

# Eyewitness Account of the Massacre of Bahá'ís in Nayriz on the Naw-Ruz 'Abdu'l-Bahá Interred the Remains of The Báb on Mount Carmel

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Naw-Ruz 1909 is a significant landmark in the history of the first Bahá'í century. 'Abdu'l-Bahá chose the festive occasion to accomplish a most sacred task entrusted to Him by His Father. The task was the interment of the remains of the Báb in a specific spot in the heart of Mount Carmel in Haifa. When Bahá'u'lláh assigned the task to His Most Great Branch, the remains of the Báb were still in Iran and the land on which a befitting Mausoleum for the purpose was to be built had not yet been acquired. The accomplishment of the task became one of the principle objectives of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry. This objective and that of His trip to the West achieved within a short period after He gained freedom from decades of exile and incarceration are mysteriously linked. He undertook His historic journey to Egypt and the West only after He had successfully completed the original structure of the Shrine of the Báb and ceremoniously interred the body of the martyred Herald of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation in the designated spot. Another historic event took place thousands of miles away during that historic Naw-Ruz: The believers in Nayriz were targeted once again for adhering to the tenets of the nascent Faith, and eighteen souls innocent of any wrongdoing were tortured and put to death. 'Abdu'l-Bahá links the interment of the "sanctified body of His Holiness, the Báb ... in the Shrine on Mount Carmel" to the event in Nayriz. He says: "[S]acrifice was necessary and martyrdom required ... The loved ones in Nayriz ... won the trophy of excellence."<sup>1</sup>

## The Interment of the Remains of The Báb

Gripping as is the life and martyrdom of the Báb, the account of the rescue of His body, its transfer to the Holy Land, and interment in a spot designated by Bahá'u'lláh in the heart of Mount Carmel sixty years later is no less fascinating. According to Shoghi Effendi, “[T]he mangled bodies of the Báb and His fellow-martyr, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali Zunuzi, were removed, in the middle of the second night following their execution, through the pious intervention of Haji Sulayman Khan, from the edge of the moat where they had been cast to a silk factory owned by one of the believers of Milan, and were laid the next day in a wooden casket, and thence carried to a place of safety. Subsequently, according to Bahá'u'lláh's instructions, they were transported to Tíhran and placed in the shrine of Imam-Zadih Hasan” [GPB 273]. The decision to transfer the remains to Tíhran “was prompted by the wish the Báb Himself had expressed in the ‘Ziyarat-i-Shah ‘Abdu'l-'Azim,”<sup>2</sup> in which, addressing the buried saint, He says: “Well is it with you to have found your resting-place in Rayy, under the shadow of My Beloved. Would that I might be entombed within the precincts of that holy ground!”<sup>3</sup>

It took sixty years from the date the bodies of the Báb and His fellow-martyr were removed from the edge of the moat outside Tabriz until they were finally interred in the Shrine on Mount Carmel. During that time “by reason of the ascendancy of the enemy, and from fear of the malevolent” the sacred remains knew “neither rest nor tranquility” until “through the mercy of the Abha Beauty” they were “ceremoniously deposited, on the day of Naw-Ruz, within the sacred casket, in the exalted Shrine on Mt. Carmel.”<sup>4</sup> Early in His ministry, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá arranged for the “precious Trust” to be transported to the Holy Land. It was delivered into His hands on 31 January 1899 [GPB 274].

Immediately after the remains reached the Holy Land, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá with great difficulty acquired the plot of land on Mount Carmel, which Bahá'u'lláh had specified for the Resting Place of the Báb’s remains, and began constructing the original six rooms of the Shrine. With the intrigues employed by

Covenant-breakers to abort or at least indefinitely delay the completion of the project, it took nine years for the original structure to be built. "Every stone of that building, every stone of the road leading to it" 'Abdu'l-Bahá "with infinite tears and at tremendous cost, raised and placed in position" [GPB 275]. To help the believers grasp the significance of this undertaking and appreciate its vital importance, Shoghi Effendi says:

'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself testified, on more than one occasion, that the safe transfer of these remains, the construction of a befitting mausoleum to receive them, and their final interment with His own hands in their permanent resting-place constituted one of the three principal objectives which, ever since the inception of His mission, He had conceived it His paramount duty to achieve. This act indeed deserves to rank as one of the outstanding events in the first Bahá'í century. [GPB 273]

The successful completion of this sacred undertaking fulfilled an old prophecy in Zechariah: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord."<sup>5</sup> The enshrining of the remains of the Báb paved the way for another remarkable achievement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry: His trip to Egypt, North America and Europe. The consummation of the second depended on the accomplishment of the first and neither was possible without 'Abdu'l-Bahá gaining freedom from decades of exile and strict confinement. His freedom could not be realized without drastic changes in Iran and Turkey, two countries intent on uprooting the nascent Cause of God or at least keeping its advancement in check. Had the necessary changes occurred sooner, Abdu'l-Bahá would have built the Báb's Shrine, entombed His remains earlier, then undertaken His trip to the West when He was younger and time constraints were not so intense. Freedom came when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was sixty-six years old and His health impaired. Time was of the essence. The world was moving toward the first conflagration of international magnitude. With the dethronement of Muhammad-'Ali Shah in Iran and Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid, the Ottoman Emperor, impediments to His freedom were removed. Several months after achieving

freedom, He with His own hands placed, during a moving ceremony, the inner casket containing the sacred remains of the Báb and His fellow-martyr in the marble sarcophagus prepared by the Bahá'ís of Rangoon, Burma. The sarcophagus had arrived and been placed beforehand in the vault of the Shrine, which had been built for the purpose. The historic Naw-Ruz that witnessed one of the most significant achievements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry coincided with the martyrdom of eighteen Bahá'ís in Nayriz.

In a visitation prayer revealed in 1909 in honor of the Bahá'í martyrs of Nayriz, 'Abdu'l-Bahá beseeches God to make their blood the cause of the dissemination of divine signs, of the appearance of mysteries and the shining of light in other lands.<sup>6</sup> On the Naw-Ruz that witnessed the interment of the remains of the Báb on Mount Carmel and the martyrdom of the Bahá'ís in Nayriz, 'Abdu'l-Bahá received the joyous news of the convocation in Chicago of the first American Bahá'í Convention and the election of the members of the Bahá'í Temple Unity, a prelude to the election of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, linking the entombment of the remains of the Báb and the election of the Bahá'í Temple Unity with the martyrdom of the believers in Nayriz.

