

Report of the Martyrs of Hamadán, 14 June 1981

BY Zhinus Mahmoudi

Pure and sanctified art Thou, O my God! How can the pen move and the ink flow after the breezes of loving-kindness have ceased, and the signs of bounty have vanished, when the sun of abasement hath risen, and the swords of calamity are drawn, when the heavens of sorrow have been upraised, and the darts of affliction and the lances of vengeance have rained from the clouds of power — in such wise that the signs of joy have departed from all hearts, and the tokens of gladness have been erased from every horizon, the gates of hope have been shut, the mercy of the supernal breeze hath ceased to waft over the rose-garden of faithfulness, and the whirlwind of extinction hath struck the tree of existence. The pen is groaning, and the ink bewaileth its plight, and the tablet is awe-struck at this cry. The mind is in turmoil from the taste of this pain and sorrow, and the divine Nightingale calleth: “Alas! Alas! for all that hath been made to appear.” And this, O my God, is from naught but Thy hidden bounties. —Bahá’u’lláh

How heavy are our sorrows, and how great are His blessings in relation to them. Whatever happens is full of paradoxes and contrasts, full of grandeur and glory, full of sorrow and joy. How are we able to blend all these faces of these awesome events? Only God knows. Sometimes the thought comes over me: how can the eyes see these events, the heart and soul feel them, the mind and reason comprehend them, and the terrible pressure of these events not yet burst us limb from limb? How is it that our hearts are not yet shredded into pieces? And how is it that our veins that carry so much sorrow and suffering with our heart's blood to every limb have not yet exploded?

His calamities are dreadful, and yet His grace is mingled with all this pain and suffering. How can I describe what is happening? These words are powerless to relate all these terrifying events; but I know that you want me to tell you, even though it may be a drop of many oceans and but an intimation of this storm that is enveloping everything. But I must, at the outset, express my own powerlessness, lest the greatness and brilliance of the deeds of our heroes lose their brightness in the poverty of my words.

My tongue can never offer adequate thanks at His Sacred Threshold for having decreed in my destiny that for the last three years, as an Auxiliary Board member, I should become a part of the noble family of the Bahá’ís of Hamadán. To form bonds of love with the friends of that city, to get to know the Spiritual Assembly members—who have played such a part in this year 138 of the Bahá’í Era in the bloodstained history of our community—and to cherish the flowering of such rarefied spiritual relationships between us: all that was my lot in the

last three years. I became a member of their families, and a proverbial “safety valve” for all of them. On the day when I saw their kindly faces for the first time, I could never imagine what bitter and dreadful days had been decreed for us. I never knew that day by day I should witness their growth and perfection in love and faith, a growing that culminated in the highest degree of human maturity—sacrifice of life in the path of the Beloved and attaining to a station greater than the creations of both worlds.

Unrelatable is what I have seen and cherish in my memory. Our relations with these dear ones and their families were ones of love and true friendship. In all this period I was their partner in everything, in their sorrow and joys, in the difficult stages of their tests and growth. What truly happy times I spent with them, and now that this wrenching event has taken place, memories flood my soul. Whenever I spoke to my colleagues of Hamadán and its Spiritual Assembly, I was proud of my relationship to them. The prayer book which they had copied in their own handwriting in the prison for me—for “Dear Auntie”—that is what they called me in the early days; later I became “Dear Sis”—and which they all had signed and sent to me to recite for protection, and which I now know all by heart, is one token of our deep love and attachment that I used to show everyone with pride. And I had the same relationship with their wives, children, and relatives, an attachment as if bonded from the dawn of creation. This, too, was one of the blessings of our revolution that fell to me. I was a member of their families, and I pray that their dear survivors will grant me this privilege as long as I am alive.

With these words I wanted to express at the outset the magnitude of my sadness—to say that I have lost seven dear loving brothers at once. And now to the details of the event. From the first news to the last one, it lasted four days. The first news was that the officials in Hamadán had gone to the homes of our dear friends, taken inventory of their belongings for confiscation, driven away their private automobiles, and padlocked the shop of Messrs [Suhráb] Ḥabíbí, Suhayl [Ḥabíbí], [Ḥusayn] Khándil, and [Ṭarázu’lláh] Khuzayn. And the last news, on Sunday 24 Khurdád [14 June 1981] was of the gruesome martyrdom of those innocent souls. Since we knew that taking inventory of the property of prisoners did not bode well, we were filled with anxiety when we heard that news, and you can imagine how we passed the next four days. All the friends raised their hands in prayer and supplication—
anxious for Hamadán. But the result of our prayers was perhaps that our dear ones endured the terrible last moments with greater strength and fortitude.

After they killed Mr. [Mihdí] Anvarí and [Hidáyatu’lláh] Dihqání in Shiráz, they sent the Hamadán files to Ṭihrán, and apparently they were in Ṭihrán until recently. The religious judge of Hamadán was also in Ṭihrán for the past month receiving instructions and special guidance. The day we heard that the files of the Hamadán prisoners had been sent to

Ṭīhrán, we were very worried, because only the files of those prisoners sentenced to death were to be reviewed and approved by the authorities at the capital. We inquired through the official channels, and we were told that the files of all the prisoners had been ordered to be sent to Ṭīhrán, so that local death sentences may not be summarily handed out as in the case of Messrs Anvarí and Dihqání in Shiráz. And we believed them. In March they had taken our friends to court, as they put it, to give them “spiritual guidance” and to force them gently to recant.

