lord! Were I
given the choice between, on the one hand, the wealth and opulence, the ease
and comfort,
the honour and glory which they enjoy, and, on the other, the adversities and
trials which are
Mine, I would unhesitatingly choose My present condition and would refuse to
barter a
single atom of these hardships for all that hath been created in the world of
being.
“But for the tribulations that have touched Me in the path of God, life would
have held
no sweetness for Me, and Mine existence would have profited Me nothing. For
them who
are endued with discernment, and whose eyes are fixed upon the Sublime Vision,
it is no
secret that I have been, most of the days of My life, even as a slave, sitting
under a sword
hanging on a thread, knowing not whether it would fall soon or late upon him.
And yet,
notwithstanding all this We render thanks unto God, the Lord of the worlds, and

yield Him

praise at all times and under all conditions. He, verily, standeth witness over all things.”⁹⁷

From the letter written by Baha’u’llah to the Sultan of Turkey we quote the following:

“O thou who hast imagined thyself to be the most exalted of men and who hast regarded as the lowliest of all creatures this divine Youth, through Whom the eyes of the

96 Baha’u’llah, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 97–103.

97 Baha’u’llah, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 133–36.

Concourse on high have been illumined and made radiant! This Youth hath sought nothing

from thee or from such as are like unto thee....

“Even if this Lifegiver and World Reformer be in thine estimation guilty of sedition and

strife, what crime could have been committed by a group of women, children, and suckling

mothers that they should be thus afflicted with the scourge of thine anger and wrath? No

faith or religion hath ever held children responsible. The Pen of divine Command hath

exempted them, yet the fire of thy tyranny and oppression encompasseth all. If thou bearest

allegiance to any faith or religion, then thou shouldst know that, according to all the heavenly

Books and all the divinely inspired and weighty Scriptures, children are not to be held

accountable. Aside from this, not even those who disbelieve in God have perpetrated such

unseemly acts....

“Ye have plundered and unjustly despoiled a group of people who have never rebelled in

your domains, nor disobeyed your government, but rather kept to themselves and engaged

day and night in the remembrance of God. Later, when the order was issued to banish this

Youth, all were filled with dismay....

“A handful of clay is greater in the sight of God than all your dominion and your

sovereignty, and all your might and your fortune. Should it be His wish, He would scatter

you in dust. Soon will He seize you in His wrathful anger, sedition will be stirred up in your

midst, and your dominions will be disrupted....

“Neither will your glory last, nor will Mine abasement endure. Such

abasement, in the estimation of a true man, is the pride of every glory.”⁹⁸

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Appendix C

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Baha Concerning Persia

“Regarding the subject of Persia. Praise be to God! She became the East of the Sun of Truth in this age. The Light of Eternity dawned, the everlasting Glory unveiled her countenance and the Realty of Mercifulness became manifest. This is the prosperity of Persia.

Undoubtedly, she will progress day by day under the shade of the Blessed Tree until her illumination shall penetrate throughout the wide expanse of the earth.

“Regarding the question of the establishment of then National Assembly ([i.e., the Parliament] of Persia, September 12, 1906). This National Assembly will not bring any rapid results. Now some of the agitators are harboring evil intentions and do not let agreement and union be realized between the government and (foreign) nations....

“However, we have nothing to do with these proceedings and counter-proceedings. We are commanded to quicken the souls, to train the characters, to illumine the realm of man, to guide all the inhabitants of the earth, to create concord and unity among all men and to lead the world of humanity to the Fountain of the everlasting Glory. The reformation of one empire is not our aim; nay, rather we invoke from God that all the regions of the world be reformed and cultivated; the republic of men become the manifestors of the bounty of the most glorious Lord; the East and the West be brought nearer together; and that Turk and Tajik, Iran and America, India and Arabia, Japan and Persia, China and Germany—in brief,

⁹⁸ Baha’u’llah, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 161–65.

all the nations and peoples of the world—become as one soul and one spirit, in order that strife and warfare be entirely removed and the rancor and hostility disappear so that all become as the waves of one ocean, the drops of one sea, the flowers of one rose-garden, the trees of one orchard, the grains of one harvest and the plants of one meadow.

“The Constitutional Government, according to the irrefutable text of the Religion of God, is the cause of the glory and prosperity of the nation and the civilization and freedom of the people. However, according to what is known, the hands of the selfish leaders from among the ‘ulama are in this affair. Outwardly they are desiring the establishment of the National Assembly and at every moment they are crying and clamoring (for its immediate realization), but inwardly they are sowing the seeds of corruption and agitation and try to put to naught the noble intention of the government. In the secret of their hearts and souls they do not favor the upbuilding of the National Assembly, the civilization of Persia, the awakening of the people, the advancement of the age, the spreading of knowledge and public instruction. Thieves like to lurk in darkness; fishers desire disturbed water; the bat shuns the rays of the sun; the black beetle dislikes the fragrance of the rose-garden; the ferocious wolf is in expectation of the sleet and snow; and the wine seller sees his advantage in the inebriate, irrational drinker. These leaders of religion also desire to behold the nation thrown into a weltering chaos of ignorance so that the reins of affairs remain in the hands of the arrogant ‘ulama. They know that if the nation began to adore wisdom, truthfulness, progress and fidelity, it would bring about their (the ‘ulama) degradation....

“Be ye engaged in prayer that with the utmost good pleasure the nation obey the government, comply with the wise counsels of the attendants of the central dominion, give no attention to the hearsay of the agitators and rise not to quarrel with and protest against the government like unto the Russian Duma, so as to throw the whole empire, the nation and the kingdom into a sea of anarchy and lawlessness. Much prayer is needed so that God may help and protect.”

And in another letter, also written at that same period, ‘Abdu’l-Baha declared:

“Unquestionably, through the manifestation of the Infinite Power in this

glorious age,
wonderful signs will appear in the world and great changes are seen in the present and promised in the future, for the Word of God is like unto the Spirit, and the contingent world like unto the embryo in the womb of the mother. Through the power of the Spirit such various changes and metamorphoses become apparent, transforming them from one form to another. Especially in Persia, through the power of the Word of God, wonderful signs will appear.”

Document 2: An Appeal to Muslim Leaders in Iran
New York,
The United States
March 1928

The Honored and Exalted Leaders of Islam in Tehran:

Esteemed Spiritual Brothers,

Even though human practice has not established goodly relations and mutual aid among different religious societies of the East and the West, nevertheless we address this communication to the honored leaders of Islam, confident that it will be received in the same spirit of respect and fraternity in which it has been written, and in the knowledge that the conditions and needs of the present age render religious disputes disagreeable, nay impossible.

We adhere to this truth: that the greatest gift of God in this bright age is the recognition of the oneness of humanity, and that all the exalted religious leaders should consider the promotion of this fact as their greatest bounty. It is this truth, which, despite successive centuries of misunderstandings that have prevented spiritual relationships and mutual aid among the followers of diverse religions, has prompted us to compose this communication.

No rational or fair-minded person can deny the reality that divine teachings are the source of all human aspirations and the foundation of all human undertakings. Therefore, as history has demonstrated, if at any time such teachings become the cause of division and difference,

then without a doubt division and difference appear in deeds as well; conversely, whenever religion promotes unity and friendliness, then conflict and disputation subside.

Understanding this universal divine reality in past ages—that is, at a time when the world of humanity was divided in every way due to differences in language, culture, traditions and geographical limits and boundaries—was not possible. However, today, when new means of travel, education and communication by telegraph and wireless are constantly bringing different nations closer, this truth shines brilliantly in the East and the West. Does this firm material connection not create new responsibility for religious leaders to emphasize such teachings as promote firm spiritual connections? Does the endless misery at the conclusion of the recent World War not compel those who wish to promote true religion to instead devote their efforts to the promotion of peace? Therefore, our principal purpose in writing this letter is an invitation to peace in the world of religion, so that serenity and tranquility can be established among the nations of the East and the West. This is because without the spirit of peace among religions, establishing peace among nations is impossible.

We feel a discussion of this vital point with those wielding authority in Islam is appropriate for us, since of all the societies in the West, it is only the Baha'is who recognize the Prophet Muhammad as an appointed Messenger and a Manifestation of God. With utmost gratitude, we testify to His absolute sovereignty in promoting the spiritual goal of brotherhood among millions of people in the East, and also accept that even the West has benefited from the luminous civilization that appeared as a result of the penetrating influence of Muhammad and the power of His Words. There is no room for doubt that the progressive age which our historians have named the Renaissance came into being because of the brilliance of the Islamic world. Nonetheless, even though these realities are completely established to the Baha'is, the Christians in Europe and America are far from accepting

them, and in many instances have insulted or even attacked the Baha'is of these regions for accepting the Messengerhood of Muhammad. However, such prejudiced attacks upon the Baha'is are a source of pride to us; we believe that as long as followers of every religion refuse to accept the principles of all religions, they cannot manifest their universal truth in eradicating the ills afflicting the body of humanity. One of our principal beliefs is that no Prophet is honored by the belittling or denying of another Prophet, and as such, we readily testify that the Prophet Muhammad has served in the Divine Vineyard; in this way we consider ourselves to be His humble followers. Our Faith's teachings give us the assurance that true following in every Dispensation is only possible through acceptance of the divine foundation of all Manifestations. The basis of our recognition of the grandeur and power of Prophet Muhammad is through the brilliant effulgence of Baha'u'llah's teachings, Who with mighty courage arose to enunciate the principles of faith, and Who demonstrated to all well-wishers and men of insight that all Messengers have been appointed by the same single God. Baha'u'llah tore apart bonds of prejudice and rent asunder veils of ignorance. Because of His contributions in this arena, now His followers throughout the world, despite the fact that they have been raised in religious environments where bigotry and discord govern, have complete unity in the principles of religion. Islamic leaders no doubt owe a debt of gratitude to Baha'u'llah, Who eliminated enmity towards Muhammad in the heart of His Christian followers, and in its place instilled the merits of understanding and respect. We well recall the unforgettable memory of the time that 'Abdu'l-Baha, the eldest son of Baha'u'llah, and His devoted and distinguished servant, proclaimed and established before large and eminent gatherings in this country the truth of the Prophethood of Muhammad. For instance, in a gathering at Temple Emmanuel,⁹⁹ which

is a Jewish synagogue in San Francisco, 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke the following words on October 12, 1912:

You should consider that Muhammad was born among the barbarous tribes of Arabia, and He lived among them. Outwardly He was illiterate and uninformed of the holy books of God. The Arabian nations were in ignorance and barbarism, to the extent that they buried their daughters alive. This act was considered to be the expression of valor and of sublimity of nature. They lived under the yoke of the Persian and Roman governments, were scattered throughout the Arabian desert and were subjected to continuous internecine strife and bloodshed. When the light of Muhammad dawned, the darkness of ignorance was dispelled from the Arabian Desert. In a short space of time those barbarous tribes reached a degree of civilization which extended to Spain and was established in Baghdad and influenced the people of Europe. What proof is there concerning His Prophethood greater than this? The evidence is clear, unless one ignores impartiality and adheres to unwarranted discrimination. Christians believe in Moses as a Prophet of God. Muslims are believers in Moses, and praise Him highly. Has any harm come to Christians and Muslims because they have admitted the validity of Moses? No, on the contrary, their acceptance of Moses and confirmation of the Torah prove that they have been fair-minded. Why should not the children of Israel now praise Christ and Muhammad? This would forever do away with enmity and hatred which have lasted for two thousand years, so that differences and animosities may pass away forever. Muslims admit that Moses was the Interlocutor of God. What harm would there be if the Jews said that Christ was the Spirit of God and Muhammad was the Messenger of God? Thus there will be no hatred, no disputation, no warfare and no bloodshed.100

In the same address, 'Abdu'l-Baha also spoke the following words:

...the foundation of the religions of God is one. Reality does not accept

multiplicity. Every religion is divided into two parts. One part is concerned with the world of morality, the upliftment and advancement of the world of humanity, the knowledge of God and the discovery of the realities of things. This part of religion is spiritual, and is its essential and fundamental part. It is the foundation of all the religions of God. Therefore, all religions are one and the same.

99 Located at 450 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California.

100 Translation from: Zarqani, Mahmud's Diary, pp. 322–23.

The second part has to do with social relationships. This part is not essential; it is subject to change according to the requirements of the time....The essentials are spiritual in character and have to do with morality. They are the one foundation of religions, and are subject to neither change or multiplicity.

The basis of the law was promulgated by Christ. That same foundation of religion was promulgated by Muhammad. Since all the Prophets called on the people to accept this reality, the purpose of all the Prophets has been the same. They upheld the honor and advancement of humanity, and instituted the divine civilization of man.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, at the same time that 'Abdu'l-Baha was teaching spiritual devotion and wisdom in the United States of America, the followers of Muhammad in Iran, who had misunderstood the purpose and teachings of Baha'u'llah, opposed the Baha'is by all possible means, and in the utmost severity subjected them to persecution, injury and death.

Our intent is not to judge the perpetrators of these heinous deeds, since judgment remains with God. Our purpose in mentioning these difficulties is to express reasons that have compelled us to submit, on behalf of our coreligionist brothers and sisters in Iran, a request to the leaders of Islam, since, alas, the cup of sacrifice in the path of Baha'u'llah has not yet been filled to the brim. This very year, in the town of Ardabil, in the province of Azerbaijan, an innocent and blameless Baha'i was slain solely because he

refused to recant
his sincere belief in the teachings of Baha'u'llah.¹⁰² This incident took
place at the instigation
of the local 'ulama, and consequently they had a direct hand in bringing
about this great
tragedy.
When we learned of this appalling incident, it occurred to us to ask ourselves:
Are the
things that we are told about the teachings of the Qur'an true? Was Muhammad
truly a
regenerator of the message of divine love? Or was He, as most believe, a
Prophet of the
sword?
Of course, either the above is true or His followers have diverted from the
path of His
true teachings, and even though they hold firmly to the influence of Muhammad,
they have
used that influence like a shroud to cover their human ignorance and enmity.
Such thoughts are, of course, natural, particularly when we consider that the
Baha'is of
Iran for over eighty years have been the target of endless persecution by the
followers of
Islam, to the point that thousands of them have been killed by the bullets from
guns and
rifles.
However, we set aside these thoughts and brought to mind this truth: that the
followers
of all Prophets, sooner or later, enter a phase of darkness, when the light of
divine love is
extinguished in their hearts and in the place of affection and self-restraint,
which are
attributes of that light, they cling to dark deeds. In truth, other than the
power of God, what
other power can raise the reality of man from its animal nature to the world of
humanity?
We embrace this power, and through this clinging we perceive our equality with
the entire
body of man.
At this time we should inform you that last year we were so saddened and
aggrieved over
the news of the brutal killing of eight Baha'is in Jahrum¹⁰³ that we
submitted a confidential

101 Translation from: Zarqani, Mahmud's Diary, pp. 319–20.

102 A reference to the killing of the Aminu'l-'Ulama; see Mazandarani, Tarikh Zuhuru'l-Haqq, vol. 9, pp. 79–81.

103 Shoghi Effendi records the following in Baha'i Administration, pp.

103–4, in a communication dated April 22,

1926: “Once again the woeful tale of unabated persecution, involving this time the martyrdom of twelve of our long-suffering brethren in Jahrum, southern Persia, has reached our ears, and filled us with a gloom which all the joys and ennobling memories of Ridvan have failed to dispel.”

missive to the presence of His Majesty the Pahlavi King, and we requested that justice be carried out in regard to the wronged Baha’is of Iran, who have never contravened their government, and who in accordance with their religious teachings consider obedience to a just government to be obedience to God. However, our request remained unanswered, and tyranny and persecution continued.