On the day of the entombment of the remains of the Bab, three believers from Nayriz were among the eastern and western pilgrims present at the ceremony.<sup>7</sup> On that day 'Abdu'l-Bahá singled out the three Nayrizi pilgrims for special consideration. The outpourings of His loving kindness vouchsafed to these three pilgrims astonished the recipients and everyone present. After the ceremony, 'Abdu'l-Bahá announced that there was room in His carriage for three people. Not wishing to show favoritism, He asked that a lot be drawn. The drawn names were those of the three pilgrims from Nayriz. These friends were well aware of their unworthiness and of the presence at the gathering of devoted and outstanding believers from the east and the west, so they could not fathom the significance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá focusing His special attention on them. The following day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went for a walk along the seashore and took with Him the pilgrims from Nayriz. As He was walking, He looked at

the sea and spoke of a storm. Seeing the calm sea, the Nayrizi pilgrims thought 'Abdu'l-Bahá was speaking of a storm in the making. 'Abdu'l-Bahá repeated: "The sea is stormy, very stormy." He then turned to the pilgrims and said you are dismissed. Tomorrow you return home. He gave them specific instructions how to proceed and said: Tarry not anywhere until you reach home.<sup>8</sup>

## The Mystery of Sacrifice

Shortly after the martyrdom of the believers in Nayriz during Naw-Ruz 1909, 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed a Tablet. In it He speaks of the heroism of the friends, of the atrocities they suffered and the effect of the pure blood that was shed there. The Tablet leaves no doubt that the martyrdom of those lovers of the Blessed Beauty was a ransom for the highly remarkable undertaking of His ministry, the interment of the sanctified body of the Báb in its eternal resting place on Mount Carmel:

O ye Friends of God! In these days Nayriz hath become the place for blood shedding. Sanctified souls among the loved ones of the Lord have sacrificed their lives and hastened to the field of martyrdom in the path of the conspicuous Light. For this the eyes are tearful and hearts burn with sorrow. Sobbing and sighs have soared to the highest heaven and extreme sadness hath caused lamentation to appear anew. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's highest wish is to quaff a drop of the chalice of faithfulness and to be intoxicated with the wine of sacrifice, that the end of His life may be the beginning of infinite grace...

O ye friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! In these days, through a felicitous event and confirmations from the Lord of the highest Heaven, as well as assistance from the unseen Kingdom, the sanctified body of His Highness, the Bab, was interred in its Shrine on Mount Carmel. Therefore, sacrifice was necessary and martyrdom required. The loved ones in Nayriz, inebriated by this brimming chalice and with the rod of high resolve, have won the

trophy of excellence. Happy are they and blessed is this chalice, which is overflowing with the wine of the love of God. Upon them be the Glory of God...<sup>9</sup>

The necessity of sacrifice and the requirement of martyrdom in relation to the interment of the remains of the Báb and its linkage to what the Bahá’ís of Nayriz suffered highlight the significance of a phenomenon strongly present in the early history of the Bahá’í Faith. The tree of the Cause of God has indeed been nurtured with the blood of martyrs. Before His declaration, the Báb offered up His only son, Ahmad, as a sacrifice. Thousands of believers met their death and many more thousands sacrificed everything they possessed for the promotion of His Cause. He later offered His own life in the path of the One Whose Advent He had come to herald. Two decades later Bahá’u’lláh sacrificed His saintly son, Mirza Mihdi, for the realization of the lofty ideals of His Cause, while He was incarcerated together with His family and companions in the army barracks in ‘Akka. Nearly two years had passed since they had arrived there and lived under stringent restrictions. No change in their situation was in sight. The few pilgrims who spent months travelling on foot to attain Bahá’u’lláh’s presence had to be content with seeing the movement of His hand from a distance, then retrace their steps. For the doors of the prison to open, for some relief to come to Bahá’u’lláh, His family and companions, for the pilgrims to attain the presence of their Best Beloved, a mighty sacrifice was required. That sacrifice was the sanctified life of the Purest Branch, the youngest son of Bahá’u’lláh and Asiyyih Khanum. “His dying supplication to a grieving Father was that his life might be accepted as a ransom for those who were prevented from attaining the presence of their Beloved” [GPB 188]. Prison doors opened four months after his martyrdom.

The Purest Branch’s sacrifice served other purposes. The quickening of the world and the unification of its inhabitants owe their realization to Bahá’u’lláh offering up His beloved son as a ransom: “I have, O my Lord, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united” [GPB 188].

## The Uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya Kuhistani

The episode that led to the massacre of eighteen Bahá'ís in Nayriz during Naw-Ruz 1909 has become known as the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya, for it was under his command that the rebel forces living in the Kuhistan region surrounding Nayriz launched an attack on the town, wreaked havoc on the Bahá'í inhabitants, and massacred the male believers they laid their hands on. Rebels invariably thrive when chaos and confusion reign. When the government is strong, the officials are just and the rule of law is observed, they keep a low profile, ever ready to take advantage when the ingredients for security are absent.

The quest for freedom from the despotic rule of the Qajar kings began in Iran almost simultaneously with the Advent of the Báb in the mid-nineteenth century and culminated in the constitutional revolution in the early years of the twentieth century. The Advent of the Báb awakened the people of Iran to the potentialities inherent in human beings and raised their awareness of the glorious destiny awaiting the human race. His teachings spread throughout the country and beyond startling the ecclesiastics and government leaders alike. The transformative power of His revelation changed the inner realities and outward conduct of His followers, which continued to grow after His execution in 1850. Thousands of His followers were put to death, and Bahá'u'lláh, the most prominent and influential of all, was forced to leave the country and spend the rest of His life in exile. Some fair-minded scholars have begun assessing the influence of the Báb's teachings on the movement for reform in Iran. Future historians and analysts, unbiased and impartial, will no doubt cover in detail the crucial contribution that His Advent, as well as that of Bahá'u'lláh and the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have made to social and political change in that land and beyond.

The constitutional revolution created a fertile ground in Iran for the proponents and opponents of democracy to get entangled in their opposing ideologies and fight for priorities that served their selfish ends. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in constant communication with the believers and provided guidance that protected them from falling a victim to the intrigues employed

by self-seeking individuals on either side. The volume of Tablets revealed during that period testifies to the precariousness for the Bahá'ís of the events that transpired. Muzaffari'd-Din Shah's willingness during his ministry (1896-1906) to allow some measure of democracy to take hold afforded some relief to the Bahá'ís in Iran and enabled them to promote the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with less stringent restrictions. The atmosphere was favorable enough for 'Abu'l-Bahá to send a Bahá'í delegation consisting of Mr. Hippolyte Dreyfus and Lua Getsinger to meet the Shah and his Prime Minister, Mirza 'Ali Asghar Khan Atabak, during the Shah's second visit to Paris in 1902. The purpose of the meeting was to seek restitution of Bahá'í rights and appeal for justice. The relative calm during the rein of Musaffari'd-Din Shah provided the people of Iran, including the Bahá'ís, some measure of freedom to pursue independently matters of conscience. As a result, people in high office and from all walks of life, who wished to know about the Bahá'í Faith, had the opportunity to do so without fear of severe persecution.