One is truly amazed at all this aptitude! How many experiments are necessary? 138 years? 25,000 martyrs? And experimenting on every one of them? What can be done, aptitudes are so different. There are differences in nature. Even after all this time their black hearts pound in the hope of the moment they can force one of our people to recant, in the hope of the moment that they can coerce us into the practice of dissimulation with which they have been brought up. They try every useless strategy, and they bother themselves—and us!

On that track they had acted with such guile and solicitude that all the families of our prisoners even expected them to be released for Naw-Rúz. They had decked their homes and were expectantly watching the door for their dear ones to come in. When Naw-Rúz passed, and nothing happened, all the hopes turned to despair, and even the new Local Spiritual Assembly was so disturbed that I had to pay a quick visit to them and talk them out of their groundless expectations. What roles we play these days.

On Wednesday the 20th of Khurdád (10 June), when they had gone from the court to take inventory of their property, some well-informed acquaintances told us that the sentence of death had been handed down, and they were awaiting the return of the religious judge. On that same date, at 10 o'clock at night, they were told to gather their belongings in their cell and prepare to go to the revolutionary court. They were prepared. They knew the meaning of all this. All the other prisoners were reduced to tears, and our men were comforting them with smiles on their faces. What wonders! He who *is* going to face his executioners is the comforter of the onlookers. An hour later the guards came back and said tonight the program is changed. Of course, this kind of activity—taking people to the execution spot and returning them—has been the spice of life for the victims of these courts.

The next day, Thursday, was the usual day of visitation. It was their last visit with their families. They still could not believe it. Their spirits, as ever, were strong, patient, and calm. They were chanting anthems of love and were prepared for every calamity in the path of the Beloved. Friday passed uneventfully. At 10:30 on Saturday night the guards came again and called them to the revolutionary court. This time they needed no time to prepare themselves. They were completely prepared. The other prisoners related that from that morning they were busy with bathing, shaving, pressing their clothes, and making their cell

neat and clean. They left with dignity and beauty. They all knew that the altar of love awaited them, and they tried to make themselves seemly even in appearance. The fellow prisoners were once more in tears, but they were happy as they had been two days before—and as they must have been when they faced death. The smiling faces of their blood-stained corpses were a witness to this. Seven bridegrooms, laughing and joyful, leave the place, waving good-bye to the agitated and weeping group of prisoners who had gathered to see them off.

(“And this is by reason of Thine ancient mercy, with which Thou favorest those servants of Thine whom Thou willest. I swear by Thy might, O God, that all these calamities are sweeter than any nectar and more pleasing than any delight. For until the seekers of the Kaaba of reunion have passed the limits of outer glory, they shall not be gladdened by the manifestation of Thy Beauty; and until they have quaffed of the cup of total evanescence, they shall not enter the tabernacle of eternity; and until they have put on the garb of poverty in the path of Thy good-pleasure, they shall not be honored by Thy resplendent robe of true wealth; and until they are made sick with the pain of love, they shall not be enabled to reach Thy healing grace; and until they pass from this earthly abode, they shall not ascend to their sacred and heavenly habitation; and until they die in the calamities of endless yearning, they shall not attain to eternal life; and until they dwell on the dust of abasement, they shall not find their way to the heavens of glory; and until they taste the poison of separation, they shall not be nourished by the sweetness of immortality; and until they traverse the deserts of remoteness and separation, they shall not find rest in the stations of nearness and reunion.”¹)

Before their departure some friends in the prison tried to telephone their families, but they prevented them, saying: “Let them sleep tonight. Tomorrow they have much to do.” We have no full information of the sequence of events after their departure from the prison. One of the friends happened to be driving on the road leading out of Hamadán to Maláyir—where the Muslim cemetery is located—after 11 p.m. He noticed that armed revolutionary guards had closed the road and were permitting no through traffic. At 2 a.m. their bloody, tortured, and mutilated bodies were dropped off at a small hospital known as Imám Khumeyní hospital. In the morning a Bahá’í nurse at that hospital found out and informed everyone that the great martyrdom had taken place. This is a brief account of the surface of the events. But what is at the core of this heartrending event is the spirit, energy, love, and sacrifice on one side, and the intensity of hatred and hostility on the other. And what is created in our midst with the clash of these opposite states of mind? That is the true reality

¹ Bahá’u’lláh. Provisional translation by the Bahá’í World Centre

of the question. It is so vast and so indescribable. It is beyond my powers to express. I only try to give an intimation of it.