We now make the same request of the leaders of the Islamic religion—not as a criticism of the government, but as a means of drawing the attention of those spiritual guides whose influence and sway over people’s thoughts and actions are more than the influence of civil laws. Our appeal is that you consider the persecutions and wrongs perpetrated by the followers and promoters of Islam in the name of religion. Can anyone still imagine that religion can progress through the murder of innocent men and women? The wise of every nation understand that whenever human emotions are provoked against those with religious differences, eventually the divine decree directs that fire of enmity back onto its originator, and causes that religion to be wrecked. Therefore, it would be a true service to Islam and to humanity if Islamic leaders admonished the generality of people to compassion and kindness, and promoted peace and unity.

Do not imagine that our intent is only to prevent and stay the slaying of some devoted and sincere followers of Baha’u’llah—even though every human life is precious before God.

Our principal purpose is more fundamental, as we are trying to raise the call of affection, which gives the spirit of compassion and kindness to humankind without consideration of ethnicity, race and nationality. Our purpose is to establish fraternity among the nations of the

world, and our wish is to help create the path of oneness among diverse religions, so that the spirit of faith would permeate us, and the contrary and destructive customs and thoughts of the past would be transmuted into unity and peace. The esteemed leaders of Islam have religious sway and authority over millions of souls in the East. Alas, if only this influence could be used for the promotion of religious liberty and the increase of spirituality. Otherwise, there is no hope that the seeds of conflict can be eradicated from the earth. The foundation of the progress of the nations of the East and the West is harmony among religions, and we exert every effort so that soon the day will come for the representatives of the different religions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and others, to come together, so that we may develop complete unity of thought on the true principles of divine teachings. We are certain that you share the same wish and sentiment. However, until such a time as every religion prevents its followers from committing oppression and tyranny, this mighty purpose will remain unachievable.

On behalf of the Central Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada,
Horace Holley,
Secretary

Appendix 9 Five Historical Documents

The following reports by Baha'i institutions in Iran and the United States shed considerable light on the trial and on efforts to liberate the innocent Baha'is entangled in the events associated with the murders in Abarqu. The National Archives staff of the National Baha'i Center of the United States is thanked for providing these documents, which have been reproduced below in slightly edited form (for grammar).¹⁰⁴

Document 1

Letter dated July 16, 1952, from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran:¹⁰⁵

National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran (Persia)

Tehran, Iran (Persian)

July 16, 1952

No. 2457

To the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States
Mr. Horace Holley, Secretary
536 Sheridan Road, Wilmette, Illinois

Dear Baha'i Friends,

A report of the imprisonment of the members of the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd and

some other Baha'is, relating to the incident of Abarqu, namely, the murder of a woman and

her children has been sent and received by your Assembly from time to time.

Therefore, it is

not necessary to repeat it here again.

After the trial was held and sentence pronounced against those wronged ones, we sent a

report to the Beloved Guardian, which we herewith enclose, and his telegraphed reply was as

follows:

HAIFA, JUNE 26, 1952

GRIEVE DEVELOPMENTS CASE YAZD PRISONERS ADVISE AFTER CAREFUL
DELIBERATION EXAMINATION INTERNAL SITUATION CONSIDER
ADVISABILITY YOUR ACQUAINTING AMERICAN ASSEMBLY DETAILS CASE
EITHER ASK THEM APPEAL STATE DEPARTMENT OR AUTHORITIES PERSIA OR
UNITED NATIONS. PRAYING ADDED FERVOUR DIVINE GUIDANCE.
SHOGHI

After careful consultation by this Assembly, we have decided on these two proposals,

namely, "ask them appeal State Department or Authorities Persia" and pass it on for the

decision of your Assembly to decide which of the two in your opinion is more effective and

104 Private communication, March 15, 2010.

105 A translation of this letter in Persian appears in Afnan, Bigunahan, pp. 228-30.

best or whether to try both proposals. Due to the fact that our Baha'i brothers in Persia are

being severely persecuted by the fanatics, it is requested that their case be thoroughly

investigated and their dossiers be referred to by unbiased parties. For the present, we

consider referring to the UN be ignored.

The main point to be considered carefully by your Assembly is that the judges of the

Court of Yazd had fabricated false documents in advance against the Friends, as you have

been previously informed, and subsequently with all their might misrepresented the whole case so that it would appear lawful in order that these wronged ones be sentenced.

Although the Baha'is lawyers proved in detail that the Court's accusations were weak and false and their documents were irrelevant to the case, yet unfortunately, their arguments were unheeded just as in the case of the martyrdom of Dr. Berjis; although the murderers confessed that they had murdered him, the Court set them free on the strength that there was not sufficient proof.

This Assembly knows for certain and testifies that these Friends who have been persecuted and suffered all these trials are innocent and have been sacrificed for the fanaticism and animosity of these people. The Court and the judges of this country have always endeavored to oppress and encroach upon the rights of the Baha'is, and such matters have been brought many times previously to your Assembly's notice. We kindly ask you to acknowledge receipt of this letter by telegraph.

Sincerely yours in His Cause,
[Signed by] A[li-Akbar] Furutan

P.S. We have just learned today, that the dossier has been sent to the No. 2 Division of the High Court. The President is Justice Lutfi, who is very fanatic and does not look favorably upon the Baha'is. If it is possible to do anything for us, we request you to do so as soon as possible.

Document 2

The following report was attached to the above-cited letter of July 16, 1952, by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran:
The trial opened on 7th May, 1952 at No. 1 Division of the Tehran Criminal Court. The accused were as follows:

Nine members of the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd:

Badiullah Afnan	Mr. Rafati
Muhammad Ali Afnan	Mr. Salekian
Dr. Rasti	Mr. Majdhub
Dr. Manshadi	Mr. Mishki
Dr. Malakutian	
Mr. Hasan Shams, member of the Spiritual Assembly of Isfandabad	

Mr. Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi, Baha'i Pioneer in Abarqu
Mr. Husayn Karambakhsh, a believer from Isfandabad
Mr. Muhammad Rafahi, a believer from Isfandabad
Mr. Muhammad Shirvani, a Muslim
Mr. Ahmad Niku'i, now a Muslim who was formerly a Baha'i

Mr. Muhammad Husayn Niku'i, a Muslim (the last three are brothers)
Mr. Ali Muhammad Shirvani, 20-year-old son of Muhammad Shirvani

The tribunal was composed of:

Justice Ashraf Ahmadi, president (belonging to the Shaykhi sect)

Justice Amir Ibrahimi, member (of the Shaykhi sect)

Justice Vakili, member

Justice Fakhr Tabatabai, member

Justice Arshad Amiri, member

Deputy Prosecutor—Khili Sabri (of the Sunni sect)

The Counsel pleading on behalf of the relatives of the deceased was composed of some of

the bitterest enemies of the Cause who are well known for their religious fanaticism, such as:

Shaykh Riza Malik

Adib Razavi

Mehdi Razavi

Khudadad Sabir

Amidi Nuri—editor of the daily paper Dad who had lately shown marked opposition towards the Faith.

The Counsel for defense was composed of the following lawyers:

Mr. Navidi, a believer [Baha'i]

Mr. Nasiri, a believer [Baha'i]

Mr. Kazemzadeh, a believer [Baha'i]

Mr. Naraqi, a Muslim

Mr. Safavi, a Muslim

Mr. Abdullah Razi, a Muslim

When the procedure for the identification of the defendants had ended, the prosecutor's

indictment setting out the charges against the accused was read in full at the Court. It ran

briefly as follows:

In order to fulfill their pioneering plan for teaching work and [the] formation of [an]

Assembly in Abarqu, the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd appointed Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi for

this purpose, paid him some money and sent him to the above center. The

inhabitants are highly fanatic in their religious beliefs and resent Baha'i propaganda. This is evidenced by the fact that prior to the arrival of the above-named, a certain Baha'i teacher by the name of "Sabit" was carrying out the same mission in Abarqu. However, having met strong opposition and being threatened with death, he was forced to escape from the area with his wife at midnight.

One of the bitter enemies of the Baha'is in Abarqu, who often used to insult and denounce them in public, especially at Muslim lamentation gatherings was a woman by the name of Soghra. She lived in a caravanserai some two kilometers from Abarqu and earned her living by baking bread and doing laundry work. Her neighbor was a certain Muhammad Shirvani, a reserved Baha'i who was genuinely hurt by Soghra's biting insults.

Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi got in touch with Shirvani by means of some business dealings in chickens for which the former maintained relations with Hasan Shams [sic], a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Isfandabad. Of course all these connections were highly secret.

Finally, a plot was arranged to dispose of this poor woman so that the opposition towards the Baha'i Faith may be broken down through terror and the way be prepared for the formation of the Assembly in Abarqu. This plot was made with the full knowledge and approval of the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd and the active support of Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi and of Hasan Shams who instigated three native farmers from Isfandabad namely: Hasan

Himmati, Husayn Karambakhsh, and Muhammad Rafahi, to join as accomplices in the plot. On the night of 13th Day [3rd January], the above accomplices called at the house of Muhammad Shirvani and accompanied by the latter's 18-year-old son ([meaning,] at the time of the crime was 18 years old) and his two brothers Muhammad Husayn Niku'i and Ahmad Niku'i, they worked their way into the home of Soghra and murdered her and her three daughters and two sons with axes and spades, taking away some of her

provisions
and clothes as well.

The above was a summary of the indictment lodged against the defendants. It is indeed unique in irrelevancy and lack of sensible proofs. For instance, a reason given to prove that the murder was committed on religious grounds is that practically all the victims had sustained fatal blows in their face and jaws. And since the prosecutor could not find any tangible evidence to implicate the members of the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd and the other accused in this crime, he has satisfied himself by stating repeatedly that the whole affair was highly secret. For instance, it is stated that apart from the sum of 350 tumans paid to Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi according to the Assembly registers, further sums have been paid to him secretly. Another assertion is that those named above had established secret relations with Muhammad Shirvani or that Hasan Shams had given secret instructions to some natives of Isfandabad.

When the reading of the indictment was over, the Deputy Prosecutor proceeded by saying that at a time when our neighbors in the adjoining lands are striving towards progress and self-advancement and our own country is in a dire need of economic and educational reforms, it is regrettable to see a number of people—whom I feel ashamed to call “Persians”—engaged in fratricidal strife in our homeland. They have secret organizations and seek to advance their doctrines by committing acts of crime. The case under review, involving the murder of a woman and her five innocent children, is one of their sinister acts. It must have been carefully plotted in advance and was committed by the accused quite cleverly and cautiously. If these people in the dock, said the Deputy Prosecutor, had killed their opponents openly in the daylight I would have regarded their crime as an ordinary one, however these cruel people attacked their victims in the dark of the night when they were fast asleep in their beds and murdered them in a very atrocious manner. After dwelling on

such provocative and baseless allegations, the Deputy Prosecutor concluded by saying, “I demand from the Court that the severest sentences be passed on these criminals so that people will realize that in our country there is the rule of law, otherwise it would be likely that the public would intervene and take a harsh revenge.” This unusual and provocative statement by the Public Prosecutor led the counsel for defense, namely: Messrs. Navidi, Razi, Kazemzadeh, and Nasiri, to tender their resignations to the Tribunal on the grounds that these instigating remarks created such a strong excitement among the audience as to endanger the individual safety of the counsel, who still had to plead for the defense.

Later the President of the Court gave an assurance that no demonstrations would be allowed and re-appointed Messrs. Navidi and Kazemzadeh to resume the defense of the case. The other two members of the Counsel were also re-selected and introduced by the defendants.

Now it was the turn of the lawyers who were to plead the case on behalf of the only [surviving] daughter of the murdered woman. From the outset it was evident that each of the ten advocates was told in advance what line he should adopt in making allegations when it was his turn to address the Court. So apart from the two or three who explained certain points about Law or spoke about the legal aspects of the case, the rest contented themselves with uttering words of denunciation, by making false and irrelevant statements and by directing bitter and derisive attacks towards the defendant—as well as the Cause to which they adhered.

For instance, Mr. Khudada Sabir, one of the bitter enemies of the Faith, had brought with him copies of Bayan, Aqdas, and Some Answered Questions into the Court, and the gist of his talk was as follows:

According to the text of the book Some Answered Questions, Baha’is reject evidence based on rational, tangible, or traditional proofs. Then how can one attain to the

Truth? Baha'is regard everything unclean as clean. If a Baha'i fails to change his household effects once in 19 years, he will be dismissed from the community. Baha'is are ordered to place their dead in glass or marble caskets. When the Baha'i Faith becomes universal, one may wonder where one is going to get so much marble from for burial purposes. In the book of Aqdas there are laws for the punishment of men and women who commit sensual offences. Also there is a law as to how a robber is to be treated, but there is none relating to a woman robber. And so he went on for nearly an hour, dwelling on such absurd and inconsistent falsifications. However, the President did not stop him, not even a word of caution was said to indicate that his talk had no bearing upon the case, while on the other hand the spectators, numbering about 700–1,000, encouraged him with their tumultuous acclamations.

Another speaker was Amidi Nuri, editor of the paper Dad, who seemed to be altogether ignorant about the case but had joined the prosecution team to gain personal prestige and reputation. For nearly forty minutes he read from the political writings of Dolgorukii, the ex-Russian minister who had made false allegations about the Faith, then making a bitter attack against the prisoners, referred to them as outcasts, spies, murderers, etc. He then went on to say that at the instigation of Baha'is, and contrary to the interest of our nation, has announced that a group of innocent Baha'is are being tried in Iran, reminiscent of the Medieval Ages when people were dragged to courts for Inquisition. In his vehement attacks against the Faith, Mr. Amidi Nuri outmatched ignorant fanatics and priests. Thus the ten lawyers who acted as Counsel on behalf of the victims' relatives concluded their statements. Outwardly, they were supposed to support the prosecution in the case of the murder of a Muslim woman and her five children, but in fact they were appointed by a certain other source to defame the Cause. Now it was the turn of the Counsel for the defense to plead the case. They delivered

lengthy, tactful speeches whereby they proved the innocence of the prisoners by legal, rational, and logical arguments. However, when any of the defending Counsel began to refute the false allegations and misrepresentations advanced by the prosecuting Counsel, he would invariably meet with the immediate intervention of the President stating that the argument was inconsistent with the case. When it was pointed out to him that the prosecution had distorted the truth or made false statements and that evidence is furnished to remove misunderstanding, the President would retort that there is no need for further explanation since the matter has no bearing upon the case.

Of the defending Counsel, Messrs. Navidi, Nasiri, and Kazemzadeh manifested courage and tenacity in their work and conducted their defense in a masterly manner undeterred by

the threats and intimidations leveled against them. However, Mr. Safavi, the Muslim counsel, extremely alarmed at the sight of the be-turbaned mullas and the furious crowd of spectators, only took part in the first two sessions, and the other Muslim lawyer on the Counsel for defense, Mr. Naragi, was only present at the last session. He spoke very briefly about human rights and stated that the Court should approach inquiry only from the legal aspect and should not allow the proceedings to turn into a religious wrangle giving opportunity to people to appear before the Court and declare themselves as "Baha'is."