The signing of the decree to adopt a constitution and establish a parliament in 1906 presaged a new era of social and political change in Iran. However, the Shah's death immediately after he signed the decree, his successor's opposition to democratic rule, and the blatant interference of foreign nations in the internal affairs of the country, threw everything into confusion and chaos ensued. Muhammad 'Ali Shah, who succeeded Muzaffari'd-Din Shah, disbanded the parliament and sided with those who benefited from dictatorship. He was dethroned by the proponents of democracy in 1909 and his son, Ahmad, a minor when he came to power, ruled by proxy. These rapid changes and deep-rooted ideological differences and conflicts weakened the central government, emboldened different factions and tribes who sought autonomy, and gave rise to rebellion especially in areas farther away from the capital. One such place was Nayriz, a small town situated about 228 kilometers to the south east of Shiraz.

Although a famous town in ancient Iran, when the Báb declared His Mission in 1844, Nayriz was an obscure place on the map of that country. What made it prominent again was the

heroism of the Bábís of the town who fought alongside Jinab-i-Vahid in the Fort of Khajih and defended their right to adhere to a new system of belief they considered the pathway to individual and collective transformation and salvation. That episode ended on 29 June 1850, ten days before the Báb's martyrdom, but the heroism of the believers did not end there. After Jinab-i Vahid and many valiant souls were martyred, the survivors of the Fort of Khajih episode were persecuted mercilessly. The continuation of the atrocities committed against the defenseless Bábí community reached unbearable proportions when Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan, the governor of Nayriz responsible for the first upheaval and the continued suffering of the believers, was murdered.

To escape the onslaught of a relentless enemy, the scattered beleaguered believers took refuge in nearby mountains under the leadership of 'Ali Sardar, assisted by Khajih Qutba, two young and brave souls who cared for the survivors of the first Nayriz upheaval. Their congregation alarmed the governor, who sent exaggerated reports to Shiraz and gathered an army to force the Bábís into submission. This second upheaval became known as Jang-i Jabal (Battle of Mountain), during which nineteen strongholds each consisting of nineteen brave believers engaged the combined forces of the government and tribal factions living in the area. One of the strongholds was defended solely by women under the leadership of Nanih Sami' (the mother of Sami').<sup>10</sup> The believers fought heroically to the last fighting man and woman. That episode occurred in 1852 and coincided with the imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh in the Siyah Chal of Tíhran and the intimation of His Mission in the concluding months of that year. The survivors of the second Nayriz upheaval, mostly old men, women and children, were taken captive and sent to Shiraz, every two riding on the back of an unsaddled horse, with the heads of martyrs on spears parading before them. Most men suffered martyrdom at different stages of the journey; the rest were executed in Tíhran. The women and children, after untold suffering, were freed in Shiraz and abandoned to their fate. Many returned to Nayriz, some remained in Shiraz. One of the survivors, a young boy about twelve years old, named Muhammad-Shafi', who had lost his father and four paternal uncles in the first and second

Nayriz upheavals, was taken captive together with his mother and grandfather. He and his mother were held in Shiraz; his grandfather, Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn, together with other male survivors, continued the arduous journey toward Tíhran.<sup>11</sup>

Muhammad-Shafi and his mother were among the women and children captives who were freed in Shiraz and remained there. Under the care of his mother he continued his education and grew up to be a staunch and devoted believer. With the help of the Imam Jum'ih, who knew his father and grandfather, Muhammad-Shafi` became proficient in religious knowledge necessary for holding responsible positions. Impressed with his personality and demeanor, after the death of his grandson, the Imam Jum'ih appointed Muhammad-Shafi` to the prestigious position of the Imam (prayer leader) of Jami` mosque in Nayriz.<sup>12</sup> He then became known as Mullá Muhammad-Shafi`, and served the people of his town and its surrounding areas with integrity and distinction. He attained Bahá'u'lláh's presence in Baghdad and dedicated his life to the promotion of His Cause. The many Tablets revealed in his honor testify to the staunchness of his faith and to the selfless services he rendered. He later wrote an account of the first and second upheavals in Nayriz during the Bábí period and sent the original of his manuscript to the Holy Land. Nabil bases his account of those episodes on Mullá Muhammad-Shafi's booklet.<sup>13</sup> It is believed that the account was written when Bahá'u'lláh directed Bahá'ís with firsthand knowledge of historical events to prepare such accounts and send them to the Holy Land. The original of Mulla Muhammad-Shafi's manuscript has so far not been found. It may have been among the material stolen by the Covenant-breakers. The draft of the manuscript was destroyed during the third episode, known as the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya.<sup>14</sup> Fortunately by then a few transcripts had been made and were held by certain individuals. Muhammad-Shafi` Rouhani, the author of *Lama'atu'l-Anvar* and the father of this writer, located one transcript in Rafsanjan in the province of Kirman, which he used for writing the history of the Babi-Bahá'í Faith in Nayriz.

An interval of more than half a century separates the second Nayriz upheaval, known as Jang-i Jabal (Battle of Mountain),

from the third episode, known as the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya. The lengthy lull in the cessation of hostilities has been attributed to the wise leadership of Mulla Muhammad-Shafi'. He established friendly relationship with governor Fath-'Ali Khan, the son of Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan.<sup>15</sup> The two entered into a formal agreement, which both sides honored to the end of their lives. The provisions of the agreement provided for mutual understanding and respect, and for disputes to be settled through negotiation, not violence and armed conflict. The friendly contacts between them led to the governor investigating the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's Claim and professing belief in the tenets of His Faith. During his governorship the general atmosphere in Nayriz changed and became so warm and friendly between Bahá'ís and Muslims that a number of prominent Bahá'í teachers were allowed to visit the place, teach the Cause of God to people of all backgrounds, and complement Mulla Muhammad-Shafi' in his efforts to promote the nascent Faith and deepen the understanding of the friends in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the friends' transition from the Bábí to Bahá'í Faith was very smooth. The militant Bábís of Nayriz accepted Bahá'u'lláh as the One for Whom the Báb had sacrificed Himself, and changed their conduct to comply with the tenets of His Cause, one of which was the abolition of holy war. Their firmness in Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant passed the test when after His Ascension the opponents of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His appointed Successor, tried hard but failed to win their support.