The beginning of the problem was ten months ago. In August 1980, ten days before the kidnapping of the members of the National Spiritual Assembly, six of these dear souls: Messrs [Ḥusayn] Mutḷaq, Dr. [Náṣir] Vafá'í, Dr. [Fírúz] Na'ímí, [Ṭarázu'lláh] Khuzayn, [Ḥusayn] Khándil, and Suhráb Ḥabíbí were arrested and jailed by the Hamadán revolutionary court. In the previous summer also, during June and July of 1979, Messrs Mutḷaq, Khuzayn, and Suhayl Ḥabíbí had been arrested and imprisoned for brief periods lasting from a few days to a month, and released on temporary orders. Drs. Na'ímí and Vafá'í had also been called in for interrogation. In all these proceedings their interrogator was one of the most prominent members of the Tablīghát-i-Islamí [Propagation of Islam] group and an implacable enemy of the Bahá'í Cause. The accusations brought against them were hiding the files of the Local Spiritual Assembly, membership on the Assembly, efforts to pioneer, and similar charges.

For the second time the above-mentioned six men were arrested on the 9th and 10th of August 1980. On the 11th they were released with a three-day pass and asked to surrender themselves at the end of that respite. But immediately on the 12th, before the expiration of the time allowed, guards broke into their homes and took them back to prison. Mr. Khándil had just been elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly at Ridván of the same year, but his tireless services in several national and local committees, and the fact that he was an assistant to the Auxiliary Board were enough pretexts for his arrest. Again the charges brought against all were the same as in the previous year but with more emphasis on fundamentals of belief and membership on the Spiritual Assembly.

The location of their confinement in the summer months was a small cell of about 6 by 7¼ feet, extremely filthy and malodorous, as it was next door to the toilet for the whole prison. There were so many prisoners and so few toilets that an overflow of waste was continuously trickling past their cell door in the corridor. The stench, the heat, all the bugs, and the hardships which they endured in those first days bring to mind the confinement of the Beloved of the worlds in the land of Ṭá². The cell was so small for six persons that they slept by turns. For 137 days in this cell they truly endured trying times with their enormous spiritual strength. But according to the testimony of prisoners in other cells, the loud laughter of Mr. Khuzayn, accompanied by sounds of merriments of others, could often be heard.

² Ṭihrán

During this period they were allowed no visitors. Only some of the prison guards, who had in the past been the recipients of care and free treatment from Dr. Vafá'í, occasionally brought some news of them to their families. In this whole period, much of which was in the heat of summer, they were not allowed a bath even once. Only rarely when they were let out of their stinking cell into the courtyard they would take their towels to the pool, the quality and cleanliness of whose water needs no description. They would wet the towels in that barely fluid liquid and rub themselves and each other to get some relative relief.

Then they were transferred from the general section of the prison to the section for political prisoners. All of them were put in a larger cell of approximately fifteen by eighteen feet. Of course, often one or two additional prisoners were added to their cell. They were also given rights of visitation from their families. From that point until their execution they were allowed two visits per week with their families. Toward the end, the visitors were allowed to spend the visiting time in their cell. They would all sit around and have a happy time, while the prisoners prepared tea and served them sweets. No one except the next of kin was permitted to visit. Several times I wished to see them but the local Spiritual Assembly of Hamadán did not deem it wise. Once when even they approved, and the word got to the prisoners, they warned against it, not for their own sake—they never thought of their safety—but for my sake. All during their incarceration they hardly had any thoughts of themselves. Once the representative of the president of the Islamic Republic went to the prison for inspection of the prison conditions. He learned of the circumstances of their arrest and of the charges against them. At the end of an hour-long interview during which he realized their innocence and was impressed by their personal qualities and the high level of their knowledge and education, he asked them what he could do for them. Their response was, “For ourselves we want nothing, but please find out the whereabouts of the eleven kidnapped members of our national institutions.”

My contact with them was regular, by telephone or letters. Messages were exchanged via their families, especially through Mrs. Mutlaq who was both the secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly and my assistant.

On the 21st of October 1980 Mr. Suhayl Ḥabíbí, who was in Ṭíhrán at the time, was arrested by a revolutionary committee and sent to Hamadán. Apparently, they had been after someone else and had arrested him by mistake. They inquired about him from the Hamadán authorities and were told that he was a Bahá'í and that he was wanted there. So he was sent to Hamadán and joined the rest; and, thus, the number seven was completed. What is the hidden meaning in this number seven and its connection with martyrdom?

In February 1981 they were tried at first one by one. Then in mid-March they held a general trial session for all of them. The case prepared against them made it clear that, in reality, it

was the Bahá'í Faith that was on trial. They had prepared excellent articles of defense in the prison. At first the Judge of Religious Law thought that they had received aid from outside. When he realized that it was put together in the prison, he asked, "Where did you obtain all these references and documentation?" They had made copious references to Qur'anic verses in their own defense. They answered, "We have a Qur'án in the prison. We used it." It is not precisely known whether the court in Hamadán actually issued a sentence or not. Accounts differ. Then we received word that their files had been sent to Tīhrán. Apparently, they were sent some time in April. On 14 June, after the return of the Hamadán Judge of Religious Law from a month-long trip to Tīhrán, the sentences of death were carried out.