The number of the spectators in the Court was quite large and steadily increased each day. During the intervals in the hearing, anonymous printed notices were distributed in which Baha'is were vehemently attacked and the death sentence was demanded for all the accused. The defending advocates were also threatened with death unless they give up their appointment as counsel for the accused. However, order was maintained by an adequate number of policemen both inside and outside the Court. After the Counsel for defense had concluded their pleading, the Deputy Prosecutor once

again addressed the Court. He repeated his former statement and brushed aside the arguments advanced by the defending advocates as baseless and vague. The other prosecuting attorney followed suit by reiterating the former false allegations, which were finally refuted by the defending Counsel. On the 11th and 12th May, the defendants made their last pleas before the Court in a brief statement. Thereupon the inquiry was declared to have been concluded, and the Tribunal adjourned to consider the verdict. As it was not known when the judges would return, the spectators, including some fifty turbaned mullas in a special gallery, gradually left the courtroom after waiting for a couple of hours. However, they returned between 3 p.m. until about 7 p.m. The crowd numbered some 600–700. Another report indicates that the top galleries were locked, in the afternoon, and the lower hall's capacity does not exceed 400 seats. At this time security measures, which were not lacking throughout the trial, were redoubled, and a larger number of armed guards and policemen were posted around the courtroom and along the corridors in the building. Several police officers are reported to have said that the President of the Court looked rather terrified and was reluctant to enter the courtroom. The Tribunal passed verdict on the defendants between 7:30 and 8:00 p.m. in the presence of the five judges, the accused, and the spectators. The verdict was read by the Secretary of the Court as follows:

Muhammad Shirvani—Muslim
Hasan Himmati—Baha'i
Husayn Karambakhsh—Baha'i
Muhammad Rafahi—Baha'i

The above four were sentenced to death for committing the murder.

Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi—Baha'i Pioneer in Abarqu and
Hasan Shamsi—member of the Spiritual Assembly of Isfandabad were sentenced to ten years of hard labor for acting as accomplices in the case.

Nine members of the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd were sentenced to three years' hard labor each for having plotted the murder.

The two other accused, namely, Ahmad Niku'i (formerly a Baha'i) and Muhammad Husayn Niku'i were acquitted.

Usually when the verdict is passed at the Court, the convicted are required to sign the bill as evidence. Now, the sixteen accused prisoners who were convicted to execution or imprisonment had to affix a few words to the bill stating their intention to appeal to the High Court. This simple declaration will be legally binding and the dossiers will be submitted to the High Court of Appeal for their decision. There will be no need for a further petition to be filed with the Court seeking appeal in respect of its verdict. When an appeal is made in respect of a court verdict, the documents are forwarded to the High Court after one or two weeks, when the necessary office formalities are complied. However, when the verdict involves the death sentence, it is likely that the procedure will be expedited in all its stages. According to constitutional codes of law, when the Supreme Court of appeal renders judgment in a criminal case, the accused or the defending advocates are to be called in; however, if the parties concerned fail to attend with no good reason, judgment will be passed in their absence, and the case will not be postponed. Nevertheless, this principle is not recognized by the Persian High Court, and neither the party affected by the verdict nor its appointed Counsel is allowed to take part in the Court of Appeal proceedings. When the concerned dossier is forwarded by the Criminal Court to that for Appeal, it will be referred to one of the latter's three divisions for consideration. The time taken by the High Court to pass judgment in a case ranges from about two to six months, depending on the importance of the case under consideration as well as on recommendations from people of high standing and on the extent to which the parties concerned could bring their efforts and influence to bear on the case. However, there have been cases in the past in which reconsideration by the High Court only took about one month. Three courses of action lie open to the High Court in passing judgment in a case of appeal:

1. To issue a warrant upholding the verdict passed by the Criminal Court.

2. To quash the verdict already passed and to appoint another court of similar status to reopen inquiry into the Case. This would imply that the whole procedure should be repeated.

3. To repeal the verdict passed and to suspend further inquiry by another Court.

Should the High Court uphold the decision of the Criminal Court, one can request that the case be reopened for a second hearing. This has been allowed by law in such cases where the convicted person has been proved innocent, or when the sentence is found to be legally incompatible with the offense. If the petition for reopening of the case is approved, enquiry into the case will be committed to the charge of another court.

The dossier belonging to the case under reference is at present held by the Registrar of the Criminal Court. Normally, it will be forwarded to the High Court within a week or two.

However, if applications are submitted for copies of the verdicts or other documents on file, its dispatch may be postponed for a while. On its being received by the Court of Appeal it will be referred to one of the three Divisions for consideration and judgment.

But since the defending lawyers will not be present on that occasion, it cannot be ascertained when the case will come before the High Court for their judgment.

Document 3

Letter dated July 30, 1952, from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States:106
Iran, Tehran, Shirkat Sahami Nawnahalan
Mr. 'Ali-Akbar Furutan,
Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran

Dear Friends,

The following actions were immediately taken regarding the matter that you reported to us in your July 16 communication:

1. The following telegram was sent on July 28 to the Prime Minister of Iran:

WITH UTMOST RESPECT WE REQUEST YOUR EXCELLENCY TO INTERVENE IN THE CASE OF THE BAHA'IS OF YAZD WHO HAVE BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED OF MURDER, AND WHOSE CASE IS BEFORE NO. 2 DIVISION OF THE HIGH COURT, SINCE IT

APPEARS THAT THE APPEAL IS BEING GRAVELY INFLUENCED BY THE ENVIRONMENT AND RELIGIOUSLY-FANATICAL ELEMENTS, WHICH IS IN CONFLICT WITH THE PROGRESSIVE AIMS OF YOUR EXCELLENCY. THE AMERICAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY REQUESTS YOUR EXCELLENCY TO GRANT AN OPPORTUNITY TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BAHÁ'IS OF IRAN TO SUBMIT BEFORE YOU NECESSARY FACTS RELATED TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND SAVING THE LIVES OF INNOCENT AND LAW-ABIDING INDIVIDUALS.

SIGNED, SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'IS OF THE UNITED STATES

2. A letter has been prepared reflecting what you have reported and representations you have made to the appropriate authorities: this letter will be sent to the Iranian ambassador in Washington.

3. A copy of these documents will be sent to the United States State Department.

4. We will inform the Guardian [Shoghi Effendi] of these undertakings.

We sincerely pray that these innocent persons will be completely exonerated and acquitted.

With loving greetings,
Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly,
Horace Holley

Document 4

Letter dated September 4, 1952, from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States:107

106 The National Archives staff at the National Baha'i Center of the United States informed the present translator (private communication, March 15, 2010) that the original of this letter in English was not available in their files. Therefore, a rendering from Persian is offered by the present translator based on the Persian text in Afnan, Bigunahan, pp. 230–31.

107 Persian translation appears in Afnan, Bigunahan, pp. 231–34.

Dr. Hassan Pernahad
Chargé d' Affaires of Iran
Iranian Embassy
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Chargé d' Affaires:

The National Spiritual Assembly, as representative of the Baha'is of the United States,

appeals to the Iranian Government through Your Excellency on behalf of members of the

Baha'i Faith in Iran who have been unjustly arrested, brought to trial and condemned, for a crime they did not commit and for which there is evidence establishing the identity of the real criminal.

The appeal made by the Baha'is of the United States, Your Excellency is assured, rests upon facts and documentary evidence.

During the year 1950, a woman and five children living in Abarqu, near Yazd, were murdered. Residents of the village knew who the murderer was and pointed him out to the authorities. Affidavits and other evidence establishing this were and are available, but have been ignored by the authorities.

Despite the actual facts, upon the basis of false documents the members of the Baha'i Assembly of Yazd, and other Baha'is, were imprisoned and charged with responsibility for the crime by the Judges of the Court of Yazd.

The case was transferred to No. 1 Division of the Criminal Court in Tihiran and the trial opened on May 7, 1952.

The names of the accused are:

Badiullah Afnan Muhammad Ali Afnan

Dr. Rasti Dr. Manshadi

Dr. Malakutian Mr. Rafati

Mr. Salekian Mr. Majdhub

Mr. Mishki

being the nine members of the Baha'i Assembly of Yazd; [plus] the following Baha'is:

Hasan Shams of Isfandabad

Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi of Abarqu

Hasan Himmati of Isfandabad

Husayn Karambakhsh of Isfandabad

Muhammad Rafahi of Isfandabad

and the following Muslims:

Muhammad Shirvani Ahmad Niku'i

Muhammad Husayn Niku'i Ali Muhammad Shirvani

The report of the trial clearly indicates that the facts pertaining to the crime were disregarded and the case made an occasion for publicly vilifying the Baha'i religion and persecuting innocent members of the Faith. The conduct of this trial proceeded in an atmosphere of religious prejudice and unrelenting hatred of the Baha'i

religion and its adherents. Anti-Baha'i statements were printed and distributed. The prosecution dramatized the case as an indictment of the Baha'i religion and made no effort to submit proof and evidence carrying legal weight.

On May 12, a verdict was passed by the Court, sentencing four defendants to death for committing the crime. Those sentenced were Muhammad Shirvani, Hasan Himmati, Husayn Karambakhsh, Muhammad Rafahi. Of these, the first named is a Muslim, the other three are Baha'is.

The verdict also passed sentence upon other defendants. Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi and Hasan Shamsi were sentenced to ten years' imprisonment with hard labor for being accomplices to the crime. Nine of the defendants, members of the Baha'i Assembly of Yazd, were sentenced to three years at hard labor for plotting the murder. Two Muslim defendants, Ahmad Niku'i and Muhammad Husayn Niku'i, were acquitted.

Appeal was made in due course to the High Court by the fifteen condemned prisoners for review of the verdict.

The National Spiritual Assembly is informed that the High Court under its procedure has three courses of action in such appeals: to sustain the verdict pronounced by the Criminal Court; to quash the verdict and appoint another Court to conduct a new trial; to repeal the verdict and suspend further inquiry by another Court.

On or shortly before July 16 the appeal was sent to No. 2 Division of the High Court, whose President is Justice Lutfi.

Your Excellency, there is still an interval of time during which the condemned prisoners can be vindicated by examination of the true facts of the case as assembled and recorded by the members of the Iranian National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is.

The appeal presented by the Baha'is of the United States is directed to this end: a new and impartial trial of the case by an unprejudiced tribunal competent to separate fact from mere denunciation, and logical evidence from false documentation. The American Baha'is feel it necessary in order to save these innocent, law-abiding Iranian

Baha'is from pressure of
prejudice and persecution, to appeal for the exercise of the high civil
authority by
appointment of an observer to attend the sessions of the Court.
Our appeal, Your Excellency, is that this safeguard be granted the unjustly
condemned.
Not for one moment do the American Baha'is press for suppression of fact nor
the exercise
of mercy at the expense of justice. Our claim is that these unjustly condemned
Baha'is are
innocent, deserving a hearing before an impartial tribunal and responsible
authority.
May we request Your Excellency to transmit our appeal to the Iranian Government
for
consideration at the earliest possible moment. The Baha'is of the United
States, and the
Baha'is of all lands, honor the ancient land of Iran and desire to exalt its
reputation for
spiritual wisdom and justice throughout the world.
We are,
Sincerely yours,
National Spiritual Assembly
[Horace Holley] Secretary

Document 5

Letter dated September 5, 1952, from the National Spiritual Assembly of the
Baha'is of the
United States:108
His Excellency Muhammad Mossadegh,
Prime Minister of Iran

108 Persian translation appears in Afnan, Bigunahan, pp. 234–36.

Tehran, Iran.

Your Excellency:

The Baha'is of the United States are deeply concerned about the fate of a
number of
Iranian Baha'is recently arrested, tried and condemned by the Court for a
crime they did not
commit.

This case, your Excellency, is an instance of religious persecution we consider
to be of
extreme importance in that the Baha'i victims have not suffered at the hands
of lawless
fanatics but have been unjustly condemned by a civil tribunal.

The facts of the matter are summarized as follows:

During the year 1950, a woman and five children living in Abarqu, near Yazd,

were

murdered. Residents of the village knew who the murderer was and pointed him out to the

authorities. Affidavits and other evidence establishing this were and are available, but have

been ignored by the authorities.

Despite the actual facts, upon the basis of false documents the members of the Baha'i

Assembly of Yazd, and other Baha'is were imprisoned and charged with responsibility for

the crime by the Judges of the Court of Yazd.

The case was transferred to No. 1 Division of the Criminal Court in Tihran and the trial

opened on May 7, 1952.

The names of the accused are:

Badiullah Afnan Muhammad Ali Afnan

Dr. Rasti Dr. Manshadi

Dr. Malakutian Mr. Rafati

Mr. Salekian Mr. Majdhub

Mr. Mishki

being the nine members of the Baha'i Assembly of Yazd; the following Baha'is:

Hasan Shams of Isfandabad

Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi of Abarqu

Hasan Himmati of Isfandabad

Husayn Karambakhsh of Isfandabad

Muhammad Rafahi of Isfandabad

and the following Muslims:

Muhammad Shirvani Ahmad Niku'i

Muhammad Husayn Niku'i Ali Muhammad Shirvani

The report of the trial clearly indicates that the facts pertaining to the crime were

disregarded and the case made an occasion for publicly vilifying the Baha'i religion and

persecuting innocent members of the Faith.

The conduct of this trial proceeded in an atmosphere of religious prejudice and unrelenting hatred of the Baha'i religion and its adherents. Anti-Baha'i statements were

printed and distributed. The prosecution dramatized the case as an indictment of the Baha'i

religion and made no effort to submit proof and evidence carrying legal weight.

On May 12, a verdict was passed by the Court, sentencing four defendants to death for

committing the crime. Those sentenced were Muhammad Shirvani, Hasan Himmati, Husayn

Karambakhsh, and Muhammad Rafahi. Of these, the first named is a Muslim, the

other

three are Baha'is.

The verdict also passed sentence upon other defendants. Abbas-Ali Pur-Mehdi and Hasan Shamsi were sentenced to ten years' imprisonment with hard labor for being

accomplices to the crime. Nine of the defendants, members of the Baha'i Assembly of Yazd,

were sentenced to three years at hard labor for plotting the murder. Two Muslim defendants,

Ahmad Niku'i and Muhammad Husayn Niku'i, were acquitted.

Appeal was made in due course to the High Court by the fifteen condemned prisoners

for review of the verdict.

The National Spiritual Assembly is informed that the High Court under its procedure has

three courses of action in such appeals: to sustain the verdict pronounced by the Criminal

Court; to quash the verdict and appoint another Court to conduct a new trial; or to repeal

the verdict and suspend further inquiry by another Court.

On or shortly before July 16 the appeal was sent to No. 2 Division of the High Court,

whose President is Justice Lutfi.

The American Baha'is, Your Excellency, appeal to the highest civil authority of Iran to

assure a new and impartial trial of the case by an unprejudiced tribunal by appointment of a

competent observer to attend the sessions of the Court.

Your Excellency's favorable consideration of this appeal will inspire gratitude in the

hearts of Baha'is not only in America but throughout the world. The National Spiritual

Assembly respectfully refers to the constitutional laws of Iran, which have been contravened

by the treatment accorded to the unjustly condemned Baha'is.

Respectfully,

National Spiritual Assembly

[Horace Holley] Secretary

Appendix 10

Eyewitness Accounts

The following accounts printed in World Order¹⁰⁹ journal provide important insights in the

courtroom drama in 1952 and 1954, as the Baha'is were unjustly tried for the Abarqu

murders. In introducing the first two accounts, Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh states:

Ever since its inception in nineteenth-century Iran, the Baha'i Faith has been subject to persecution by an unholy alliance of Shiite clergy and despotic state. Vilification, slander, economic pressure, withdrawal of fundamental human rights, denial of justice, and even massacre have been instruments used by the extremist elements among the mullahs, often supported by government authorities, in their attempts to exterminate the Baha'i community in the country of its birth. Even the partial modernization that followed the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and the downfall of the Qajar dynasty that greatly decreased the power of the Shiite clergy failed to bring relief to Iran's Baha'is. Through the entire Pahlavi (1925–79) period, discrimination and pressure, punctuated by outbreaks of physical violence, continued unabated. In the wake of World War II Iran underwent a period of confusion and turmoil. The reemergence of political parties and the resurgent power of the Shiite clergy produced instability that endangered the Baha'is, who could be attacked with impunity since the authorities were largely unwilling, and at times even unable, to protect them. The influence of the clergy further increased in 1953 when its leaders, the Ayatollahs Borujerdi and Kashani, sided with the Shah in his conflict with Prime Minister Mosaddegh. The Shah was now beholden to the mullahs who demanded, as payment for their services, freedom to suppress the Baha'is. The supposedly independent judiciary was tightly controlled by the government and decided cases at the direction of either the Cabinet or the Court. The majority of the legal profession were either intimidated or, with some outstanding exceptions, shared the prevailing prejudices of Iranian society. Persecution intensified with the establishment of the Islamic regime and continues to this day. The following two documents deal with two trials of Baha'is falsely accused of inciting and committing murder. I have translated them from the Russian and have added footnotes to clarify a number of points. The background to the trials involved a widow and her five young children all of whom were murdered in 1951 in Abarqu, a small town or village near Yazd in

south-central Iran. Local police suspected a relative; but, since he was a person of standing in the community, they referred the case to Yazd, the provincial center.