Mulla Muhammad-Shafi's eldest grandson and namesake, a true heir of his grandfather in many respects, by a strange coincidence was also twelve years old when the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya took place. Like his grandfather, the young Muhammad-Shafi' made acquiring knowledge his lifelong quest, became a committed Bahá'í, was steadfast like a solid rock in the Covenant, and dedicated his life to the promotion of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. One of his imperishable services has been the writing of the history of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths in Nayriz. After extensive search, as stated earlier, he found in Rafsanjan in the province of Kirman a transcribed copy of his grandfather's booklet, gathered his own notes, located and interviewed the living members of the families of survivors of

the earlier episodes, added his own observations of subsequent events, and wrote *Lama'atu'l-Anvar, Depicting the Soul-Stirring Episodes of Nayriz*.<sup>17</sup> He also wrote his memoirs, entitled *Khatirat-i Talkh va Shirin (Bittersweet Memories)* which were published after his death. The following account is based principally on these two sources.<sup>18</sup>

## **Eyewitness Account of the Massacre of Bahá'ís in Nayriz During Naw-Ruz 1909**

It was mid-March 1909 when the notorious rebel from the Kuhistan region, Shaykh Dhakariyya, who had earned his reputation by defying government regulations, by launching attacks on defenseless people, plundering property, using distortion to enrich himself and his supporters, even causing bloodshed, engaged in armed conflict with the local government of Nayriz. The attack did not happen in a vacuum. It was carried out on orders from Haji Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i Lari, the leader of the Shi'is of the area. His pretext was setting up a national government and protecting Islam from undesirable influences. It was several days before Naw-Ruz. Bahá'ís were fasting and like all Iranians were preparing to embrace the New Year. With the launching of the attack the festive mood turned somber, then it became a nightmare for the Bahá'ís of the town when on Naw-Ruz eve the Shaykh conquered an important fort outside Nayriz and turned the attack, which until then the inhabitants thought was political and against the local government, into an onslaught against the Bahá'ís. That Naw-Ruz coincided with the interment of the remains of the Báb in the heart of Mount Carmel, fulfilling the sacred task Bahá'u'lláh had entrusted to His Most Great Branch many years earlier.

That a rebel with meager resources and control over a tiny part of the country could in the name of religion declare war on a local governor installed and supported by the regime in power and prevail is a tale beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that during the reign of the Qajar kings, whom Iranians considered usurpers of the crown, clergy in Iran gained inordinate influence and meddled at will with matters of state culminating in humiliating defeat for the country, the loss of

territory to Russia, intensification of the influence of foreign powers, and causing widespread discontent. Disgusted with the hopeless situation, Iranians rose up against despotism and demanded reform. The movement for democracy gathered momentum and yielded some tangible results in the early years of the nineteenth century. The preoccupation with internal struggles for social and political change and the rapid succession of kings sapped whatever strength was left and exhausted the energy needed to keep law and order in the country. When the constitutional revolution was in full swing, in some provinces certain elements took advantage of the weakness of the central government and raised the banner of rebellion. Among them were clerics who worked with tribal heads and looked for opportunities to spread their influence. The deteriorated security situation was a gift to the rebels who thrived when chaos and confusion reigned. Some tribes revolted against the central authority and wreaked havoc on the regions they brought under their control. Nayriz was one of the worst affected areas.

During the constitutional revolution 'Abdu'l-Bahá provided constant guidance to the Bahá'ís of Iran and warned them emphatically against getting involved. As a result, the believers kept clear of politics and continued promoting the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, revolving around the principle of the oneness of humankind. The truce that Mulla Muhammad-Shafi` had negotiated with Fath-'Ali Khan, the governor of Nayriz, years earlier enabled prominent Bahá'í teachers to visit Nayriz, provide spiritual sustenance to the believers, and guide eager souls to the pathway of truth. The visit of the last two itinerant teachers during this period, Mr. Tarazu'llah Samandari, later appointed by Shoghi Effendi to the rank of a Hand of the Cause of God, and Mr. Ali Akbar Rafsanjani,<sup>19</sup> coincided with the period leading to the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya. The meetings held for these teachers were filled to capacity; even rooftops were occupied. Some of the inhabitants of the town started investigating the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission and expressed interest in joining the Faith. This development roused the animosity of the antagonists and determined them to do what it took to stop the progress achieved. The deputy governor of Nayriz, a friend of the Faith, secretly sent a message to the

Local Spiritual Assembly, apprised its members of the enemy's schemes, and advised that the best course of action was for the visitors to leave Nayriz immediately and go to a safer place. Upon the receipt of this advice, the two teachers, escorted by ten Bahá'í men known for their bravery and staunchness of faith, left for Sarvistan, a town in the province of Fars not very far from Nayriz.

The teachers left the town safely but the adversaries did not stop agitating. They turned to Haji Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i Lari, the leader of the Shi'is of the area, and beseeched him to take necessary action to curb the advancement of the Bahá'í Faith. The Haji had an added incentive to encourage an assault on Nayriz to take place: he had received an invitation from the Shaykhu'l-Islam<sup>20</sup> of the town asking him to subdue the local government and rid Nayriz of its governor and his family. The reason the Shaykhu'l-Islam had turned against the local government was unrelated to the Bahá'í Faith and the teaching activities of the friends. In fact, he was favorably inclined toward Bahá'u'lláh's Cause. His grievance had to do with an incident involving the governor and his deputy, which he found highly offensive and humiliating.

Mas‘udu'd-Dawlih, the son of Asifu'd-Dawlih, was then the governor of Nayriz. He was married to Nazhatu'l-Muluk, the daughter of Fath-'Ali Khan. Her brother, Muhammad Hasan Khan-i Sartip, was the deputy governor. Mas‘udu'd-Dawlih committed an act which, though legal in Islam, caused great offence and cost him his position. What did he do? He contracted another marriage, this time with the daughter of the Shaykhu'l-Islam, a very influential personage in the area, nay in the province of Fars. His first wife's family, immensely displeased with Mas‘udu'd-Dawlih, brought tremendous pressure to bear on him until he relented and divorced his second wife. This was something far beyond what the Shaykhu'l-Islam could bear. Deeply offended and insulted by the incident, he decided to exact revenge and waited for opportunity to present itself. When he found the ground ready, he sent an invitation to Haji Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn to attack Nayriz and dislodge the governor.<sup>21</sup>

The requests that Haji Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn received from the fanatic inhabitants of Nayriz and from the Shaykh'l-Islam provided ample justification for him to act, but the timing had to be right. The dethronement of Muhammad 'Ali Shah Qajar and the ensuing chaotic situation presented the hoped-for opportunity. To realize the dream of subduing the people of the town and inducing them to do what he and his supporters desired, he needed a ruthless agent. Shaykh Dhakariyya Kuhistani, whose authority was supreme in twelve small towns and villages in the mountains surrounding Nayriz, was the man for the job. The Haji ordered the Shaykh to proceed toward the town with forces under his command. Shaykh Dhakariyya was happy to comply and did as ordered. He and the armed men under his control moved toward Nayriz intent on conquering the town, expelling the governor, establishing an autonomous entity that opposed the central government, and dealing the Bahá'ís a fatal blow.

Nayriz was besieged and fighting began between the forces of the governor supported by the inhabitants of Nayriz on the one hand and the rebels supported by tribesmen living in the surrounding areas on the other. To prevent support and supplies from Shiraz, the capital of the province of Fars, to reach the governor's forces in Nayriz, the rebels cut off all means of communication.