In the months of their incarceration their demeanor, their knowledge, and their innocence had captivated all. Everyone who had any contact with them, be it fellow prisoners or prison guards, had formed bonds of affection with them. The physicians in the group treated the prison sick. Even the sick family members of the prison guards used to come to jail to be treated and receive prescriptions. Their beautiful writing style, especially that of Mr. Muṭlaq, who had served a long time as the secretary of the Hamadán Local Spiritual Assembly, and their skill in preparing articles of defense were utilized by the other prisoners. In truth, they were friends and a refuge for their fellow prisoners. In the later months they had relative freedom to read and write. Sacred writings and tablets were sent to them one at a time. They would read and return them. They studied the whole Kitáb-i-Aqdas. They read these holy writings together and deepened in the oceans of divine knowledge. They listened regularly to radio news and kept up with what was happening in the world. They would even send news and guidance from within the jail to the Assembly outside and to their families. They would often sit in formal consultation and make decisions on questions of importance. In the evenings the wardens and prison guards would often sit with them late into the night and benefit by the wealth of their wisdom and knowledge.

A few months before their death they learned the art of tapestry making from a prisoner who was a master of that craft. Very quickly they became very good at it, and each one of them left behind some artistic tapestries. The sensitivity of their nature was growing each day. What is left of this fleeting period—the last months of their lives—tells a profound story of the refinement of their spirits. The tapestries, the necklaces, the beaded bracelets with the Greatest Name woven in them, all show their refined and nurtured creativity that had blossomed so quickly and gone through the stages of perfectibility with such rapidity, so that they arrived at the destination of love with all that aptitude, refinement, and grace. Outside of jail their multitude of activities and preoccupations never gave them a chance to manifest their creativity. It was the similitude of the imprisonment of the Blessed Beauty that nurtured the refinement of their spirit. The sensibility and sensitivity manifested itself

in a particular way in each one of them. For example, Mr. Muṭlaq had never written poetry in his life. Only a few months before his death he began to write verse, and in that short period he wrote some beautiful poems. Anyone who hears or reads them cannot believe that they have come from a poetic talent that had only a few months to flower. His wife will collect these poems so they can show us another sign of the blessings of prison.

The spirit of submission to the will of God and satisfaction with His decree grew stronger in them gradually during the ten months of imprisonment. The changes in them were extremely noticeable—so much so that finally when I was allowed to visit them during the Naw-Rúz holidays this year [1981], I was stunned by the calmness in their faces. About eight months earlier, in the grip of activities of life outside prison, they looked different—active, struggling, impatient, and agitated. And now they were different beings. The serenity of their faces and the signs of submission and satisfaction in the depth of their looks had such an impact that I shall never be able to describe it. I can only say that it was very amazing. It had a profound impact. Waves of a special magnetism radiated from them, such that when I came out of the prison a great attraction and eagerness to see them again was flaming in my heart. I do not want to liken it to anything—perhaps it was not like anything—but it had a feeling close to that eagerness that consumes one's being at returning from a pilgrimage to the holy shrines and heightens the desire and the thirst for another pilgrimage. Had I been permitted, I would have gone back to see them that same day; and had I not been worried for them and the consequences of visits from me, I would have managed to get myself to Hamadán for weekly visits afterwards too.

That pull once again took me to their prison a week before their martyrdom. Concerned for them, I had intended not to stay more than half an hour, but the magnetism was beyond imagination. I stayed in their presence—next to them—for two and a half hours. On the blankets, which they had spread on the floor for sitting, I sat next to each one of them; and this time in the span of less than three months between our meetings, I sensed a lifetime of perfecting in their beings. And what was in the depth of their glance shook my very core. I did not know what it was. I had never experienced it—experiencing holy beings who are nearing the Source of love. Beings whom Bahá'u'lláh is preparing for the supreme sacrifice—recreating them—like the recreation of Badí', the Pride of the Martyrs.

What shall I say of their state? What shall I say? How should I say it? I thought that this might be my own sensation—coming from a distance as I did. I asked their families and all who had visited them on those last days. They were all agreed that this great transformation could be felt in them. They were so resigned and calm that I could fully see that all of life's resistance on this earthly planet had been wiped off their existence.

Eagerness for flight and for breaking the walls of the prison to reach the altar of love had taken over their whole being.

In the past, before they were imprisoned as well as after that, they sometimes used to send me messages jokingly, “Ask them when do these events run their course? Isn't it enough? Aren't the calamities coming from six directions complete?” When I used to laugh in response, or say that no one knows God's Will in advance, I could sense impatience in them—or in some of them. But this time they didn't even ask. It was obvious that the answer that neither I nor anyone else knows, they knew.

They showed me photographs of themselves that were taken in the prison room, and I saw the smile and serenity on Dr. Vafá'í's face. I said, “Doctor, you seem very happy and satisfied.” In reply he only laughed, a laughter which was overflowing with this message: “Yes, I am satisfied; and it is I who has reached to this limit of submission and satisfaction with the Will of God.” When you think of the pace of his life and his professional activity on the outside, which sometimes left him little time for sleep, it was easy to see how confinement had affected him in the earlier days. He was very distressed and used to complain often. When he heard news of the martyrdom of the second group in Shiráz—that is, Messrs [Yadu'lláh] Vaḥdat, [Iḥsánu'lláh] Mihdízádiḥ, and [Sattár] Khushkhú—his anxiety and disquiet were heightened—so much so that his wife was very worried. But that evening he had a dream of the Blessed Beauty telling him to recite the Tablet of Fire three times. The next morning he looked frantically for a quiet spot. Where could one find such a place in the prison? Somehow he managed to carry out the command of the Beloved of the worlds. From that day to the end no more signs of anxiety and distress were seen in him.