Suddenly original suspicions of the local police were discarded. Instead, the authorities arrested the entire membership of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Yazd and several other Baha'is, among them three simple farmers in Abarqu. The farmers were accused of the murders and the members of the Spiritual Assembly of incitement to murder. The case was widely advertised in the press. The trial was held in Tehran, giving it maximum publicity. The original verdict was appealed, and a

Firuz Kazemzadeh, "The 1952 and 1954 Trials of Baha'is from Yazd, Iran," *World Order* 38 (2008) 3: 7–15.

Steve Cooney is thanked for drawing materials cited in this appendix to the attention of the present translator.

second trial was held. At the conclusion of each trial, my father, the lead defense lawyer, wrote the following letters to me.¹¹⁰

Account 1: Kazem Kazemzadeh's Firsthand Account of Defending Baha'is from Yazd in 1952
June 1952
My Dear Son:

The trial of the Yazd friends began on May 7 and ended on May 27. You cannot imagine what we endured in those twenty-one days. What agitation, what anxiety for the fate of those unfortunate men, what apprehension and fear for our own lives have we, defenders of a righteous cause, experienced. And the outcome of the trial? Four sentenced to death, three to ten years' imprisonment, and nine [members of the Spiritual Assembly] to three years. This verdict dealt us a moral blow from which we have yet to recover. One could expect anything from such a court and such judges; but to condemn three innocent peasants who had done nothing, from whom the examining magistrate obtained a confession by trickery, charlatanry, and deception—that I did not expect. These unfortunates are illiterate. They affixed their fingerprints to the protocol of the investigation

not knowing what was written there.

More than a thousand persons were in the hall where the trial was held. In a box reserved

for the press there sat forty to fifty head mullahs. The public was select in the full sense of

the term—that is, they picked from the street anyone who suited their purpose and paid him

three tumans. The guards numbered some 100 to 150 men. On the third or fourth day of the

trial, all who wanted to enter the hall were searched. It was said that weapons were found on

and confiscated from several people.

In addition to the assistant prosecutor, ten lawyers participated as parties to the civil

suit.¹¹¹ There were only four of us defense attorneys of whom one, having assessed the

situation, got sick (apparently of an upset stomach); another appeared on the final day of

defense arguments and said a few words about the United Nations, human rights and so on,

constantly emphasizing that he was hostile to the religious convictions of the defendants.

After the speech of the assistant prosecutor, a Sunni, we, the defense, lodged a protest

and resigned. This, if you will pardon the expression, assistant prosecutor read a speech

prepared for him ahead of time pouring forth mud, insults, and slander on the accused and

their beliefs. At the end of his spurious speech he demanded severe punishment of the

defendants so as to avoid vengeance of the people. It was after this speech of the assistant

prosecutor that we, the defense, resigned, declaring to the Court that we had been deprived

of the necessary guaranty [of safety] and that, after the assistant prosecutor's speech one

heard in the hall shouts of "Execution, execution!"

The Court found itself in a difficult situation, and we did not feel too well either.

According to judicial procedure, after our resignation the Court should have appointed two

¹¹⁰ Kazemzadeh, "The 1952 and 1954 Trials of Baha'is from Yazd, Iran," which provides the text of Accounts

¹ and ² quoted in this appendix. Steve Cooney is thanked for drawing the translator's attention to this document and sharing a copy.

111 Under Iranian law, criminal and civil proceedings may be conducted simultaneously. (F. Kazemzadeh)

or three defense attorneys. The defendants could reject such defense attorneys in which case they must choose their own attorneys and recommend them to the Court. There was apprehension that, if the defendants chose us for the second time, the Court would refuse the request on the ground that we had been chosen before and had resigned. There was such a precedent. But if, as a form of protest, the defendants refused to choose their attorneys, the Court on its own could appoint attorneys, as was done for four other defendants; and such attorneys, not knowing the case and not caring for the accused, would have talked a lot of irrelevant nonsense and would have recounted in detail that they regretted being compelled, in accordance with the instructions of the Court, to defend individuals to whose convictions they were adverse, that in our country the official religion is Islam of Shiite denomination, and so on. One of the defense lawyers appointed by the court literally said such things. Considering all this, when the presiding judge told me and Navidi that we were wrong to resign and that we would be given full guaranty [of safety], we said that we would be ready to defend the accused as advocates appointed by the Court.¹¹² He, the presiding judge, agreed and appointed us. The further peripeteia of our resignation and appointment are too detailed, and I shall not write about them. Private advocates began their speeches. They were a bunch selected from among three or four arrant fanatics, three or four lawyers in the worst sense of that term.... These gentlemen, having turned the rostrum of the court into a tribune of a political or religious meeting, said that Baha'is had no prohibition against marrying their sisters or daughters; that they considered everything, including dog excrement and human semen, ritually clean; that in Baha'u'llah's laws nothing was said about how to treat a female thief, while there was a law about a male thief (Kitab-i-Aqdas speaks of the punishment of thieves

in the masculine gender, and these gentlemen, alleged lawyers, concluded that female thieves were not to be punished); that Baha'is must change the furnishing of their homes every nineteen years or suffer excommunication. Another lawyer, editor of the newspaper Dad,¹¹³ who broke the record for maliciousness and hostility, devoted forty minutes of his speech to reading the so-called Memoirs of Prince Dolgorukii and came to the banal conclusion that this religion was created by a Russian diplomat.¹¹⁴ Words such as spies, murderers, men without fatherland, traitors, apostates, were repeated incessantly, but the presiding judge never stopped the overzealous advocates. When the lawyers, foaming at the mouth, described the method of the murder of the unfortunate woman and her five children, the public either expressed its indignation at the "cruelty" of the accused or applauded the orator who demanded the death penalty for all eighteen men. When applause was heard, the presiding judge would ring and direct the guard to remove the violators of order from the hall; but this was only a formality perfectly understood by both the public and the guards. Therefore, during the entire trial not one person was ejected.

112 Aziz Navidi was Kazem Kazemzadeh's colleague in the 1952 and 1952 trials. (F. Kazemzadeh)

113 Dad, Persian for justice. (F. Kazemzadeh)

114 The fictitious Memoirs of Prince Dolgorukii, a diplomat who had served as Russian minister plenipotentiary in

Iran were manufactured in clerical circles in the late 1930s in Mashhad. The alleged memoirs have been demonstrated by various scholars to be a poorly executed counterfeit, purporting to show that the Babi religion was invented by the Russians to weaken Islam and subjugate Iran. For more than half a century the Memoirs, an Iranian equivalent of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, have been used in attacking Baha'is as agents of foreign powers. (F. Kazemzadeh)

In the intermission suspicious persons distributed leaflets that demanded that the Court severely punish the accused. One leaflet bore a drawing: a woman is sitting on

the rug by a
samovar and around her, five children. These supposedly are Soqra [Sughra] and
her five
children resting at the family hearth after a day's work; and below another
picture—cadavers
of the woman and five children covered with blood, the blood represented by red
stains—
shabby, grubby pictures in a cheap Persian manner. However, even these shabby
leaflets
made strong impression on Persian minds and feeling, if Persians have them.
From every
side one heard words of revilement cast at the defendants and even at their
attorneys.
Had I the time and the inclination I would have written a whole book about this
trial,
and the book would have turned out quite interesting and instructive. But,
alas, there is a
more urgent issue before me than writing a book, the issue of daily bread. For
twenty-one
days I was deprived of rest and sleep. I frequently sat up until four in the
morning and got
up at six. You can imagine your father limited to two hours of sleep. I have
lost much weight
and turned pale and weak. Yet at the trial I acted heroically. A smile never
left my lips. I
calmed the defendants, kept persuading them that the case could be won,
frequently
conversed with them. And an impression was created among all those present at
the trial that
I was the most reckless, the strongest, and the bravest of the defense lawyers.
I will write you
another time about my speech and the reactions of others.
All of us defense lawyers spoke well and with dignity; but the Court frequently
stopped
us even in instances where we attempted to reply to certain insinuations or
slandorous
statements by the accusers. Thus, when at the start of my speech I said that
the pamphlet
entitled "Memoirs of Prince Dolgorukii" was read here and that to avoid
possible
misunderstanding I intended to prove that this documents was a forgery composed
by a
Persian and not by a Russian diplomat, the presiding judge said that the
document had no
particular significance for the trial. In order not to contradict the presiding
judge on whose
caprice and mood depended the fate of my clients, I replied that, following his

instructions, I would not touch this issue and would confine myself to pointing out the fact that the content of this pamphlet kept changing all the time. Some “facts,” too obviously mendacious, have not appeared in new editions; chronological errors were corrected, and so on. For comparison of their texts I deposited with the Court two of the pamphlets printed at different times, from which it will be clear to the Court that the memories were counterfeit. With the pamphlets I gave the Court a note pointing out several examples of such divergences. My speech, given in two sessions, lasted some three or four hours. Having finished the speech that had been completely written and typed out. I submitted a copy to the Court. After the speeches of the defense, the assistant prosecutor spoke again so as to give an opportunity for private [civil] accusers to pour their bile and malice upon the unfortunates. After that came our turn, and we gave an appropriate answer to the slanderers. The Court declared a recess and left for deliberations. This was at ten o’clock in the morning. We defense attorneys left the court. The defendants were returned to prison since deliberations could last several hours. During the Court’s deliberations, all the dark forces were set in motion, and all buttons were pushed, and all means used. Today, when we visited the prison for consultations with the condemned, and an officer of the prison guard said that the presiding judge who brought out such a draconian verdict was afraid to leave the hall of the trial and kept asking the guard to make sure that there would be no one in his way. From 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. when the verdict was announced, the public did not leave the hall, expressed its impatience, and constantly made its presence known by uttering prayers like exclamations. And thus under pressure of these elements and of the others hidden from the eyes of ordinary mortals, the Court rendered its shameful unprecedented decision. Of course, the

verdict will be appealed, but the facts remain. The criminal court consisting of five judges, motivated by both religious fanaticism and other, more realistic, considerations, terrorized by a fanatical clergy and a group of adventurers, brought out a verdict that was received with an ovation by a handpicked and paid crowd, and the revulsion and indignation of all honest people.

Dear son, I have filled ten pages but recounted only a hundredth of what I went through during this historic trial. I shall write more. I finish for now. I kiss you...and wish you happiness and achievements. Pray for us. Write more often. We are all in good health.

Yours, Kazem

Account 2: Kazem Kazemzadeh's Firsthand Account of Defending Baha'is from Yazd in 1954

My Dear Firuz:

... I could not answer your letter in a timely fashion because I was busy at the trial.

As you know, two years ago a so-called criminal court in Tehran condemned nine members of the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd accused of subornation to the murder of an

unfortunate woman, who lived in Abarqu, and of her five children to three years'

imprisonment; and three Baha'i peasants indicted for the murder of the members of that

family to execution; and two more Baha'is to ten years' imprisonment each.

The Supreme

Court (again so-called), after two years of procrastination, at last got enough courage to

rescind this, if you will pardon the expression, verdict as it related to the three who had been

condemned to death, to one member of the Spiritual Assembly who had been sentenced to

three years at hard labor, and to another Baha'i, condemned to ten years at hard labor. As far

as the last two men were concerned, the verdict was voided for the simple reason that both

convicted men were over sixty years old, and the law does not provide for hard labor for old people.

The case of these five was remanded to the Second Section of the Criminal Court for a

new trial. The members of this court, particularly its presiding judge, were

relatively decent
and honest men. The trial began on June 13 and lasted fourteen days. At first
everything
went well, and all of us got the impression that all the defendants would be
exculpated. The
defense team consisted of me, Navidi, and Razi.¹¹⁵ In addition to the assistant
prosecutor...
our adversaries were four other...lawyers.
When our turn came, Mr. Razi in a very ardent speech refuted all the slanderous
accusations. Then our opponents resorted to their old tired weapon—there
materialized at
the trial mullahs, bearded men with rosary beads, fanatics, followers of Navvab
Safavi,
founder of the Fadayan-e Eslam group; there appeared the murderers of the
former minister
Hazhir and of Kasravi.¹¹⁶ As I spoke, one heard shouts, curses and threats.
Order was

115 Aziz Navidi was also a lawyer in the 1952 trial. Razi was a highly
respected Muslim lawyer and writer. (F.

Kazemzadeh)

116 Navvab Safavi, founder of Fadayan-e Eslam, a terrorist group that advocated
the establishment of Islamic

state and carried out the assassination of several prominent statesmen,
including Prime Minister Ali Razmara.

Safavi was hanged in 1956. Abdol Hoseyn Hashir had served in several cabinets
and as prime minister. Ahmad

maintained in the court by some thirty policemen and outside by a regiment of
soldiers.

Admission to the trial was only by tickets that were distributed by the
prosecutor. Whenever

an applicant was recognized as a Baha'i, he was refused a ticket.

The closer we came to the end of the trial, the more furious became the attacks
of the

enemies. There appeared newspaper articles targeting the defendants. Three days
before the

end of the trial, leaflets were distributed in the hall calling for the death
penalty for all the

accused. After my first speech, when the judges had not yet left the hall, one
character in

clerical grab, a big fellow (later we heard that he was Kasravi's murderer)
shouted at full

throat, "We demand the death penalty for all the defendants. Otherwise we
will hang them

ourselves and will cut to pieces their defense attorneys and the members of the
Court."

The day before the end of the trial, taking advantage of mourning on the occasion of the Imam's death, a crowd of shopkeepers, tramps, and adventurers gathered in a mosque. Speeches were made, calling to finish with Baha'i murderers, to march to the court, and to demand the harshest punishment of the accused. And, as is the custom, all sorts of idle stories and fairy tales circulated about the Baha'is who supposedly bribed everyone and everything. Fortunately, the authorities took appropriate measures and prohibited the crowd's leaving the mosque.

On the eve of the trial's last day, a member of parliament, to intimidate the Court and the minister of justice of himself, asked the government a question, made up by our enemies, about the course of the trial. The last three days of the trial presented an interesting picture.

Through the corridors of the court there marched arrogantly back and forth all sorts of terrorist fanatics. Behind them, like obedient slaves, crawled young men with black beards.

Every moment one heard the thunder of "Salavat" [God's blessing], as some mullah appealed to the faithful to defend the foundations of Islam from the infidels, and the crowd shouted "Sallallah Muhammad va al-e Muhammad" [God's benedictions upon Muhammad and Muhammad's family]. Others were recounting the tragic death of a Muslim woman and her five children at the hands of apostates. Sounds like wailing rose from the crowd. At the doors of the court there stood armed gendarmes. We were stared at as if we were monsters.

At the end of each session we defense lawyers were surrounded by policemen who accompanied us to the cars because there was information about preparations of an attempt at our assassination. In addition to the police, we were guarded, secretly, by ten to fifteen [Baha'i] young men.