After three days of fighting, the rebels took the northern highlands and strongholds. After that victory, Shaykh Dhakariyya invited the inhabitants of Nayriz to the fort of Sayfabad, which he had conquered. The people were curious to know what the Shaykh had in mind, so they attended the meeting. Shaykh Dhakariyya's purpose was to induce them to cooperate with him. To succeed, he knew that he had to offer them incentives they could not refuse. Knowing the fanatic population's deep-rooted animosity toward the Bahá'í Faith and its followers, he made the Bahá'ís a scapegoat. In his speech he introduced Haji Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i Lari as the defender of Islam and the supporter of a national government, and himself as the standard-bearer of Islam. In the same speech he attacked the Bahá'í Faith and roused his audience against the Bahá'ís of the town.<sup>22</sup> By so doing he helped the seed of hatred and

contention, which had been planted in their hearts decades earlier, to yield the fruit he desired. At the same time he diminished support for the local government, whose forces were already hard pressed to hold ground. Then in a surprise attack by night, he took a section of the town known as Mahallih Kuchih Bala.<sup>23</sup> A few days later another section of the town fell into the rebels' hands and they moved closer to Mahallih Bazar, the seat of the government. The governor of Nayriz, Mas‘udu’d-Dawlih, and his brother-in-law Hasan Khan-i Sartip, the grandson of Haji Zaynu'l-`Abidin Khan,<sup>24</sup> fled Mahallih Bazar and moved to Mahallih Chinarsukhtih, where the Bahá’ís lived. They chose the Jami` mosque, which was a mighty stronghold, for their defense. Intimidated by the approaching forces of the Shaykh, the governor and his brother-in-law fled Nayriz by night in disguise and left the Bahá’ís at the mercy of the advancing forces of the Shaykh. Thus Mahallih Chinarsukhtih became the battlefield. Fighting began around the Jami` mosque between the inhabitants of that mahallih and the rebels. One of the Bahá’ís, Muhammad-Hasan, son of Rahim, was killed during that encounter. After Mahallih Chinarsukhtih fell to the rebels, the Shaykh issued a decree making it a religious duty to kill the Bahá’ís, plunder their property, and set fire to their homes. The fanatics among the inhabitants of Mahallih Chinarsukhtih joined hands with the Shaykh's forces in carrying out the decree. Most Bahá’ís, in obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's teachings prohibiting His followers from engaging in holy war, left Nayriz and moved to a mountainous area to the south of the town, where the early Bábís had defended themselves against their adversary. Some with infants, or elderly family members unable to walk a long distance, could not get very far and went into hiding closer to the town.

Among the Bahá’ís who fled the town and took refuge in the nearby mountains were the twelve-year old Muhammad-Shafi', his two younger brothers, his mother, Nurijan Khanum, and his maternal uncle and aunts. Fearing the outcome of the Shaykh's victory, they took off for areas outside the town they considered safe.

Other Bahá’í fugitives from Nayriz scattered in the same region: Those younger and stronger moved further up the

mountain in search of safer hiding places, the groups consisting of older people, women and children stayed in caves lower down the mountain. With the group comprising Muhammad-Shafi' and his family was a servant who carried some provisions for them on the back of a mule. They started off early in the morning of Naw-Ruz 1909. The mother of Muhammad-Shafi', a devoted and valiant soul, knowing the gravity of the situation, related stories about the heroic deeds of the early believers, awakening in them the spirit of heroism and sacrifice. Before noon they reached a valley known as Tang-i Lay-i Hina and took refuge in a small cave. When night fell, everywhere was pitch black and no sound could be heard except the water and the wind. Frightened and bewildered, they counted the hours and minutes. About midnight they heard footsteps and wondered whether the enemy had discovered their hideout. As they held their breath in readiness to meet their fate, they heard a familiar voice. A Muslim relative, whose Bahá'í wife was a member of the group, had come to warn his relatives that the area was unsafe. He informed them of the Shaykh's decree and added that he had announced that whoever presented the severed head of a male Bahá'í, age ten years or older, would receive the reward of a hundred tumans; if a Bahá'í were captured and taken to him alive, the captor would receive 2000-3000 Rials, the wealthier the victim the higher the reward. However, the women and small children were not to be harmed, he said. The visiting relative suggested that while it was still dark the men should take an unfrequented mountain route to flee the area, and the women and children return to Nayriz. Everyone agreed. What was of concern was the situation of the boys who were older than ten. Muhammad-Shafi' was then about twelve years old. He and two other boys two years younger than him could not keep pace with the men who were going to Sarvistan on foot.<sup>25</sup> After deliberation, it was decided that he and the other two boys should wear the chadur and accompany the women. As the parting time arrived, Muhammad-Shafi's maternal uncle, Shaykh Muhammad Husayn, turned to his Muslim brother-in-law and said:

Now that we are saying goodbye and moving towards an unknown destiny, God has willed that you take charge of these defenseless and homeless women and

children. I adjure you to hide them in an obscure and deserted place in Nayriz. If you see that the enemy is likely to find and dishonor them and you are unable to provide protection, throw them into a well and cover it with debris that no blight may touch this family.

Readers unfamiliar with the cultural norms of the Middle East in the early nineteenth century may find it extraordinary, even outrageous that men made life and death decisions on behalf of the women in their care. Unless one has lived in those places at the time when those norms dictated certain behavior, it would be most difficult, if not impossible, to understand the dynamics at work. Tradition backed by Quranic references was the supreme determiner of behavior. What they perceived as ‘honor’ was uppermost in men’s minds, when it came to their womenfolk. Men were in charge of the affairs of the women, and they made decisions as necessary to ensure at any cost what they considered their honor. If they could not do it themselves, they delegated the responsibility to another male member of the family, which is what happened here. It must be added that the women who fell in the hand of the enemy, if they did not enjoy amnesty, suffered a worse fate than death, as evidenced by what is going on today in places where religious and holy wars occur.

At the time of farewell, the immediate future looked bleak. No one knew what the future held. The hope of reunion was slim indeed. Time was short. Loved ones had no choice but to separate. Tears were ceaseless, hearts were burning with anguish, sighs were soaring high, but uttering a sound could cost their lives, emotions had to be contained and words were uttered in whisper. The fate of the ones who were fleeing, as well as those who were returning to Nayriz was unknown. Those who fled faced many hazards on the way. Those who remained had little hope of making it through the ordeal. Risky as the choices were, they were better than immediate annihilation.

After the men left, the women and children, exhausted and distraught, decided to tarry a while longer in the Tang-i-Lay-i Hina. They spent the night in fear and uncertainty. No one had the appetite to eat. However, spiritually they were ready to embrace any eventuality. When daylight broke, the boys who were older than ten wore the chadur and with the women started

walking toward Nayriz. With them was Mashhadi Hasan, the Muslim husband of Muhammad-Shafi's aunt, as well as the servant, whose name was Muhammad-Taqi. On the way they could hear gunshots and see fire raging in that part of the town where Bahá'ís lived. They realized that their houses had been set on fire. The rebels' practice was to set fire to Bahá'í houses after plundering the contents. As the group continued walking, feeling anxious and exhausted, the mule that carried their provisions, carpet and bedding, was wrested out of the servant's hand by thieves and the servant himself stripped of his clothes. However, the women were not disturbed. About noon, hungry and without necessary provisions, they reached the ruins of a house where they decided to retire for a while. They spent the night in that spot without food and water. Fear of being discovered kept everyone awake. Every time they heard a脚步声, all rushed to a dry well within the ruins of the house and stood ready to throw themselves in, to honor the parting words of Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn.