Oh, how many points and revealing touches of their lives are left. But there is one interesting thing that I cannot omit. On that last day that I saw them the looks of all of them had become the same. It was as if one soul was looking through one eye on the faces of these seven men at our world—with a look of amused disregard for our world—with a world of love for all around them, and with pride and honor in their condition. It was the same glance that kings cast upon small children who are too young to know their station.

With customary love and eagerness they heard the messages of “grandfather” and the “elder brothers.”³ At the end, when they opened a new box of sweets and offered it to me, I wanted to take nine and carry them to Tīhrán for the “elder brothers,” but they just took seven for themselves and insisted that I take the whole box. I wish you could taste these sanctified sweets, each one of which had the flavor of love and sacrifice. Of course, we tasted their enjoyment in lieu of all of you.

³ Code words for the House of Justice and the National Spiritual Assembly

As for what transpired on Sunday, the 14th of June 1981—that awesome day that the kids say reminds one of Karbilá—it needs a special narration and description.

At nine in the morning word got out that there were seven bodies in the morgue of Imám Khumeyní hospital. A Bahá'í woman who worked in that hospital gave out the news. Instantly, anxiety spread to all the families. They rushed to see for themselves and informed others. It was true. The tragedy had taken place. Their bloody bodies had been dropped on the floor on top of each other. At a glance one could easily see the intensity of hatred, cruelty, and desecration that had been inflicted on their innocent and lifeless bodies. Around their corpses money was strewn—dropped by Muslims who had come by earlier and seen them—in atonement for the sins of their fellow Muslims. What was truly tragic was their tortured, mangled, and torn bodies. In one hour there was the commotion of the Last Day. It is not clear how everyone heard the news, including the town populace. Several thousand people—except for a few hundred Bahá'ís, the rest were Muslim townspeople—gathered at the hospital. The hospital grounds were filled. They closed the gates. But people were still coming and, unable to enter the hospital, stood watching through the fence posts.

Inside the hospital courtyard a different world was unfolding. No one was in control. Whatever was happening was taking place without any plans. In every corner a crowd had gathered around a Bahá'í and with sorrow were asking the reason for this tragedy. Mrs. Muṭlaq, who just like her martyred husband is a pride of our community, stepped on a platform and addressed the crowd. She spoke of the innocence of the victims, of the inhuman hatred visited upon them, and of the greatness of the aims for which they had given their lives. Right now she herself does not recall exactly everything that she said; but the intense impact of the moment had transformed her into a volcano. Without premeditation she had cried out and proclaimed and affected the crowd. (Three nights later the Judge of Religious law of Hamadán in a television interview decried the “incitement of public opinion by a Bahá'í woman.”)

The Bahá'í youth raised their voices in cries of “*Alláh'u'Abhá.*” At first some non-Baha'is responded with cries of “*Alláh-u-Akbar*”; but then there were only the calls of “*Alláh-u-Abhá,*” which were shouted in unison by Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís. *Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!* What signs and what power there are in this martyrdom; and what grandeur in the triumph of Thy Greatest Name over all other of Thy names and attributes!

The friends asked the hospital for an ambulance to carry the bodies to the Bahá'í cemetery. They were refused. They telephoned the mayor and told him that if an ambulance was not provided they would carry the bodies overhead to the cemetery, one by one. When they saw the resolve of the friends, they ordered an ambulance to be provided. Some non-

Bahá'ís who were at the scene—including some police officials—were suggesting not to move the bodies right away. They said let them remain on public view so that the extent of the tragedy would become clear to everyone. But there was no need. The curious people of Hamadán had heard the news with unbelievable speed and had come of their own to witness.

Finally, an ambulance was provided. It was a dilapidated old vehicle with all windows broken and the back gate glass missing. It was their way of adding another humiliation. But the result was that all along the way thousands of people could clearly see into the glassless windows of the vehicle and be witnesses to the extent of the cruelty and oppression inflicted upon those innocent bodies. The crushed arm and the skinned fingers of Ḥusayn *Khándil* were the first sight that could be seen by anyone looking in. The ambulance driver was ordered to drive at full speed, but the Bahá'í youth courageously placed themselves in front and demanded that it move slowly, in pace with the pedestrian followers. After a short distance the density of the crowd became so great that there was a virtual standstill from time to time. Several thousands had joined the mourners. The pace was slowed to the point that the distance that normally takes ten minutes was covered in two and a half hours. The traffic along the path came to a stop, and there was no other movement except the vast throng accompanying the ambulance. In the early stages the police showed up to control the traffic and, realizing there was nothing they could do, withdrew from the scene. Some Bahá'í youth had climbed on top of the ambulance and were chanting “*Alláh-u-Abhá*,” and “*Subbúhun, Quddúsun, Rabbíná wa Rabb-il-Malá'ikati war-Rúh*,”⁴ and the crowd joined them! Such a grand caravan. Such an amazing caravan. N What was happening? Thousands of non-Bahá'ís were joining voices with the few Bahá'ís in that great tumult, calling out the Greatest Name. They would quickly learn the call of “*Subbúhun, Quddúsun*” from the Bahá'ís and join in it. These calls and these cries filled the streets of Hamadán and were carried in waves toward Mount Alvand. On that day as I was rushing to share everything with my beloved community of Hamadán, there was such a storm raging within me that when I caught sight of that defiant mountain of hard stone I addressed it: “O Alvand, how is it that you stand so stolid and motionless and watch these tragedies at your foot?” That instant when the majestic waves of the Greatest Name reached her slopes, however, I felt how downcast and insignificant the mountain is before this great drama.