Obviously, to render a just verdict in the case of innocent Baha'is in such an atmosphere heroes would have been needed; but since the judges were not heroes but just common contemporary Persians, all these demonstrations, threats, and pressures had their requisite

effect, and they brought out the following verdict: the three men who had been condemned to death at the previous trial were given ten years in prison. The member of the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd was acquitted because the fact of his participation in and presence at the meetings of the Assembly had not been proved. The old man who had been sentenced to ten years was given five years. At first we were all stunned by this unjust verdict. But gradually, as passions subsided, and we coolly weighed all the circumstance, we came to the conclusion that even for that we should say, "Thank you."

Kasravi, philologist, historian, and polemicist, was murdered in court at his trial in Tehran by a follower of Safavi. (F. Kazemzadeh)

Two weeks of the trial have completely frayed my nerves, and now, when by every article of every law I deserve a rest. I must again perform the heavy duties of the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly because Mr. Furutan left for the provinces, and his trip will last about four or five months. I have filled six pages, and they are waiting for me at the Assembly's office. Kiss my lovely and dear granddaughter....I kiss you.
Yours, Kazem
July 5, 1954

Account 3: Given the extremely volatile and intense anti-Baha'i atmosphere of the trial of the Baha'is defendants, a number of Baha'i young men, including the late father of the present translator, were asked to serve as bodyguards for the Baha'i lawyers during these trials. One of these bodyguards, Iraj Ayman, has recorded his recollections of the 1954 trial and notes, "I was an eyewitness to the horrifying scene of that maliciously staged trial of innocent Baha'is, including members of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Yazd."¹¹⁷ I accompanied a small group of young Baha'is who were asked to attend the court proceedings and serve as security guards for the Baha'i lawyers. Since we were not joining the crowd in what they were shouting all the time, it was obvious that we were Baha'is. The trial was conducted in the grand hall of the Supreme Criminal Court, which had a high ceiling. Behind the panel of judges there was a huge and imposing statue of Justice (a lady with covered

eyes holding a balance in her hand). Several spectators were in the balcony facing the panel of the judges. There is no jury system in Iran. Instead, there were a presiding judge and two assistant judges (dadyars). Defense lawyers and the plaintiffs (private attorneys) were seated on the right side of the hall facing the Prosecutor General and his assistants. The defendants were seated in the middle of the hall facing the panel of judges. Baha'i lawyers were defending the Baha'is, including the members of the Spiritual Assembly of Yazd, trying to prove their innocence while plaintiffs were attempting to refute the arguments of the Baha'i lawyers. On the whole it was a very grand and impressive environment, if it had not been for the presence, interference, and agitations of the hired ruffians and a group of old and young mullahs. It was, indeed, a frightening experience. The Baha'i lawyers made their statements in a very brave, logical, well-documented, and polite manner. But each time they started to make their statement a crowd of several hundred rogues and ruffians began to shout "Khafeh Shu" (Shut up) and "Salavat" (God's blessing, a tribute to Muhammad and His descendents); in this way they were constantly interrupting the statements of the Baha'i lawyers. We were afraid to enter or exit the courtroom and the building of the Ministry of Justice alone, and moved together as a group while the hired ruffians shouted abuse at us. All these things took place inside the building of the Ministry of Justice where policemen and other security officers were standing around but

117 Ayman, "Recollections of a Baha'i Youth Attending the 1954 Trial," composed on November 17, 2007.

would not dare to stop those who were shouting abuse and slander at us and were disgracing the Founders of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah, and the Bab.

We could see how the Baha'i lawyers were courageously putting their own lives at great risk. All the time I was marveling at their courage, and I was extremely afraid for their safety. I testify that there is no exaggeration in what

Kazem Kazemzadeh has written. As a matter of fact, he has written it in a very mild language that does not fully picture the great ordeal that he and others experienced. I vividly remember those situations.

Part 2

Suppression of the Baha'is of Iran in 1955

Introduction¹¹⁸

Persecution and slaying of the Babis and Baha'is were part of the daily activities of the clerics

and monarchs of the Qajar dynasty. For religious and political reasons, this propensity to kill

Babis and Baha'is continued up until the conclusion of the Qajar era.

The [Azali] Babis had an important role in the Constitutional Movement of Iran, and

indeed one could claim that their efforts to advance the Constitutional Revolution were

critical and constructive. However, this fact does not imply that Baha'is were not supportive of constitutional rule, as it must be understood that their leaders insisted that Baha'is should not participate in partisan political activities, in order that the newly founded Baha'i community would remain immune from the attacks of those who sought to establish a Shari'ah-based constitution, and who were among the leading clerics of the time.

[The Iranian constitution of 1906, and 1907 supplementary legislation, created the

foundation for institutionalized discrimination against the Baha'is.¹¹⁹

Although these

documents were based on the model of Belgium's 1831 constitution, its provisions

guaranteeing freedom of worship were conspicuously omitted.¹²⁰ While subsequent legislation gave some recognition to Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians as equal citizens

before state law, it also "gave unprecedented institutional powers to the clerical

establishment" and did not guarantee freedom of religion.¹²¹]

Reza Shah's Reign

[Whereas in the nineteenth century, suppression of the Baha'is had impact on individual

adherents, towards the end of the Qajar era these attacks were accompanied by centrally

directed campaigns that targeted the Baha'i community in general terms and its institutions

in particular.]

During the rule of Reza Shah, several towns witnessed Baha'i killings.

However, as a

whole, persecution of Baha'is was not one of the political objectives of Reza Shah's era, as

his main goal was to limit the influence of religious clerics. It was during his reign that the

notion of millat [national identity] acquired its roots, and to some degree, the religious

118 This translation was previously published in Baha'i Studies Review and appears in this monograph in an

expanded form with the kind permission of that journal's editor.

119 The constitutional laws contained provisions that were later used to restrict the activities of the Baha'i

community. See, for example, a circular by the Minister of Interior dated 1957, Iqdam Kunid ta az Majami Baha'i

Khuddari Shavad [Stop the Baha'is from congregating] asserting that Baha'is meetings had been taking place in violation of Article 21 of the Constitution, which prohibited gatherings of all organizations which generated threats to religion or state and disturbed order.

120 See Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*, p. 375, for the full text of the provisions.

121 One of the justifications given for closing the Baha'i Tarbiyat schools in Tehran was that “the Iranian

Government has not recognized the Baha'i religion as it has other minority religions.” See *The Baha'i World*, vol. 6, p. 26.

identity of ummat [body of the believers] was gradually replaced by millat. That is, the country was moving in a direction such that citizens would consider themselves Iranians without concern for religious belief, political orientation or tribal affiliation. However, in the years after Reza Shah's demise, that policy was gradually abandoned and, once more, the idea of ummat Islami [the body of Muslims] entered political discourse. Moreover, the Cold War against the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc reinforced this idea among the political figures of Iran. The organization of Fada'iyan Islam [Devotees of Islam] was founded after Reza Shah had been deposed and was an effort to combat leftist tendencies in Iran.

Post-Reza Shah

In the 1940s and 1950s, the persecution of religious minorities—particularly the Baha'is—on the pretext that they opposed the Shi'i religion or had leftist tendencies, forced the government and the Shah, especially after the events of September 1941,¹²² to follow the blind alley of ummat Islami and obliged them to openly contravene the principles of the Constitutional Revolution and the country's adopted constitution. Almost all political and prominent personalities of every faction significantly contributed to this wayward political path and forced Iranian society's accelerated departure from the established norms of democratic principles enshrined in the goals of the Constitutional Revolution. A golden

opportunity for strengthening democracy in Iran was lost, and the chance to gain popular support for the implementation of improvements and reforms, even within a controlled framework, was lost to the Shah and the government. With Reza Shah's departure, intense criticism of his reign began. The clerical establishment, like termites, began gnawing at the foundations of the nation's democratic system. As a result, every aspect of modern life, enlightened thought, social progress, and liberty became a toy in the hands of the reactionary forces in Iran. After 20 Shahrivar [September 11, 1941, the day of Reza Shah's departure], the entire Shi'i ecclesiastical order, joined by the ruling class, arose and once again forced women to wear chadors and veils, and strove to close all mixed-gender schools. Islamic propaganda groups and societies were organized throughout the country and began disseminating publications on "the truths and teachings of Islam," as well as various religious pamphlets, daily newspapers, and weekly or monthly journals—all of which had the suffix of Islam or Islamic in their titles. In summary, the clerics' long-held hatred of the Babis, and then of the Baha'i movement, surfaced once again, and the field for expressing animosity and abhorrence of religious minorities, particularly the Baha'is, as well as exponents of enlightened and progressive thought among Iranians, opened up. At the insistence of the religious leaders [maraji'-yi taqlid, literally: "focuses of emulation"] Islamic training and religious propaganda were interjected in the curricula of all elementary and high schools throughout the nation.¹²³

122 The forced abdication of Reza Shah by the Allies during World War II and the installation of his son

Muhammad Reza Pahlavi as Shah.

123 Prohibitions against the Baha'is ranged from the censorship of Baha'i literature to the closure of Baha'i

schools in the 1930s and 1940s. Two of the largest schools closed were the Tarbiyat boys' and girls' schools in Tehran, with an estimated 1,500 pupils combined; see *The Baha'i World*, vol.

6, pp. 27 and 96, listing Baha'i schools closed throughout the country. While similar measures were directed against the Armenian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian minorities, the practice of non-recognition of Baha'i marriages was specifically targeted at that community.

All of these developments took place in Tehran and other cities during the 1940s and centered on opposition to Baha'is, to Ahmad Kasravi and his supporters, and to the Tudeh Party and its members, and occurred under the supervision of the government and in most instances with the financial and organizational support of the authorities. In truth, it was the clerical order that established the notion of Da'iy Jan Napoleon¹²⁴ among Iranians who suspect that whatever occurs in Iran is the work of foreign agents. Fabricated documents, such as the Memoirs of Prince Dolgorukii,¹²⁵ which was manufactured by the fiction-weaving pen of Ali Javahir-Kalam¹²⁶ and published with the financial support of Astan Quds Radavi¹²⁷ and the backing of the leading Shi'i clerics [maraji'], were disseminated. This was just one example of many such products that originated from the clerical establishment.¹²⁸ In reality, the widespread perfidious belief that "any non-Islamic idea is the creation of foreigners" stemmed from the fusty minds of the mullas. Through this devious approach, they attached such labels as "anti-Iranian" and "foreign" to everything that was not Islamic and which could threaten or undermine the power of these religion-mongers in Iran. This deceitful "Othering," this spreading of the seeds of conflict and enmity, not only engulfed religious minorities, progressive nationalistic parties, and independent leftist groups but also, in the long run, even raised questions about the government itself and about constitutional rule. It became an excuse for the clerics to proclaim widely the claim that the people's Constitutional Revolution, which in reality had taken place in protest against clerical influence and the absolutist rule of the Qajar, was an exploit of the Russian and British governments in order to serve their own interests. They occupied themselves

with propagating this baseless idea, insisting that constitutional rule and secular law were fundamentally at variance with the true religion of Islam and with Iran's historical tradition. [Politically weak, and faced with growing nationalism and acute economic difficulties, Muhammad-Reza Shah ceded control over certain religious affairs to the clergy. This power-sharing resulted, inter alia, in a campaign of persecution against the Baha'is which, some scholars believe, was most likely intended by the government to distract the citizenry from the country's other problems.129]

124 Da'i Jan Napoleon is a masterpiece of socio-political satire by the renowned satirist Iraj Pizishkzad. In the course of this entertaining and fascinating novel, which was later made into a popular play, Pizishkzad discloses the Iranian tendency to think that behind every misfortune is the hand of foreigners, particularly the British.

For a discussion of the Iranian preoccupation with conspiracy, see Momen, "Conspiracy Theories and Forgeries: The Baha'i Community of Iran and the Construction of an Internal Enemy."

125 Prince Dimitri Dolgorukov [Dolgorukii] was the Russian Tsar's ambassador to Iran, 1845–54. The book,

Memoirs of Kinyaz Dolgorukii, a creation of the troubled mind of 'Ali Javahir-Kalam, endeavors to connect the Babi and Baha'i movements to Tsarist Russia. At first, this book attracted considerable attention in Iran, but soon the fact that it was a mere forgery was thoroughly established by historians and religious researchers. In a well-regarded article, Professor 'Abbas Iqbal Ashtiyani proved these memoirs to be a forgery created by troublemakers (Yadigar, year 5, numbers 8 and 9). Professor Mujtaba Minuvi considers these memoirs to be a forgery and the forger to be an Iranian (Rahnamih-yi Kitab, year 6, numbers 1 and 2). Similarly, refer to Adamiyat, Amir Kabir va Iran, p. 456. (BC)

126 Adamiyat, Amir Kabir va Iran, p. 456n. (BC)

127 Astan Quds Razavi is responsible for maintenance and supervision of the Sacred Shrine of Imam Reza in

Mashhad. It has a strong publishing arm as well as administering many religious schools and endowments.

128 Adamiyat, Amir Kabir va Iran, p. 456n, was the first to attribute the

authorship of the fictional Memoirs of

Kinyaz Dolgorukii to Ali Javahir-Kalam. However, subsequent research has proven this not to be the case. A

detailed analysis will be the subject of a forthcoming study by Mina Yazdani.

129 Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in Pahlavi Period*, p. 77.

Early 1955 Opposition to Baha'is

It was stated earlier that after the coup d'état of 28 Murdad 1332 [August 19, 1953],¹³⁰ the

mullas insisted that their significant contribution to the coup d'état be recognized and that

this was only possible by the suppression of the Tudeh Party and the Baha'is.

[One of the well-known anti-Baha'i propagandists, whose commentaries were widely

circulated by the Iranian media in the mid-1950s, was a populist preacher named Shaykh

Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi, a collaborator of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.¹³¹

Falsafi enjoyed

the support and encouragement of prominent religious figures.¹³² This is documented in a

letter of encouragement from Ayatollah Siyyid Husayn Burujirdi, who in 1946 had become

the Shi'i's "source of emulation," the religion's highest office.¹³³

In 1951, Falsafi approached

Prime Minister Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq on behalf of Ayatollah Burujirdi in order to

discuss the Baha'is and their activities, but he was rebuffed by Musaddiq who rejected the

idea that the Baha'is were any different than Muslim Iranians. However, after the 1953 coup,

Falsafi approached the pro-monarchist government to once again press for action against the

Baha'is.]

The disreputable and notorious preacher Hujjatu'l-Islam Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi has

stated in his memoirs that his sermons against the Baha'is took place with the prior consent

of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi and Muhammad-Reza Shah. In an interview on May 10, 1955, with a

reporter of *Itihad-i Milli Journal*, Falsafi described his meeting with Ayatu'llah Burujirdi in

these words:

Before the blessed month of Ramadan, I went to Qum where I met Ayatu'llah Burujirdi and found him deeply distressed. He stated, "Now that the situation of the

oil industry has been resolved and the matter of the Tudeh Party has been disposed of, we must make plans concerning the Baha'is and confront this challenge.”

In *Khatirat va Mubarizat* [Memories and struggles], Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi writes:

My religious duty compelled me not to be indifferent about this sect, and in spite of their connections to the government, to propagate against them in my sermons....

130 This is a reference to the coup of 28 Murdad 1332 against the government of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq. It

is commonly called by Iranians the “28 Murdad coup” but will be referred to as the “1953 coup” in the rest of this translation. Musaddiq, who was the elected prime minister of Iran from 1951 to 1953, was a nationalist and passionately opposed foreign intervention in Iran. He was also the architect of the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry, which had been dominated and exploited by the British through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (today known as British Petroleum). Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi removed him from power in a CIA-orchestrated coup, supported and funded by the British and the US governments.

131 Falsafi's published memoir acknowledges openly that Falsafi “played an important role in combat with

Baha'ism”; see Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu'l Islam* Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi.