The plunderers and opportunists were hard at work that night searching every corner of the town and the surrounding areas to find male Bahá'ís, turn them in, and collect their reward. The next morning another Muslim relative, a cousin by the name of Mirza Muhammad-i-Shu'a', who had heard his aunts and cousins were staying in that place, rushed to their aid, took them to his home and offered hospitality until the situation improved. To get to his house, the group had to walk through the area in front of the Masjid-i Jami' in Mahallih Chinarsukhtih, where fighting was intense. As they were passing through the area, the young Muhammad-Shafi' saw from under his chadur deplorable and tragic scenes. Opposite the mosque he saw a body hanging upside down from a mulberry tree. The corpse was bright red, like freshly barbequed meat. There was also a heap of stone collected under the body. His curiosity made him ask whose corpse it was. In response, his cousin said it was the corpse of Mulla Muhammad-'Ali who, together with his son-in-law, Mulla Hasan, had been killed in Mahallih Bazar on the day of Naw-Ruz. The corpse of Mulla Hasan, he was told, was similarly hung in Mahallih Bazar but Mulla Muhammad-'Ali's body had been dragged to Mahallih Chinarsukhtih near the mosque, where it had been set on fire, hanged and stoned. So many stones were

used that an elevation was formed under his body. The purpose of inflicting abuse on dead bodies was to send a twofold message: To intimidate the believers that if they insisted on holding on to their new belief they would suffer a similar fate, and to strike fear in the hearts of those who sympathized with the Bahá'í Faith that if they crossed the line and joined the adherents of that Faith, they would know what to expect.

Seeing the horrific scene and hearing the explanation in response to his question so affected Muhammad-Shafi' that after reaching the home of his cousin, he fell ill and developed a temperature. The scene was so imprinted on his soul that he remembered it vividly to the end of his life.

The search for male Bahá'ís continued. The hostile elements among the population let loose by Shaykh Dhakariyya violated the privacy of every Bahá'í home. They entered any and all areas where they suspected Bahá'ís were hiding. The men who had not fled the area and gone to Sarvistan were in grave danger. Nayriz and its surroundings were combed for male Bahá'ís. When found, they were dragged out and delivered to the Shaykh's gunmen, who took them to the Shaykh for interrogation, the hope being that they would recant their belief in Bahá'u'lláh in exchange for their lives. However, none caved in under pressure, they all courageously confirmed their adherence to the Bahá'í Faith and expressed readiness to die, to vindicate its truth. They were summarily tried and brutally put to death, their properties confiscated, plundered and burnt to the ground, their women and children left without shelter, protection, barest necessities and means to survive.

In that chaotic situation the rebels and ruffians enriched themselves by causing the innocent Bahá'ís death and destruction, others to sustain untold suffering and heartache. But among the population there were some who extended a helping hand to their Bahá'í friends and neighbors, at times risking their own lives. A case in point is a Muslim father whose daughter was engaged to a young Bahá'í man, named 'Ali, arrested for his faith. He did what he could to save the life of his son-in-law to be and succeeded in getting a decree from the Shaykh to spare the young man's life. When he happily reached the place of execution with the decree in his hand, he realized it

was too late, 'Ali had already been executed. Then he saw that 'Ali's brother, Mulla Rahman, was being taken to the arena of sacrifice. He used the decree to save his life instead. Mulla Rahman was kept in prison until Shaykh Dhakariyya left Nayriz, then freed.<sup>26</sup>

Another man saw his Bahá'í friend, Amru'llah Nikayin, sitting in the full view of public gaze on the day the Shaykh's gunmen had entered the town and were roaming the place looking for Bahá'ís. He realized that his friend was unaware of the dangers facing the Bahá'ís. He immediately briefed him of the situation and advised him to take refuge in a house where his father and brother-in-law were hiding. The father, the son and the son-in-law stayed in that house for about a week before being discovered by those working for the Shaykh. When armed men entered to search the house and got close to the room where the three were hiding, one of the neighbors, a Mirza Nasru'llah, came forward, protested that they had entered unannounced, and angrily said: "If you are looking for Bahá'ís, I am one of them." In the encounter he received some injuries. A group of Muslims later testified that Mirza Nasru'llah was not a Bahá'í, and he was released. However, the house was no longer a safe place for the Bahá'ís to hide. At midnight when no one was around, Mirza Nasru'llah took the three Bahá'ís to a place outside Nayriz, showed them the route to Sarvistan and said all Bahá'í fugitives have fled to that town; it is best for you to join them there, he said. The three left Nayriz. In Khayr, a village between Nayriz and Runiz, they tarried for a while. Unfortunately, while there they were robbed of their belongings. They were even stripped of the clothes they were wearing. But they did make it alive to Sarvistan and joined other Bahá'í fugitives there.

When the young Muhammad-Shafi` and his family reached the home of his cousin, the women were accommodated in one room and he had to stay in a storeroom, away from the eyes of would-be intruders. An opening large enough for him to crawl into was made under saddlebags that were filled with dried fruit, nuts and grain. He spent 13 days and nights in that hole until Shaykh Dhakariyya left Nayriz. The only time he could leave his hiding place for a brief time was late at night. The Muslim

relatives kept the fugitives abreast of the news: more Bahá'ís were killed every day. Even ten-year-old Bahá'í boys were not immune. If one were found alive, he would be burned rather than killed. Muhammad-Shafi` saw clearly that this could happen to him but instead of being fearful, was so filled with the spirit of faith and sacrifice that he found himself ready to offer up his life for his belief. He attributed his state of readiness for sacrifice to the visit of the two prominent Bahá'í teachers, Mirza Tarazu'llah Samandari and Mirza 'Ali Akbar-i Rafsanjani, who had visited Nayriz before the incident. Their visit had prepared the Bahá'ís of the town for such a day, he believed.