The great caravan arrived at the *Gulistán-i-Jávid*, which is just outside the city. They took the bodies to the washing room; but the crowd, excited and anxious to witness, pressed on.

⁴ “Exalting, Sanctifying, our Lord and the Lord of Angels and Spirits” was a cry sounded by some of the early believers as they met their martyrdom

The windowpanes of the room were broken in the rush. The Bahá'í youth clasped hands and formed a human chain around the room and somehow convinced the crowd to enter the room two by two and see the handiwork of their fellow townsmen—the ones with the hearts of stone and souls full of hatred and fanaticism. In this way, hundreds came in two by two and witnessed the tortured and desecrated bodies of the Bahá'ís who had given their pure blood on the path of establishment of the world order of Bahá'u'lláh. They saw and left and related what they had seen to others. The burial rites were not yet ended when everyone in the city, young and old, knew what had been done to their innocent townsmen who had lived a life of service to their fellows. Some even added stories of their own making to what they had heard. Those who personally knew these sanctified beings, who had some knowledge of all the service that they had rendered to the people of this land, their cries of lamentation were loudest. It was like Judgment Day. How did it all happen? How had the powerful hand of God, Who had admitted these seven loving and sacrificed angels to His heaven of sanctity, decreed the design of this event?

Damage to the bodies was extensive. The sum of all evidence indicated that they had been tortured in front of each other in order to force them to recant their faith. It also seemed that shots might have been fired for the sake of appearances after they were already dead. The rib cage of Mr. Khuzayn, that essence of loyalty and joy, was completely crushed. The middle of his chest was cut with a sharp instrument, and his arms were broken to a pulp. f Husayn Khándil, that brave, active, noble young man, had the fingers of his left hand mangled and skinned. On his abdomen, a piece about 5 x 5 inches was cut off by knife and was missing. It was said that it must have been done to destroy the scar of a deep burn. Dr. Náşir Vafá'í, that dearly loved physician whose kindness to the poor was well-known in all of Hamadán, and who was a model of gentleness and Bahá'í character—his thighs were cut into shreds, and on his back were deep lacerations. The arm of Suhayl Ḥabíbí, that indomitable knight of the Cause of God, whose command of the Qurá'nic verses and courage in teaching were admired by all, was splintered. It was heard that he had raised that hand in protest against the dastardly assaults of the murderers, and they had crushed it. The strong face of Dr. Fírúz Na'ímí, the much-loved chairman of the Assembly and the tireless servant of the community, was covered with blood; he must have died of bleeding from cuts and mutilations in the lower part of his body. There was a burnt scar in the shape of an iron clearly visible on the back of Suhráb Ḥabíbí, that pure reflection of service. And there were nine bullet holes, shot from different directions, on the chest, back, and groin of Husayn Muṭlaq, that embodiment of spirit and lover of the Cause.

In contrast to all these severe wounds on their bodies, their faces were calm, beautiful, and smiling. As if in those moments of torture the True Beloved had unveiled in their sight such effulgences of His limitless realms that they had experienced neither pain nor been

conscious of their wounds. Instead, they had ascended in joy and eagerness, radiant and smiling. They had been the proof of these words of the Beloved of the world: “The heads of Thy lovers seek the taut ropes, and the necks of Thy seekers await the cutting swords. Their breasts, luminous with passion and eagerness, long for the venomous darts. Deadly poison is sweeter to Thy lovers than the draught of eternal life, and mortal wounds are more pleasing than the sweetest nectar.”⁵

The members of the Spiritual Assembly, with the help of the youth, washed the bodies and recited the prayer for the dead over each one separately. The friends [the Bahá'ís] recited the prayers in unison and in full voice. The non-Baha'is, who were completely overwhelmed by the grandeur and sanctity of the atmosphere, joined in the repeated litany of the prayer. This huge crowd of non-Baha'is who, together with their Bahá'í townsmen were recording these solemn rites in the history of Hamadán, were hungry and thirsty but did not abandon our friends until sunset.

At three in the afternoon the third body had just been interred when nature too was moved in protest against this injustice. A sudden and strong wind filled the air with dust, and then large drops of rain mixed with dust and mud fell upon the ground. The reaction of the non-Bahá'í crowd was amazing and loud. They were saying that the sky too is heaping dust on its head and crying tears. When the storm passed, the rites were resumed. The last body was that of Mr. Khuzayn. Hours had passed, and that enormous crowd had gone without food and drink since the morning and were tired. Some people moved to leave, but someone cried out: “This last one had no children to commit him to earth. Let us stay and act as his children.” Everyone stayed. The prayer for the last martyr was said. Still everyone remained silent and motionless. A few Bahá'ís stood on a platform and expressed their love and gratitude to the people and said that these men gave their lives to make the oneness of humanity possible. Finally, they were requested with love and thanks to leave Gulistán-i-Jávid at 6 p.m.