132 See *Didari Az Ayatollah Burujirdi az 'Abbas Furutan* [Report by 'Abbas Furutan on his visit with authorities in

Qum], *Ashuftih*, no. 19, 7–10, 22/2/1334 (May 13, 1955), referring to Falsafi as a representative of Ayatollah Burujirdi in Tehran and in the Shah's court, and stating that Shaykh Ahmad Khadimi, Siyyid Mustafa Khansari, and Taliqani met with Furutan and discussed their support for Falsafi and his actions.

133 See *Namih Hadrat Ayatu'llah ul'uzma Burujirdi* [Letter from Grand Ayatollah Burujirdi]; the letter was recited

by Hujjatu'l-Islam Falsafi during sermon at Sultani Mosque; Pust Tehran, no. 581, 18/2/1334 (May 9, 1955).

Falsafi's memoir (p. 202, n. 1) states that his anti-Baha'i sermons in 1955 “were done with the previous agreement of Ayatollah Burujirdi and had his complete support.”

Ayatu'llah Burujirdi sent me a message to convey the issue [of the Baha'is] to the

governmental authorities....Eventually, after May 1953 [Ramadan 1332], he sent me

a letter instructing me to meet with the Shah and to express the Ayatu'llah's

disapproval and displeasure over the matter of [the relative freedom of] the Baha'is....Before May 1954 [Ramadan 1333], I asked Ayatu'llah Burujirdi,

“Are you

supportive of the idea that I discuss the situation of Baha'is during my radio

sermons which are broadcast live from the Shah Mosque?” He thought for a moment and then responded, “If you did, it would be good. For now, the authorities are paying little attention [to the suppression and annihilation of Baha'is].

At least that would put them [the Baha'is] in a bad light in the field of public opinion.”

He added further, “It is necessary to mention this to the Shah beforehand so that he would not have an excuse later to intercede, ruin everything and terminate

the radio broadcasts. Such a thing would be most unfortunate for the Muslims as it

would embolden the Baha'is.”

I called the Shah's office and requested an appointment. When I met the Shah, I

stated, “Ayatu'llah Burujirdi has consented that the issue of the Baha'is, which is a

cause of concern for Muslims, be dealt with and discussed in my radio sermons during the month of Ramadan. Would your Majesty consent as well?”

Falsafi relates that the Shah remained silent for a moment and then said, “Go and preach

accordingly.”¹³⁴ [Falsafi also encouraged other preachers who were giving sermons during

Ramadan to raise the Baha'i issue in their sermons, which they did.]

From 1948 (1327), each Ramadan, Falsafi used to deliver sermons against the Tudeh

Party. Elimination and annihilation of the Babis and Baha'is was the cherished desire of the

mullas and their partners in the government. During those days, it was widely said that

strikes against Baha'is and destruction of their administrative and religious centers were

government objectives. However, this had to wait until May 1955 (Ramadan 1334).

¹³⁴ Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu'l-Islam Falsafi*, pp. 200ff. In the same book, various documents and

accounts are found that illustrate how the mullas and political figures worked

hand-in-hand against the Baha'i community and strove to suppress and harm them. They even entertained the idea of adopting a parliamentary measure that would make it illegal to be a Baha'i. These documents clearly prove that the Shah and his appointed prime minister, Asadu'llah 'Alam, were active partners in these undertakings. In Haqiqat-Pizhu, A'in-i Baha'i Yik Nihdat Siyasi Nist, after proving that the Baha'i faith has no political objective, the various objections raised by the leaders of the Islamic Republic are addressed and answered. For example, the author(s) have noted the manifold problems that the Baha'is had with the government during Reza Shah's reign. In 1941, a number of Baha'is of Yazd were imprisoned on the charge of being Baha'is. In 1943, local Baha'i centers in various cities were confiscated, and some were destroyed. In 1946, a number of Baha'is were killed in Kashan and Shahrud, and the perpetrators were never arrested. In 1951, a jihad (religious war) against Baha'is was proclaimed, and they were accused of collaboration with the communists. After Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi's sermons in 1955, Baha'is were persecuted throughout Iran, and a number of them were killed. In 1956, the Baha'is complained to the United Nations about these persecutions and discriminations. From 1956 until 1963, Baha'i gatherings were proclaimed unlawful by the government. Finally, in September 1978, SAVAK organized anti-Baha'i riots in Shiraz aimed at diverting the Revolution and turning it into an uprising against the Baha'is. Over 300 Baha'i homes were plundered and then set on fire. In Paris, Ayatu'llah Khomeini spoke of this incident and pointed out its true character. (BC)

Baha'i Center in Tehran (prior to 1955)

1955 Baha'i Persecution

In accordance with Ayatu'llah Burujirdi's wishes, soon after the 1953 coup, the attack against the Baha'is began to be included in the broadcasts of Falsafi's sermons, delivered during Ramadan of 1334 [1955]. [Falsafi states, "Speeches against the Baha'is in the Shah Mosque and their broadcast from the radio caused a strange stir in the country, and people who had suffered at the hands of this wayward sect were excited. Everywhere one went, there was talk of the necessity of suppressing the Baha'is, who were connected to Zionism and America."135

In the third week of Ramadan, the Military Governor of Tehran, Taymur Bakhtiar, ordered his forces to occupy the National Baha'i Center in Tehran, an important religious site.^{136]} The brutal attack led to the confiscation of Baha'i properties in every city by the government. In Tehran, on May 22, 1955, in front of the cameras of both foreign and domestic reporters, Lieutenant-General [Nader] Batmanqlich, the chief of staff of the Iranian army, along with [Brigadier-General] Taymur Bakhtiar, the military commander of Tehran, took pickaxes and demolished the dome of the Baha'i Center.¹³⁷ [The Muslim Spiritual Community of Qum subsequently issued a statement applauding the destruction of this "house of corruption" and stated that this act had attracted "special attention from the Mahdi and had certainly met with the agreement of His Majesty the Shah."¹³⁸ For many years, that building was impounded by the military and used as its own command center.¹³⁹

135 Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu'l-Islam Falsafi*, p. 201.

136 See "Subh Imruz Quva Intizami Haziratu'l-Quds Markaz Tabliqat Baha'iyān Ra Ishghal Kard" [This morning the

armed forces occupied the Haziratu'l-Quds, the propaganda center of the Baha'is], *Kayhan*, no. 3571,

16/2/1334 (May 7, 1955); "Markaz Baha'iyān Chigunih Viran Shud" [How the Baha'i Center was destroyed],

Tulu', 4/3/1334 (May 16, 1955).

137 See "Subh Imruz Kharab Kardan Haziratu'l-Quds Aqaz Shud: Timsar Sarlashkar Batmanqlich Avalin Kulang Ra Bih

Zamin Zad" [The demolition of Haziratu'l-Quds started this morning: General Batmanqlich was the first to

strike with a pickaxe], *Ittila'at*, 31/2/1334 (May 22, 1955), stating that

Batmanqlich delivered the first blow to

the building, Bakhtiar was present and assisted, and Falsafi was also present.

Bakhtiar was supported by the

Muslim clergy; see "Mulaqat Timsar Bakhtiar ba Ayatu'llah Burujirdi" [The meeting of General Bakhtiar with

Ayatu'llah Burujirdi], *Ittihad Millat*, 29/5/1334, [August 21, 1955] reporting that Burujirdi thanked Bakhtiar for

his work during the month of Ramadan.

138 Namih Jami'iyih Rawhaniyun Qum [Statement from clerical community of Qum], *Sitarh Islam*, 27/3/1334 (June

18, 1955). This proclamation was presumably intended to emphasize that the attack on the center was approved of by both religious and secular authorities.

139 In 1957, an order was issued for the return of the National Baha'i Center in Tehran to the Baha'i

community. See *The Baha'i World*, vol. 8, p. 295.

Generals Batmanqlich and Bakhtiar demolishing Tehran's Baha'i Center

General Muhammad Ayarmalu, the deputy-chief of the most powerful branch of government, namely, the Department for Security and Information [SAVAK], writes the following in his memoirs:

One morning, Lieutenant-General Batmanqlich, the chief of staff of the army, along with Brigadier-General Taymur Bakhtiar, the military commander, climbed the dome of the Baha'i Center [in Tehran] and using pickaxes began to demolish it.

The next morning, the military attaché of the United States came to my office and in a voice shaking with rage protested, "What was this act that the chief of staff committed? Why would the military chief take up an axe, and before the gaze of multitudes, demolish a building? Furthermore, he destroyed a building that is deeply respected and cherished by many of your citizens! My country is assisting Iran to repair the ruins, and now you turn a beautiful building into a ruin?" As I, too, could not find any logical reason for this destruction—particularly by the hands of such a high-ranking officer—I remained quiet and said nothing in the face of this rebuke from the American attaché.

A few hours later, the late Batmanqlich summoned me into his office and impatiently asked, "What are the military attachés saying about yesterday's occurrences?"

I openly shared the comments of the American military attaché and added, "Several more of the military attachés have expressed their perplexity and disappointment over this incident." When I saw signs of distress in his face, I asked,

"General, what truly motivated you to undertake this act?" He lifted his head and responded, "I had no motives. It was the chief's order." And by that he meant the late Muhammad-Reza Shah.

As later I read in various publications, Muhammad-Reza Shah had given this

order in order to appease several influential akhunds, particularly Siyyid Abu'l-

Qasem Kashani....It is ironic to note that twenty-five years later [in the Islamic

Revolution of 1979], the late Muhammad-Reza Shah witnessed the result of giving so much license to the akhunds. Also twenty-five years later, when General Batmanqlich was arrested and prosecuted at the height of the 1357 [1979] Revolution, he recounted this incident in his semi-successful defense.”¹⁴⁰

140 Ararmalu, Yadvarih Yik Bachih Qazaq, pp. 213–14. (BC)

[By Ramadan 10, Minister of Interior Amir Asadu'llah 'Alam was sufficiently alarmed by the

violence that he contacted Falsafi to voice his concerns that Falsafi's sermons were

disrupting the security of the nation. 'Alam wrote in his memoir:

Falsafi managed to fool both the Shah and the military authorities and start a campaign against the Baha'is that dragged the country to the edge of disaster. It was

Ramadan. [Falsafi's] noon sermons were broadcast throughout the nation via radio

and caused violence and terror in many locations. People killed a few Baha'is here

and there. Falsafi justified these acts by saying that they increased the Shah's

prestige. I had no choice but to order him, in my own rash way, to refrain from giving further speeches until order was reestablished.¹⁴¹

Falsafi was not so easily deterred, and as a result, a week or so later, the Shah sent the head

of the police force, General Alavi Muqaddam, and Brigadier-General Taymur Bakhtiar, to

order Falsafi to stop referring to the Baha'is in his sermons, as it was creating a security

concern. Falsafi bluntly refused to comply with the order:

It is not possible....If you want to discontinue the radio broadcasts, do it.

Arrest me

if you want to. Otherwise, I must continue my speeches until the end of Ramadan....If I do not say anything...I will dishonor Islam and marja'

[highest-

ranking clergy], and I will never do that.¹⁴²

Falsafi continued his sermons until the end of Ramadan and avoided arrest, but he was never

again admitted into the Shah's presence and was henceforth banned from preaching the

Friday sermon at Shah Mosque, at the time one of the country's most influential religious

platforms.

The general attack against the Baha'i community and its institutions, as well as the well-publicized seizure of the National Baha'i Center, provoked further anti-Baha'i attacks outside of Tehran. On July 28, 1955, in the village of Hurmuzdak in Yazd, seven Baha'is, ranging in age from nineteen to eighty years old, were killed by a large mob who hacked them to pieces with spades and axes. In Shiraz, parts of the house of the Bab, one of the Baha'i faith's most sacred sites, were damaged. Raids and attacks on the Baha'is in nearby villages resulted in 800 apparently coerced recantations by members of the Baha'i faithful which were signed and submitted to the local Islamic authorities.¹⁴³ In Rasht, Ahvaz, Shiraz, Isfahan, Karaj, Mahfuruzak, Abadeh, Reza'iyeh, Takur, and Hisar, public and private Baha'i properties were raided and destroyed, and homes, businesses, and Baha'i centers were looted and burnt. The Baha'i community responded to these events by appealing to various international bodies, including the newly formed United Nations. Even those merely sympathetic to the plight of the Baha'is might find themselves the target of religious extremists. When the governor of Fars Province, Brigadier-General Himmat, attempted to take action against the instigators of a local anti-Baha'i uprising, he was accused of being a Baha'i himself and was dismissed from his post.¹⁴⁴

141 Mahdavi, *Guftuguha-yi Man ba Shah, Khatirat Mahramaniyih Asadu'llah 'Alam*, pp. 66–67. (BC)

142 Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu'l-Islam Falsafi*, pp. 205–7.

143 "Jaryan Kamil Hadisiyih Shiraz va Abadeh va Ardestan" [Complete coverage of the incidents of Shiraz and

Abadeh and Ardestan], *Sitarih Islam*, no. 175, 10/4/1334 [July 2, 1955].

144 Afnan, *The Genesis of the Babi-Baha'i Faiths in Shiraz and Fars*, pp. 239–40.

Clerical Influence over the Government

The activities of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi, and essentially the entire efforts of the Shi'i clerical establishment against the Baha'is, were not just aimed at securing the "foundation of the true religion of Islam." In fact, this undertaking was also an instrument for the

clerics to portray themselves as actual participants in the 1953 coup d'état and restoration of the Shah to his throne.

By yielding to the illegal wishes of the religious leaders [maraji'-yi taqlid] and the clerical establishment after the 1953 coup d'état, the Shah and his government, in effect, placed a stamp of approval on the clerics' participation in the government's exercise of power.

Through a study of documents, letters, and communications of the clerics after the 1953 coup d'état until the 1979 Revolution, we can see how intertwined and aligned the relationship between the royal court and the government and clerics had become.

This friendly association developed into such a close relationship that, hoping to realize his malevolent fancies, Ayatu'llah Burujirdi asked the Shah and Prime Minister Husayn 'Ala' to modify the contents of the nation's Constitution through parliamentary action. This is the text of his letter:

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

To his Excellency [Husayn 'Ala'] the Prime Minister, may his glory endure! Your Excellency's letter of 5 Tir 1334 [June 27, 1955], conveying the necessary

instructions of His Majesty to the government regarding my suggestions as communicated in my letter of 27 Shavval 1373 [June 29, 1954], was received through Haji Qa'im-Maqam al-Mulk Rafi'. The essence of my suggestions, as noted

in your letter, are:

1. The Baha'i sect must be prevented from propagation [of its teachings], which is against the true religion of Islam.
2. Their assemblies and centers for propagation, wherever found across the country, must be closed.
3. Any employee who is not of one of the religions mentioned in the Constitution must be expelled after due investigation, in accordance with the law of the country. Consequently, the Baha'is would fall into this category [and be expelled].

May God, exalted is He, protect the sacred Islamic religion and the independence of

Iran from the harm of events that occur and the attack of the enemies. And may He

confirm and succor His Majesty and the government authorities in their work of protecting the country and supporting the sacred religion [of Islam].

Upon thee be the peace, mercy and bounty of God.

7 Dhi'l-Qa'dah 1374/7 Tir 1334 [June 28, 1955]

Husayn at-Tabataba'i [Buruji]145

During that period and subsequently, Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi would cry out in warning in every mosque and place of worship in Tehran or other cities where he preached:

145 Manzuru'l-Ajdad, ed., Marja'iyat dar 'Arsih Ijtima' va Siyasat, p. 498. (BC)

Brave merchants, employees, students, and workers of Iran! Arise and combat these irreligious people [i.e., the Baha'is] and Baha'i-sympathizers [by this he meant the Shah, the prime minister, and members of the national parliament] and completely exterminate them, so that it will be proven that [Imam] 'Ali is alive, the Prophet [of Islam] is alive and the religion of Islam will not fade away. Do not permit this illegal government to belittle Islam any longer!