During the thirteen days of the Naw-Ruz celebration that Shaykh Dhakariyya was in Nayriz (21 March to 3 April 1909), eighteen valiant believers were brutally tortured and killed for no reason other than their adherence to the Bahá'í Faith. As stated earlier, every one of them was taken to the Shaykh and ordered to recant his faith or be killed. Each refused to recant and preferred to die for the truth he had embraced. Those martyred were Mulla Hasan, Mulla Muhammad 'Ali, Muhammad Hasan-i Kulahmal, Mulla 'Abdu'l-Majid, Aqa 'Abbas, Muhammad Isma'il, 'Ali, the son of Muhammad Isma'il, Muhammad Ibrahim, the brother of Muhammad Isma'il, Asadu'llah, the son of Muhammad Ibrahim, Mihdi, the son of Mulla Husayn and son-in-law of Muhammad Isma'il, 'Ali Akbar, the son of Mashhadi Naw-Ruz and the nephew of Muhammad Isma'il and Muhammad Ibrahim, Mulla Husayn, the son of Zaynal and the father of Mihdi, Muhammad 'Ali, the son of Darvish, Ibrahim, the son of Darvish and brother of Muhammad 'Ali, Mirza Akbar Kaffash, Ustad 'Ali Sabbagh, originally from Sirjan, Ustad 'Ata'u'llah, and Amru'llah, the son of Sulayman.<sup>27</sup>

Before Shaykh Dhakariyya left Nayriz, he installed a man there as his deputy. The rule of the Shaykh and his deputy lasted for a month. During that time pressure was maintained on the Bahá'ís. Those who were hiding could not come out. The properties, which had been confiscated, stayed in the rebels' hands and the women and children, through necessity, lived on the barest minimum. Muhammad-Shafi` and the members of his group lived for a month on a daily ration of figs and a little

coarse bread. After a month, news was received that a new governor had been installed in Fars, that Qavamu'l-Mulk-i Shirazi had been put in charge of keeping law and order in the province, and that he had ordered his forces to move towards Nayriz and the areas under the control of tribal chiefs. As this news spread, the situation improved. Muhammad-Shafi` and two other Bahá'í boys of his age were able to venture out. He could run errands for his mother outside the home. But whenever he stepped out, he faced the abusive language of the children who roamed the streets and inflicted on him and other Bahá'ís as much insult and harm as they possibly could. One day he met another Bahá'í, Haji Mir 'Ali, who had just come out of his hiding place. He whispered into the ear of Muhammad-Shafi`: "Relief supplies have arrived from Shiraz. Tell your mother to send someone to my home to receive a saddlebag of wheat (about 75-80 kilos)." The young boy was overjoyed, ran home and gave his mother the glad-tidings. His mother said in response, "My husband is in the Holy Land, I cannot degrade him by accepting handouts." The young hungry boy, who was longing for a piece of good bread, was naturally disappointed.

Gradually the inhabitants of the town discovered where Muhammad-Shafi` and his family were hiding and exerted pressure on their hosts for having provided shelter to Bahá'ís. One day the landlady suggested to grandmother Nurijan that in order to put an end to the talk circulating in town, she should consider going with the womenfolk to the mosque. She stressed that her mere presence in the mosque would suffice to ease the pressure. Grandmother refused to comply, saying, "I will leave your home and stay in the wilderness but will not visit the mosque. I will not bring upon myself the blight of people thinking that I have abandoned my faith."

It was close to mid-May 1909 when Nurijan Khanum took the hands of her three young sons and returned to their home, of which only a skeleton remained. The first night was spent on the rubble with no bedding, but to them it looked like heaven, for they had been freed from confinement and could breathe a sigh of relief. Another month passed before her husband, Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn, returned from the Holy Land and found his business partner, Mulla Hasan, martyred, all accounting books,

records and documents destroyed, harvests demolished, agricultural produce devastated, and his family destitute. He had to start all over again and build his life from scratch.

When the pilgrims heard the news that Mulla Hasan had been martyred on Naw-Ruz, they realized the significance of what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said in response to the request they made on his behalf: Mulla Hasan had wanted to go on pilgrimage and asked his friends to submit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the request that he may attain his heart’s desire. Instead of granting the request, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that he had attained. The pilgrims knew that Mulla Hasan had never been on pilgrimage and fearing that they had not presented the request properly, repeated it in different words. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said again that he had attained. When the returning pilgrims found out what had transpired on Naw-Ruz, they realized that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was aware of Mulla Hasan’s martyrdom at the time it was taking place. He knew that in the world of spirit he had attained his heart’s desire.<sup>28</sup>

## The Fate of the Bahá’ís Who Fled Nayriz

Between seventy to eighty Bahá’í fugitives from Nayriz gathered in Sarvistan, which was the only safe place accessible to them in the province of Fars. After Shaykh Dhakariyya entered Nayriz as a victor and issued his infamous decree, many male Bahá’ís fled the town. They took off on foot in small groups. The first town on their route where the Bahá’í community could offer them refuge was Istahbanat, but danger awaited them there as well. The fanatics were determined to bar the fugitives from entering. They agitated the inhabitants to arise against ‘infidels’ coming to their town. The Bahá’ís of Istahbanat, knowing the dangers awaiting their fellow religionists, appointed a trustworthy person to meet the groups before they entered Istahbanat, warn them of the dangers awaiting them in the town, and advise them to proceed directly to Sarvistan. The fugitives’ first stop was Runiz, a place between Istahbanat and Nayriz, owned by some members of the Afnan family. The man who managed the property was Mir Muhammad Hasan, a Bahá’í. He warmly received the fugitives and extended to them loving hospitality. Within twenty-four hours almost all the fugitives had gathered there. Although

warmly welcomed, the fugitives could not tarry there for long, for nomadic tribes roamed the area frequently, rendering the place unsafe. Therefore, the fugitives continued their journey to Sarvistan. They sent one person ahead of time, to inform the friends in that town of their imminent arrival. Mr. Tarazu'llah Samandari and Mr. 'Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, who had left Nayriz before the disturbances, were still in Sarvistan. In consultation with them, the believers prepared a plan for sending relief supplies to the refugees and for receiving them in their town. The provisions and warm clothing that were sent proved critical, for the number of fugitives was large, not everyone was dressed properly for the bitter cold, nor did they have sufficient foodstuff to continue the arduous journey on foot.

Kharman Kuh, the mountain route the fugitives had to cross to get to Sarvistan, was covered with snow, and there was no clear path to follow. When they reached the peak, they had no choice but to slide down on their back, to reach the other side. By the time all got down, they suffered from exhaustion and had no energy to continue the trip. Seeing a friendly face awaiting their arrival on the other side and receiving the means of sustenance sent from Sarvistan ignited in their hearts the spark of hope. This was to them like heaven compared with the hell they had been through. After a short sojourn there, they continued their trip. In the vicinity of Sarvistan, sympathetic friends came out en masse to meet them. What a scene to behold! After days of traversing rough trails and snow-covered mountain routes, uncertain of what was lying ahead, they found themselves amidst loving friends who received them with open arms, shed with them tears of joy, and joined them in offering prayers of gratitude to the Lord. Alas, the joy was incomplete and had sorrow in its embrace. The fugitives, grateful for having reached a safe place, were anxious about the fate of their wives, children, mothers and sisters they had left behind. They knew not what had happened to them after their midnight separation days ago.