Oh, how tremendous was that day! May the Eternal Beauty grant enlightenment to these good but unaware servants of His to know Him, so that as they shared in our sorrow they may also share with us in His portions of Divine bounty and grace. Such an atmosphere there was on that day, and such spirituality. Three years ago when I first came as their Auxiliary Board member, the friends were saying this town is dead; it's choked. Its people are fanatical. It has no spirit at all. And today, what life! What air of love and emotion! How the pure spirits of the seven martyrs have conquered this city with the armies of life and holiness!

⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, translated by Bahá'í World Centre

The seven sanctified bodies of the martyrs of Hamadán in the year 138 [B.E.] were laid to rest forever in adjoining graves by the wall, under the shade of trees, as they had slept together on the ground of the prison for more than ten months. And their great souls have soared in the limitless spaces of the worlds of God, have entered the Divine rose garden, and sat upon the thrones of might and glory.

This great event did not end on that day. Its repercussions were evident for days afterwards. Everything connected with this event had a measure of distinction, some of which I will try to summarize:

1) The stature of these seven men, their educational attainments, their philanthropic and community services, their good character and demeanor were well known in Hamadán among Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís.

2) The cruelty of their death had no parallel except in the annals of the Heroic Age of our Faith.

3) The participation of non-Bahá'ís in the funeral procession and the burial rites and the level of their sympathy were unprecedented.

4) The proclamation of the Faith in front of thousands of townspeople was something that had not occurred on that level in Iran.

5) The energy and stirring activity of the friends, particularly the youth, was something to behold. For three days they suspended all their normal activities and coordinated everything with model organization and efficiency; and they were proud to have a share in the work of those days.

6) The complete guidance and command of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Hamadán over the cares and concerns of that tumultuous day was truly inspiring. They were involved in everything, including the washing of the bodies, without any food or drink. It was nearly 7 p.m. when they returned from the cemetery, and from 8 p.m. into the night they held a session of the Assembly. Mr. *Qíyámí*, our Auxiliary Board member in Kirmánsháh, and I were with them and could see their wisdom and decisiveness in planning for the days ahead.

7) The impact of this event in arousing the curiosity and sympathy of the people of Hamadán was so great, and it gave rise to such a wave of indignation, that four days after the event the Judge of Religious Law in Hamadán felt compelled to appear on television for eighty minutes to justify the killing of the Bahá'ís. He had to resort to such specious arguments and spurious evidence that bore nothing but further disgrace for him and his cohorts.

8) And, finally, but no less significant than the above points, was the behavior of the close kin and immediate families of the martyrs. One feels humble before these mountains of faith and fortitude. These amazing people endured that storm with an awe-inspiring strength. There were no tears in the eyes of the wives and children; and not a word was heard from them except in thankfulness. Most of them had smiles on their faces, and it was they who were giving solace and comfort to others. Visitors and strangers who approached them crying and disconsolate were stunned by their serenity, dignity, contentment, and pride.

For the last ten months I was a witness to the tremendous spirit of these families. While their husbands were in jail, most of the wives were elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly and were busy serving the community. Mrs. Khuzayn, Na'ímí, Muṭṭlaq, and Vafá'í were on that Assembly as well as the older brother of Suhayl and Suhráb Ḥabíbí, who happened to be the father-in-law of Mr. Khándil as well. The Bahá'í community of Hamadán was truly fortunate in having the leadership of this Assembly. They were a source of courage and strength for everyone. I shall never be able to describe adequately their spiritual strength. While they were under so much pressure, oppression, and separation, not for a moment did they flinch from service. Only on visitation days their time was dedicated to being in prison with their dear ones. Their role in encouragement and uplifting the spirits of their husbands and preparing them for attaining the highest degrees of human development was extremely important. Often after these visits, the men in prison felt, as they put it jokingly, that they "came up owing something." When I think of these heroic souls and their amazing behavior, I am reminded of the ringing, opening salutation of the beloved Guardian's letter to the Baha'is of Iran on Naw-Rúz of 113 [B.E.]. I ardently wish to sacrifice myself for them, and repeat in my heart: "Blessings be upon you, a thousand blessings be upon you, glory and spirit be with you, ... glad tidings and praise be upon you."⁶

These dear souls [the family members] also went through difficult stages of tests and development. I remember many occasions when they were worried about the final moments when the outcome of the tests would be made manifest. Day and night they were praying to Bahá'u'lláh, pleading for strength and staunchness for their dear ones. Such awful anxiety gripped them. But after the martyrdoms I saw how calm and relieved they became. It was as if their heavy responsibility had come to an end at that moment. In some of them this calm and happiness at the successful outcome of the tests was even greater than the sorrow of loss and separation. The friends who reached the hospital early that morning when the bodies were still piled on the floor of the morgue, related that one of the wives arrived with terrible anxiety and uncontrollably ran to the body of her beloved

⁶ Shoghi Effendi. Translated by Bahá'í World Centre

husband, lifted his face and for a few moments looked silently at the smile with which he had hurried to the eternal realm, and then addressed him aloud, with a smile on her own face, "Thank you, my dear one." From that moment on she has not shed a drop of tears. She greets the guests who come to offer her condolences with such joy and pride as if she and her family have received the greatest gift. Yet I know how close were the bonds of love between that husband and wife and how utterly alone she is now. One truly feels humble before these women. The rest are much the same. They act as if an endless treasure has been bestowed upon them. They are full of life and activity, and they leave everyone amazed at their enormous fortitude.