After its successful role in the 1953 coup d'état, the clerical establishment would attribute every political, societal, or economic reform to Baha'i designs, and through this stratagem would provoke religious sentiments, as well as inflame the latent anti-Baha'i attitude among the Iranian people. Whenever the Shah or the government retreated on these announced reforms, the clerics and Shi'i religious leaders would refer to "an agreement having been reached between the government and the clerics," or to "the defeat of the government," or would say, "Through God's will, the strivings of the courageous nation of Islam and the indefatigable clerics, we won a mighty victory!"146

In a telegram to the Shah, Ayatu'llah Siyyid Muhammad [Musavi] Bihbahani stated, "I

OFFER MY HEARTFELT GRATITUDE FOR CLOSING THIS CENTER OF RELIGIOUS AND NATIONAL SEDITION [i.e., the Haziratu'l-Quds, the Baha'i center in Tehran]

THROUGH THE

EFFORTS OF THE ISLAMIC ARMY, AND CONSIDER THIS AUSPICIOUS EVENT TO BE AMONG THE ANNUAL RELIGIOUS EVENTS WORTHY OF CELEBRATION."

In response to

Ayatu'llah

Bihbahani, the Shah noted, "As you have repeatedly heard us state, we consider ourselves

bound to carry out the requirements of Islam and beseech the Almighty to

continue

confirming us in this undertaking.”

In a cable to the Shah, Ayatu'llah Burujirdi referred to the Baha'is as

“enemies and

trouble-makers” to the royal throne, and stated, “MAY GOD, EXALTED BE HIS

STATION,

PROTECT THE SACRED RELIGION OF ISLAM AND IRAN'S MONARCHY FROM THE HARM OF THE

ENEMY AND MISCHIEF-MAKERS, AND MAY HE PRESERVE YOUR MAJESTY OVER ALL

MUSLIMS.”

In a letter to Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi, Ayatu'llah Burujirdi—the marja'

at-taqlid [object

of emulation] for all Shi'ih—had expressed gratitude for his “precious

services” to “the

sacred religion of Islam, and indeed to all religions, and to the holy

Qur'an.” He wrote that

since Baha'is held many high positions in the government, the highest

priority was therefore

to remove them all from every agency, department, and bureau of the government,

and from

every other position of influence. In an interview with the newspaper Kayhan,

he expressed

his wish for the destruction of the Haziratu'l-Quds in Tehran, expulsion of

Baha'is from all

governmental and official positions, and the adoption of a parliamentary plan

to forcibly

expel all Baha'is from Iran.

146 Zaban Guya-yi Islam: Hujjatu'l-Islam Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi [The eloquent tongue of Islam: Hujjatu'l-Islam

Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi], Tehran: Markaz Barrisi Asnad Tarikhi-yi Vizarat

Ittila'at, vol. 9. (BC)

147 See “Tiligiraf Ayatu'llah Bihbahani bih Pishgah Alahazrat Humayuni va

Hazrat Ayatu'llah ul'Uzma Burujirdi”

[Telegram from Ayatu'llah Bihbahani to Grand Ayatu'llah Burujirdi and his

majesty the Shah], in Shura, no. 52,

19/2/1334 (May 10, 1955); “Payamha-yi Muhimmi Kih Bayn Ayatu'llah Burujirdi

va Maghamat Mu'assir Rad va Badal

Shudih Ast [Important messages exchanged between Ayatu'llah Burujirdi and

important officials], Khandaniha,

no. 690, 111–12.

Falsafi participating in the destruction of Tehran's Baha'i Center

From the pulpit, Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi never hesitated to spread every manner

of

false and vicious rumor, intended to provoke the simple-minded, fanatical, and

superstitious

people against the Baha'is. He used the well-trained techniques of such preachers¹⁴⁸ and made up false stories, saying:

One of the members of the Tudeh [Communist Party] disclosed to me, "As every arena of activity was closed to us and since we heard that the Baha'is intended to initiate a coup d'état the following year, we, therefore gravitated towards them so that we could make a big impact. In order to prove our interest in the Baha'i religion, we even married Baha'i women in accordance with their traditional ceremony."

In response to objections from the international community and its agencies, and possibly also the protests from Western countries against the maltreatment of Baha'is in Iran, Falsafi devised a new trick. From the pulpit he would say, "We have not spoken of religion. Our only concern is the group who wears a religious mask, and it is against them that we speak."

Falsafi's Ties to America

Falsafi himself declared from a pulpit that he had close affiliations with the agents of the American embassy—a place described by Ayatu'llah Ruhullah Khomeini as "the nest of spies." In a resonant voice he would proclaim, "I told the Americans that Muslims were fighting the Tudeh Party and, if they were to support the Baha'is, it would be like supporting the Tudeh Party, which is an enemy of America." In this way, Muhammad-Taqi Falsafi painted himself as America's supporter in their fight against communism and socialism in Iran, and insinuated that the Cold War waged by the Americans and their European allies was in reality also aimed at combating the Baha'is,

¹⁴⁸ Rawdih-khan—these reciters of the story of the Imams would also preach as part of their performances.

and that their supporters were part of the same policy framework. His implication was that the suppression of Baha'is was not a religious issue but a struggle to guard Iran's national unity as part of the overall plan to fight worldwide communism.¹⁴⁹

Muntaziri's Role in the Persecution of Baha'is

The anti-Baha'i activities of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi were not limited to

launching Falsafi, the preacher, on his theological outbursts against the Baha'is. He dispatched his seminary students and hired thugs to every corner of the country to provoke the already inflamed religious fanatics to murder Baha'is and plunder their properties. Based on information from hundreds of relevant documents, the present author can only briefly draw attention to the activities of Shaykh Husayn-'Ali Muntaziri, who was one of the most mischievous clerics under the tutelage of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi. At that time, Shaykh Husayn-'Ali Muntaziri was a young seminarian, but in the winter of his life he reached the rank of Grand Ayatu'llah and was a deputy to Ayatu'llah Ruhullah Khomeini, the supreme leader of the Islamic Revolution. He has made public a lengthy account of his life and without any hesitation—indeed with great pride—has recounted many events. Here we note only a few passages:

The late Burujirdi was extremely anti-Baha'i. For instance, they had killed a Baha'i near Yazd and planned to execute his murderer....Burujirdi had lost sleep over this and wanted to prevent this hanging by any possible means. [Through the illegal exertions of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi and the collusion of the government, the murderer was set free.]

One year, Burujirdi instructed Falsafi to give sermons against the Baha'is on the radio during Ramadan. Ayatu'llah Kashani also concurred with this. At the beginning of Ramadan, Falsafi began his preaching against Baha'is. That year his sermons became very popular and people would gather around the radio to listen to him....

[It was about this time that Muntaziri was given a mission to go to Najafabad.]

I asked Ayatu'llah Burujirdi about business dealings, trade, and commerce with Baha'is, and in response he issued a written fatwa [religious judgment] stating: "In His Name, the Exalted! It is incumbent upon all Muslims to leave off all association, relationship, and dealings with this sect [the Baha'is]...."

News of the proclamation spread throughout the city and received a great deal

of publicity in mosques and other public places....With the announcement of this religious ruling, an atmosphere of extreme tension was created against the Baha'is in Najafabad.

At that time, I gathered representatives from every class and occupation of Najafabad, and each was asked to produce a proclamation against Baha'is. For instance, the bakers wrote, "We will not sell bread to Baha'is." The taxi-drivers wrote, "We will not permit Baha'is in our cabs."...In short, a taxi ride between Najafabad and Isfahan, which had previously cost one tuman, could not be had for fifty tumans by a Baha'i no matter how much he pleaded. Of course, these actions were not always based on religious faith. Many participated because they feared others or were forced to, due to the general social mood....

149For more details, see Iran-Namih, a journal of Iranian Studies, published in America, special issue, 19 (Winter/Spring 2001): 1-2, devoted to the religious minorities of Iran. (BC)

Eventually, as a result of this campaign, they [the Baha'is] were all dislodged from Najafabad....After they were dispersed, they would hide themselves from public view....We extended this hostility to Isfahan as well, where a widespread uproar against Baha'is was initiated....After a while, it became known that I was the instigator and the author of these affairs.¹⁵⁰

It was through the scheming of this "fair-minded" cleric—Ayatu'llah Muntaziri—that the homes of the Baha'is of Najafabad were plundered and looted, and they were made to wander homeless after being compelled to leave their native town, while the government took no action to protect them. Further, it was by the instructions of this "propagandist" and the "brilliant mind behind vilayat-i faqih [leadership of religious jurists]" that the Baha'i Center of Najafabad was set on fire and burned to the ground. Muntaziri admits that Ayatu'llah Burujirdi, "was completely aware of what was going on and was most pleased with my activities." Owing to the machination of clerics more cunning than he, Muntaziri failed to become

the deputy of the Imam and even received a letter from his supreme leader dated 6 Farvardin 1368 [March 26, 1989] that will live forever in the history of the “militant clerics.” In this letter, Khomeini addressed Muntaziri without the title of Ayatu’llah:

Your Excellency Mr. Muntaziri,

With a broken heart and great sadness, I write this short letter so that one day the people may become apprised of the situation.... You have forfeited the necessary prerequisites and qualifications to become the next leader of the nation.... (From now on,) tell the seminarians who bring you money to take the funds to Qum, to the home of Mr. Pasandidih (my brother) or to bring them to Tehran to Jamaran (my residence). Praise unto God that you have no shortage of financial means (thanks to the Islamic Revolution and plundering the possessions of Muslims and non-Muslims).

At this point in the letter, the Imam refers to his deputy as dim-witted and with the customary language of an akhund addresses Muntaziri, “Since you are a simpleton,” you must remain under house arrest, “perchance God would pardon you your sins.” At the letter’s conclusion, Khomeini writes the reason for this communication:

You have committed a treasonous act against the nameless soldiers of the Hidden Imam¹⁵¹ and the sacred blood of the martyrs for Islam and the Revolution. So that you would not burn in the depths of hell, you should confess your mistakes and sins, perchance God would aid you.

In response to this insulting letter, the deputy of Imam Khomeini, the illustrious Grand Ayatu’llah Husayn-‘Ali Muntaziri, wrote most pathetically and meekly, “Please allow me to

150 Khatirat Ayatu’llah Husayn-‘Ali Muntaziri [Memoirs of Ayatu’llah Husayn-‘Ali Muntaziri], Germany: Nima,

2000, pp. 94–96. [This document can also be downloaded at <http://www.amontazeri.com>—in this edition this reference is at vol. 1, pp. 179–80, accessed 21 May 2008]. (BC)

151 The author is referring to treason against the agents of SAVAMA and VEVAK. SAVAMA stands for

Sazman Ittila‘at va Amniyat Milli Iran, which was the successor of the Shah’s secret police, SAVAK. Later, SAVAMA was transformed into Vizarat Ittila‘at va Amniyat Kishvar, or VEVAK for short.

continue my studies and teachings as before, like a small and insignificant seminarian, under the wise shadow of your exalted leadership.”¹⁵²

The Collusion of the Clerics and the Government

At the conclusion of Ramadan 1334 [May 1955], the most distinguished of the clerics, the religious leaders, the renowned preachers, and those who promoted Shi‘ism from the pulpits, along with a representative of Ayatu’llah Burujirdi gathered in the residence of Ayatu’llah Khunsari. After discussions and consultations, the participants composed a communication addressed to “the presence of His Majesty the King,” requesting urgent and ultimate disposal of the Baha’is of Iran. In this letter, the Muslim clerics stated at length their submission and fidelity to the Crown and pleaded with the Shah to conclude the situation of the Baha’is in much the same brutal and bloody way that he had eliminated the members of the Tudeh Party, insisting that delay would only prolong the inevitable. The struggle to cleanse Iran of the presence of “the wayward and misguided Baha’i sect” gradually turned into an anti-Western and anti-American struggle, and in the course of several decades ultimately evolved into a rebellion intent on toppling the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran. The presence of the two highest-ranking military chiefs at the destruction of the Baha’i Haziratu’l-Quds in Tehran was a clear sign of the Shah’s support and his government’s encouragement of persecution and the suppression of Baha’is—an act devoid of foresight and intended solely to appease the high-ranking clerics.... The mullas’ activities against Baha’is were not only to protect “the foundation of the true religion of Islam” but also an instrument by which the clerical establishment sought to demonstrate their power and influence to the government and people alike. It was the clerical establishment (and not, as was commonly believed among the people, due to the unwise assertions of the Tudeh Party, Sha‘ban Khan Ja‘fari), who were the “tajbakhsh” [king maker]. The truth was something other than what the ordinary people believed.

Whenever social reforms appeared to conflict with the interest of the clerics, the clerical establishment would remind the Shah and his government that he wore the crown and sat on the throne solely due to its active role in the 1953 coup d'état. In the letters of Ayatu'llah Burujirdi, in the communications or speeches of Ayatu'llah Khomeini prior to 15 Khurdad [the Islamic Revolution], and in the memoirs of various clerics that are presently being published by the Islamic regime in Iran, we repeatedly see that the Shah was warned that he owed the return of his crown to the actions of "militant clerics" against Dr. Musaddiq's government. In some letters, we note that they cautioned the Shah that if he were to undertake any act that would displease the clerics or jurists, they had the power and ability to remove him from the throne.¹⁵³

152 Khatirat Ayatu'llah Husayn-'Ali Muntaziri, pp. 539–40 [in on-line version at vol. 1, pp. 673–76, pp. 681–82].

(BC)

153 Marja'iyat dar 'Arsih-yi Ijtima' va Siyasat. In this book, we encounter many documents discussing the relationship between the Shah and his governments with various high-ranking clerics such as Ayatu'llahs Mirza Muhammad Husayn Na'ini, Haji Sayyid Abu'l-Hasan Isfahani, Haji Aqa Husayn Qumi, Haji Shaykh Abdu'l-Karim Ha'iri-Yazdi, and Haji Aqa Husayn Burujirdi. Indeed these documents would be most illuminating and surprising for any researcher. Citing all these documents would, however, unduly prolong this brief essay. (BC)

Recollections of Dr. Ha'iri-Yazdi

Ayatu'llah 'Abdu'l-Karim Ha'iri-Yazdi was an object of emulation (marja' at-taqlid) of the Shi'ih and the founder of a religious school in Qum. His son Dr. Mahdi Ha'iri-Yazdi studied in Qum and later continued his advanced studies in Western philosophy in England, the United States, and Canada. He remained in the West continuing to teach and research in philosophy. Dr. Habib Ladjivardi has published, in the form of an interview, the memoirs of Dr. Mahdi Ha'iri-Yazdi as part of Harvard University's Iranian Oral History Project. Some

of these memoirs relate to events after the 1953 coup, the role of the clerics, the fall of Dr.

Musaddiq, and the collusion of the Shah with the clerics in running the country. They are most illuminating in understanding the evolution of modern politics and religion in Iran.

Regarding the issue of vilayat-i faqih [the rule of religious jurists], Dr. Mahdi Ha'iri-Yazdi

states, "The way [the Islamic Republic] has defined this theory has no basis whatsoever. At

least I have been unable to find any evidence in the book [Qu'ran], the traditions [sunnat] or in logic to support such a system."

Ha'iri-Yazdi had a close relationship with Ayatu'llah Burujirdi and relates:

On religious matters, Burujirdi would instruct the regime what to do, and the government would follow his wishes. For instance, he did not approve of Dr. Musaddiq. However, when the Shah returned from Italy [after the coup], Burujirdi approved of him.

Dr. Musaddiq showed Burujirdi great respect, to the point that he used his position to pass a special legislation such that any publication which printed anything that offended the person of the marja' at-taqlid [object of emulation] would

be banned immediately without even a trial. This law was passed solely for Burujirdi.

It even caused annoyance to Ayatu'llah Kashani. In fact, one of the reasons that

Kashani disassociated himself from Dr. Musaddiq was this very legislation and the feeling that Dr. Musaddiq had sided with Burujirdi.