Life for the refugees was made as comfortable as possible within the means available to the Bahá'ís of Sarvistan. Meanwhile, a new provincial governor, Sahamu'd-Dawlih, was installed in Shiraz, the capital of Fars, and Nasru'd-Dawlih was

given responsibility to keep law and order in areas populated by tribes and nomads. On his way to Laristan, he stopped in Sarvistan, where the Bahá’í refugees were gathered. They appointed Khajih Muhammad, a survivor of the first and second Nayriz upheavals, to submit a written complaint against Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-Husayn-i Lari and Shaykh Dhakariyya. They also briefed Nasru’d-Dawlih in detail of what the Bahá’ís of Nayriz had been put through. Nasru’d-Dawlih was visibly affected by what he heard, and promised to do everything in his power to make the two men responsible for the atrocities to pay for their crimes. Right then he issued a decree appointing Rida Quli Khan, the Mushir-i Divan, as the deputy governor of Nayriz, charging him with responsibility to subdue the Shaykh’s deputy and his supporters with the help of the Bahá’ís. He told Rida Quli Khan to leave immediately for Nayriz and carry out the order as soon as the Bahá’ís reached there. At the same time, he advised the Bahá’í refugees to leave for Nayriz and assist the deputy governor to carry out his mission. He further advised the friends not to demand the return of their confiscated properties found in the hands of the rebels. For that, he said, “await my arrival.” The Bahá’ís did as advised. Nasru’d-Dawlih, faithful to his promise, succeeded in cleansing Nayriz from the presence of the rebels, and returned the confiscated properties to their rightful owners.

The end of the Shaykh Dhakariyya episode did not mean the end of disturbances in Nayriz. Time and again the Shaykh and other rebels attacked Nayriz and caused the Bahá’ís much suffering, the loss of property and livelihood. A detailed account of each event is written in *Lam’atu'l-Anvar* by Muhammad-Shafi` Rouhani, which is currently being translated for publication in English.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> From ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablet in Persian, the approved English translation of which is quoted on page 16 of *Against Incredible Odds* by this author.

<sup>2</sup> Nabil-i Zarandi, *The Dawn-Breakers*. Translated from the original Persian by Shoghi Effendi, first British edition, p. 379.

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> H.M. Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant*, p. 126.

<sup>5</sup> Zechariah, vi.12. Quoted in H.M. Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant*, p. 129.

<sup>6</sup> The full text of the Tablet is quoted in Muhammad-'Ali Faizi, *The Queen of Carmel*, p. 99.

<sup>7</sup> The three Nayrizi pilgrims were: Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn Rouhani, Mirza Ahmad Vahidi and Mirza Fadlu'llah 'Inayati.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad-Shafi' Rouhani, *Khatirat-i-Talkh va Shirin*, p. 18, quoted in Baharieh Rouhani Maani, *Against Incredible Odds*, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 24-5. The approved provisional English translation of the Tablet is quoted in *Against Incredible Odds*, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> It was customary in those days to identify women, when necessary, by the name of a close male family member. Here the valiant warrior was known by the name of her son, Sami'.

<sup>11</sup> Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn was unable to keep pace with the caravan due to age and ill health. He was beheaded in Sa`adatabab, a village between Shiraz and Abadih. His body was buried there and his head along with the heads of other martyrs were taken to Abadih, where they were buried.

<sup>12</sup> This was very early in the history of the Faith and believers were not yet barred from holding positions in the mosque.

<sup>13</sup> Nabil-i-Zarandi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 472. Nabil refers to Mulla Muhammad-Shafi' as Mulla Shafi', its abbreviated form.

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad-Shafi' Rouhani, *Lama'atu'l-Anvar*, p. 569, footnote 41

<sup>15</sup> Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan was the governor of Nayriz when the Fort of Khajih episode took place.

<sup>16</sup> Mirza Haydar 'Ali, Mirza Mahram, Aqa Mirza Mahmud Zarqani, Aqa Mirza Jalal Zarqani are among the renowned Baha'i teachers who visited Nayriz and were received warmly by Mulla Muhammad-Shafi' (*Lama'atu'l-Anvar*, p. 125).

<sup>17</sup> *Lama'atu'l-Anvar, Depicting the Soul-Stirring Episodes of Nayriz* was first published in two volumes by the Baha'i Publishing Institute of Tihran, Iran. The first volume was published in 130 BE (1972), the second in 132 BE (1974). The two volumes were republished with revisions and index in 2002 by Century Press, Australia.

<sup>18</sup> The two sources differ slightly in a few minor details.

<sup>19</sup> Mr. Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, a devoted believer from Rafsanjan in the province of Kirman, knew by heart many Tablets and captivated his audience with his melodious voice. He passed away prematurely.

<sup>20</sup> Siyyid Shahabu'd-Din Ashraf. According to the author of *Lama'atu'l-Anvar*, he was familiar with the tenets of the Baha'i Faith and a believer at heart. He had no intention to harm the Baha'is. The unintended consequences of his invitation caused him deep regret and remorse. He withdrew from

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public life after the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya. His poems in praise of Bahá’u’lláh testify to his belief in the truth of the Cause of the Blessed Beauty.

<sup>21</sup> Haji Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-Husayn was from Lar, a town in the district of Laristan. He was inspired by Shaykh Fadlu’llah Nuri, a notorious cleric who played a dubious role in the movement for democracy in Iran, and antagonistic toward Baha’is. The Shi’is of Nayriz and the surrounding areas paid allegiance to Haji ‘Abdu’l-Husayn-i Lari.

<sup>22</sup> It has been related that during that meeting the Shaykh served dates to those gathered, letting it be known that he had fed everyone with a small amount of dates, to common people a feat, to some a miracle.

<sup>23</sup> There were four Mahallih (locations) in Nayriz, each with its own characteristics and distinctions. For more information, see *Against Incredible Odds*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> It was during his governorship that the first Nayriz upheaval, the Fort of Khajih episode, took place in 1850, and it was his murder in 1852 that caused Jang-i Jabal, or the second Nayriz upheaval.

<sup>25</sup> Sarvistan is a town in the province of Fars, about halfway between Shiraz and Nayriz. The reason Baha’is felt safe there was the peaceful coexistence between the inhabitants. Some influential Baha’is who were in positions of responsibility had created an atmosphere conducive to mutual understanding and respect.

<sup>26</sup> Had Mulla Rahman been put to death, the number of martyrs would have been nineteen, but the last minute intercession kept the number at eighteen, says the author of *Lama’atu'l-Anvar*.

<sup>27</sup> An account of the life of each martyr, as well as the immediate members of their families, the Tablets revealed in their honor, and other matters related to the Shaykh Dhakariyya episode and its aftermath are given in *Lama’atu'l-Anvar, Depicting the Soul-Stirring Episodes of Nayriz* by Muhammad-Shafi’i Rouhani.

<sup>28</sup> Mirza Ahmad Vahidi, one of the three pilgrims, is the source of this anecdote.