And the children are the same. I did not see any of them crying or not appreciating the significance of their father's sacrifice. The ten-year-old son of Mr. Khándil was consoling his desolate and crying grandmother by saying, "Why all this crying, Grandma? Don't you know that the breast of the Báb [the Gate, the Prophet-Forerunner of the Bahá'í Faith] was riddled by 750 bullets? Father received only a few." And I have heard this comparison from the children of the martyrs in other cities too. The week before their execution when I went to see these friends in Hamadán, I heard that the mother of one of them, who had raised her son with much suffering and hardship, was extremely agitated and in distress. I went to see her. She recounted the sad tale of troubles and difficulties that she had endured in bringing him up; but I found the root of her anxiety in her last sentence: "All that is not important. I fear the dread of the test. I am worried about the terror of wavering." I felt ashamed within myself for not recognizing the strength of her faith, for thinking that her worry was for separation from her son. After the executions I did not see her crying either. What shall I say, and what can I write of the superhuman strength of those men who gave their lives, and of their families whose feat was no less than theirs.

Commemorative meetings were held for three days in the seven homes of the martyrs. Large groups of people from Hamadán and from other towns came to partake of that spiritual feast. The non-Bahá'í friends were extremely distressed. In the streets and in the marketplace they took many opportunities to express their sympathy and their abhorrence of the executions. On the third day the bazaar merchants stated that they had closed their shops in honor of the seven dead men. The Hamadán Bazaar was, of course, semiclosed for some days earlier for other political reasons. But the very fact that they announced the cause of full closure to be the death of seven respected Bahá'í townsmen, and that most of them spent that third day in the homes of Bahá'í martyrs, showed the extent of their care and kindness.

As for our Bahá'í community in Hamadán—a community that was badly buffeted in the early days of the revolution—the Bahá'ís in its neighboring villages were attacked by mobs and

driven away, homes and belongings were burned, some were forced to recant, all Assemblies in the neighboring communities were dissolved, survivors were packed into the city, in the care of the Hamadán Assembly, itself beset by such disorders and dislocations—now, after the sacrifice of its seven heroes, is a firm and strong community. The youth, with heads held high and a magnificent spirit, are ready to become worthy successors of the ones lost. All the Bahá'ís are keenly aware of the blessings that have been allotted to them. The sanctified blood of those noble men has helped to bring about a new creation. It appears that a new era has dawned in Hamadán. The pages of its history have turned. Those who survive are prepared to play their part in the establishment of the new world order of Bahá'u'lláh.

On the fourth day, three of the wives took flowers and sweets to the prison. First, they went to the warden's office and thanked him and his staff for having cared for their loved ones for more than ten months. In that meeting it was the prison officials who were full of remorse and tears and who told many stories of the humanity and gentleness of character of their charges. Then the women asked permission to visit the fellow prisoners of their husbands. Full of tenderness, they distributed sweets and flowers among the men who had shared prison with their husbands. With that act the special duties of those noble servants of Bahá'u'lláh came to an end. Some brilliant new pages were added to the glorious history of our Cause in its formative age. How glorious are these times, and how noble are these heroes, nurtured by His blessed Cause, who create such grandeur. “Blessings be upon you. A thousand blessings be upon you. Glad tidings upon you ... and blessings upon those who emulate your example.”⁷

F O U N D A T I O N

I shall end these pages with a prayer of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which the Local Spiritual Assembly of Hamadán recommended and offered for the families of the martyrs and all the Bahá'ís of Hamadán in those days. Perhaps you can find our feelings and our hopes in these precious words:

O one and only God, O matchless Creator! Praised and glorified art Thou for having placed this splendid crown upon the brow of these helpless ones, and this mantle of eternal glory on the shoulders of these indigent ones. The rays of Thy sanctity fell upon bodies of clay, and the lights of the world of eternity shone forth. A flame of Thy bestowal from the enkindled fire appeared and gave the hearts eternal life. Thanks be to Thee for this blessing and this bestowal and this bounty with which Thou hast distinguished these helpless ones. Thou art the Generous, the Merciful, and the All-Loving. 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás.

⁷ Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of Iran, Naw-Ruz 113 B.E., translated by the Universal House of Justice © Mahmoudi Foundation. The materials on this website are provided for educational, research and personal use. Users may download, distribute, and cite these documents provided that proper attribution is given to www.MahmoudiFoundation.org and that the materials are not altered.

May I be offered up for all of you,

Zhinus

27 June 1981