Dr. Ha'iri-Yazdi recounts an incident involving Ayatu'llah Mir Siyyid Muhammad Bihbahani

which is most interesting and instructive. According to this recollection, Ayatu'llah

Bihbahani had knowledge of the 1953 coup d'état before it took place.

Ha'iri-Yazdi states,

"On the morning of 28 Mordad [August 19, 1953], the sun had not yet risen, when the

phone rang." The call was from the residence of Ayatu'llah Bihbahani with the instruction

that he should immediately come before the Ayatu'llah for "an urgent matter." Ha'iri-Yazdi

quickly went to Bihbahani's home and was told by the Ayatu'llah:

This morning you should leave for Qum. Go before Burujirdi and convey to him on

my behalf, “Master, the country is on the verge of dismemberment. Soon it will be ruined because there is talk of forming a republic. The Shah has left, and any day now the country will be thrown into chaos and disorder. It is certain that the country will move to the other side of the Iron Curtain. No name will remain of religion; no name of him [Burujirdi]; no mention of religious guidance; no memory of the principles of the faith. The country will become communist. He should devise a plan—perhaps a communication, or a ruling—so that people would be made aware of the truth of the matter and would rise to oppose the Tudehis. In short, do not allow the country to become communist.”

Ha’iri-Yazdi continues, “I should mention that just as he considered Baha’is to be the disruptors of security and a threat to the country’s independence, Ayatu’llah Burujirdi also

viewed the Tudeh Party in the same light. And so, he combated the Tudeh Party the same way that he combated the Baha’is.

A question was asked of Dr. Ha’iri-Yazdi regarding Ayatu’llah Burujirdi’s “intense and open battles against the Baha’is after 1953.” Dr. Ha’iri-Yazdi responded:

[Burujirdi] had a grand strategy.... At that time, Khomeini was one of the confidants

of Burujirdi. In fact, it was widely acknowledged that he was Burujirdi’s foreign

minister. This was at a time when he had not, as yet, come into conflict with Burujirdi. On at least one occasion during that episode, Khomeini went to the court

and met with the Shah on Burujirdi’s behalf. After this meeting, I met with Khomeini. He himself explained, “Yes, I went as the emissary of Burujirdi and met

with the Shah.” In telling this, Khomeini seemed very joyful and vigorous.

Khomeini, continuing what he said to me, related, “I said to His Majesty, ‘The late

Shah, your Majesty’s father, had this wayward group [the Baha’is] completely

reduced and immobilized. And now the people of Iran expect the same from you.’”

This is exactly what Khomeini related for me....

Burujirdi had conspired with the Shah to suppress and control these people [the Baha’is] as much as possible. For example, their Haziratu’l-Quds, which was their

propaganda center located on Hafez Street, was closed. At that time, they had agreed on this plan—a plan in which the Shah himself was involved. They instructed

Falsafi to commence his sermons from the pulpit in the Shah Mosque during the month of Ramadan and to prepare people for this. And they accomplished their plan.¹⁵⁴

Dealing with “The Baha’i Problem”¹⁵⁵

As anti-Baha’i violence flared up in cities across the country, Iranian politicians conducted equally incendiary debates about “the Baha’i problem” in the Iranian Parliament or Majlis.

On May 10, 1955, Siyyid Ahmad Safa’i, the Qazvin deputy, with the support of Burujirdi and Falsafi, introduced a bill in the Iranian Majlis that proposed a four-part solution to the problem:¹⁵⁶

Article 1. The corrupt community of the Babis and their adherents, the Azalis and the Baha’is, are opposed to the security of the country and are declared illegal.

Article 2. Henceforth, membership in this community [i.e., Baha’i], and any pretense or adherence to it in any way, constitutes a misdemeanor, and the perpetrator will be sentenced to solitary confinement from 2 to 10 years and will be deprived of all civil rights.

Article 3. The properties [in the form of estate, land, or house] that are places of congregation and organizations related to this community, or revenue spent on issues related to this community, will be transferred to the Ministry of Culture to be used for the purpose of establishing educational organizations and spreading religious and godly principles.

¹⁵⁴ Ladjevardi, *Khatirat Dr Mahdi Ha’iri-Yazdi*, pp. 34–59. (BC)

¹⁵⁵ This section, to “what really destroyed the Baha’i community was the Islamic Revolution,” is quoted, with

slight alterations, from *A Faith Denied: The Persecution of the Baha’is of Iran*.

¹⁵⁶ Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu’l-Islam Falsafi*, p. 207.

Article 4. People adhering to this community, who are serving in government offices and related organizations, will from this day be fired from civil service and will in no way be subject to the employment law [i.e., cannot be hired].¹⁵⁷

Safa’i’s bill failed to garner sufficient support to pass into law, due in

part to the government's anxieties over the potential international repercussions and concern about the legality of such measures. On May 17th, Minister of the Interior 'Alam presented the Majlis with a draft decree the government proposed to circulate to provincial and city governors in accordance with the government's decision to put down all anti-religious manifestations and demonstrations. Some deputies complained that the decree did not explicitly identify the Baha'is as agitators, making it difficult for the local authorities to know exactly where their duty lay, and they pressed 'Alam to implement the policies suggested in Safa'i's bill. 'Alam responded that the government was prepared to act but only within the constraints of the law. The Parliament Deputy Dr. Shahkar proposed a compromise that he felt would obviate the government's concern for legal proprieties. Dr. Shahkar suggested that 'Alam's decree be amended to include the following formulation:

The formation of sects which, under the guise of religion, spread disorder, and which have adopted the name of Baha'ism in order to implement political objectives is proscribed, inasmuch as their existence is illegal and the cause of the dissolution of order and security; and since they contradict the true religion of Islam.

Although this language was not retained in the final version of the decree, which simply restated the position of Twelver Shi'ism as the official state religion, this formula for dismissing the Baha'i community as a political movement rather than as a faith was one to which the Islamic Republic's authorities would later return. The decree ultimately issued by Minister of the Interior 'Alam empowered local authorities to "take measures to dissolve those social centers which are causing religious and secular sedition and are the source of attacks against security and order." However, in a firm rebuff to the clergy and their supporters in the Parliament, 'Alam's decree also underlined that taking such measures was the sole responsibility of government officials and instructed

157 For the text of the bill, see Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu'l-Islam Falsafi*, p. 207, citing Kayhan, no. 3575,

20/2/1334 (May 11, 1955). Safa'i, who had introduced the bill at the request of Burujirdi, subsequently continued to urge the implementation of point no. 4, the purging of Baha'is from government positions. See also *Bakhshnamiyih Vazir Kishvar Raji' Bih Firqiyyih Baha'i* [Circular from the Minister of Interior about the Baha'is sect], published in *Ittila'at*, no. 8677 on 26/2/1334 (May 17, 1955) warning that centers and societies that are anti-religion would be dissolved, but that attempts to disrupt order on the pretext of fighting the "straying sects" would not be tolerated either. Ayatu'llah Burujirdi was dismayed with the governmental authorities when this proposal met with opposition and delays. See Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu'l-Islam Falsafi*, p. 210, citing Davani, *Zindiganiyih Za'im Buzurg 'Alam Tasha'yu Ayatu'llah Burujirdi*, p. 246: "After the fight against the Baha'is proved unsuccessful, Ayatu'llah Burujirdi's relationship with the government, the Shah and his court became cold, and despair and distrust settled in [the Ayatu'llah's] mind. The Shah and the government did not care for Ayatu'llah Burujirdi's requests and with sarcastic and derogatory remarks, caused much worry and tribulation for him in the last years of his life."

local governors "to take measures" against anyone provoking unrest "under the guise...of struggling against deceiving sects."158 Throughout the 1950s the clergy consistently spearheaded the repression of the Baha'i community. Their efforts, however, were ultimately checked by government ministers, who, although sympathetic to the popular anti-Baha'i sentiment, feared that anti-Baha'i violence would spin out of control and attract international criticism. Once clerical rule was established through the Islamic Revolution, the clergy was free to revisit without interference the objectives it had failed to attain in the 1950s. Most of Safa'i's proposals were ultimately implemented by the new Islamic Republic, although they were now couched in the language suggested by Dr. Shahkar. As Falsafi observed in his memoirs:

Although the sermons of Ramadan 1334 [1955] dealt a blow against the Baha'is, what really destroyed the Baha'i community was the Islamic Revolution.159

The Hujjatiyyih

To appease and placate the mullas, the Shah sacrificed an innocent religious minority, when

in reality, every Iranian, young and old, knew that the Baha'is had no opposition to the

parliamentary government and were not enemies of the state.

After that, once more in order to indulge the mullas, SAVAK created the

Hujjatiyyih

Mahdaviyyah Charitable Society for combating Baha'is. [The Hujjatiyyih...was a

fundamentalist Islamic organization.¹⁶⁰ The organization's name refers to

Hujjat, a title of the

Hidden Imam Mahdi, awaited by Shi'i Muslims, as a sign of opposition to the

Baha'is who

believed the Bab was the Hidden Imam. Hujjatiyyih is said to be affiliated with and at times

considered synonymous with the Anjuman Tablighat Islami [Islamic Propaganda Society].¹⁶¹

The organization was founded by a clerical student named Shaykh Mahmud Zikrzadieh

Tavalla'i, also known as Halabi, who is reported to have been a close friend of Khomeini.¹⁶²

Sometimes termed the Anjuman Zidd Baha'iyat [anti-Baha'i society], the principal aim of the

Hujjatiyyih was to combat the Baha'i faith, and it devoted much of its energies to training

cadres in the "scientific defense" of Shi'i Islam in the face of the Baha'i theological

¹⁵⁸ The final draft read: "In keeping with Articles 20 and 21 of the Constitution, anti-religious publications and

the formation of societies and associations provoking religious and secular sedition and disorder are prohibited

throughout the country. Therefore, in implementing the principles of the Constitution you shall take measures

to dissolve those social centers which are causing religious and secular sedition and are the source of attack

against security and order. Henceforth, you will take steps in all seriousness to implement this important duty

with which you are entrusted in conformity with the Constitution and stop any kind of demonstrations or acts

on the part of this type of groups, and which acts are prohibited by law. At the same time, since taking steps in

these matters and implementing these laws is the task of government officials, and since the intervention of

individuals or groups having no responsibility will cause disorder and insecurity, therefore, it is to be

remembered that you are fully empowered to take measures against any person who provokes the people to act against the security of the country, under the guise and in the capacity of struggling against deceiving sects, or [any person] who himself commits acts which produce the smallest tremor against public order and security, according to those provisions of the criminal code which anticipate such crimes.”

159 Davani, *Khatirat va Mubarizat Hujjatu’l-Islam Falsafi*, pp. 209–10.

160 See Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, p. 157; and Rubin, *Into the Shadows:*

Radical Vigilantes in Khatami’s Iran, p. 13.

161 Rubin, *Into the Shadows: Radical Vigilantes in Khatami’s Iran*, p. 14.

162 Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, p. 157.

challenge.¹⁶³ The organization attracted the support of such key religious leaders as

Ayatu’llah Burujirdi, Hujjatu’l-Islam Falsafi, Ayatu’llah Mara’shi

Najafi, Ayatu’llah Milani,

Siyyid Abdu’llah Shirazi, and Ayatu’llah Baha’id-Din Mahallati.¹⁶⁴ Other alleged members of

the Hujjatiyyih who obtained powerful positions after the 1979 revolution were Supreme

Leader Siyyid ‘Ali Khamenei, Foreign Minister ‘Ali-Akbar Vilayati, and the Minister of

Education and President Mohammad-‘Ali Raja’i.]¹⁶⁵

This Society had many branches throughout Iran under SAVAK’s supervision,¹⁶⁶ and

was engaged in religious activities, in intelligence gathering and propaganda methods, thus

causing uproar and unrest among religious minorities, particularly among the Baha’is.

Although the Hujjatiyyih Society was undoubtedly founded with the Shah’s collaboration,

gradually, and unanticipated by its founders, it became a recruiting ground for the “Islamic

Coalition Societies” and the Mujahidin Khalq organization [an organization that came to

oppose the Shah and led to his downfall].¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Hojjatiyeh entry, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, p. 426, available at <http://www.bahai.org/persecution/iran/iranica2>.

¹⁶⁴ See http://hojatieh.persianblog.com/1382_5_hojatieh_archive.html.

¹⁶⁵ With slight alterations, this section is taken from *A Faith Denied: The Persecution of the Baha’is of Iran*.

¹⁶⁶ After the Islamic Revolution, a number of SAVAK’s secret documents were discovered. *Mujadiah* newspaper,

in its June 9, 1980 issue, printed a facsimile of a document related to the year 1350 [1971], which is illuminating: “Regarding Anjuman Tablighat Islami [Society for the Promotion of Islam]. The supervisor of Anjuman Islami in the central office [Tehran] has requested SAVAK to provide necessary aid in combating Baha’is scientifically and intellectually. In sharing this request of the Anjuman Islami with your contacts among known elements in the region, kindly emphasize that their activities should not cause provocation or interference. In simpler terms, while maintaining public order, Anjuman Tablighat Islami is permitted to use SAVAK’s assistance to combat the Baha’is.” The chief of SAVAK’s Third Department signed this document. Also, Subh Azadigan newspaper, in its Bahman 1360 [February 1982] issue, in an article under the title “A Glance at the Anjuman Hujjatiyyih,” described at length the deep relationship between SAVAK and Anjuman Hujjatiyyih. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between SAVAK and Anjuman Hujjatiyyih, see Hizb Qa’idin Zaman [‘The Party of Founders of Time’] (a name for the Anjuman Hujjatiyyih), by ‘Amadu’ d-Din Baghi. (BC)

167 See Moin, *Life of the Ayatollah*; 1999, p. 66, asserting that the Shah “not only tolerated the activities of

[Hujjatiyyih founder] Sheikh Mahmud Halabi and his fellow anti-Baha’i clergymen, but allowed the clergy’s fight against the Baha’is to be aired from the government-controlled media. In an unprecedented move in 1955, Tehran Radio broadcast a series of anti-Baha’i sermons by Mohammad Taqi Falsafi, Iran’s leading preacher.”

About the Author

Dr. Bahram Choubine is a prominent Iranian sociologist and historian specializing in the social, political, and religious history of Iran and the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries. He has written numerous articles and books, and has also edited a number of books for publication in Persian and German, some of which have been translated into English and French. For several decades, Bahram Choubine has been actively promoting human rights and freedom of expression in Iran. He lives in Germany, where he is finalizing his much-anticipated study on the prophetic life of Muhammad. His published works in

Persian

include:

- Tashai‘ va Siyasat dar Iran [Shi‘ism and politics in Iran], in 4 volumes;
- Andishih Istiqlal va Hakimiyat Milli dar Nihzat Mushrutiyat Iran [The concept of independence and nationalism in the constitutional revolution of Iran];
- 23 Sal [23 years]; ‘Ali Dashti’s text in 700 annotated pages with a 200-page foreword by Bahram Choubine, discussing political and social developments in Iran in the 20th century; now in its 19th printing;
- Ru‘ya-yi Sadiqih [True dream], by Siyyid Jamal Va‘iz Isfahani and others, introduced and annotated in Persian, German, and French; first-time publication of this work;
- Sih Maktub [Three epistles], by Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, introduced in 200 pages and set in its historical context; first-time publication of this work, presently in its 3rd printing;
- Maktubat [Correspondence] by Mirza Fath-‘Ali Akhundzadiah, with a 300-page introduction about the life of the author and social and political movements of 19th-century Iran;
- Karivan Islam [The caravan of Islam] by Sadiq Hidayat, introduced and published for the first time;
- Kulthum Nanih, by Mulla Aqa Jamal Khansalari, introduced and annotated.

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