

THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN EGYPT
A historical survey of the first twelve decades

Rowshan Mustapha

Foreword

In the year 2016, I began recording a book in Arabic and in narrative form presenting the history of my father, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Sulaymán, in parallel with historic events of the Faith in Egypt. My father was one of the early Egyptians who had accepted the Faith at the age of 16 around the end of the year 1914 and has been deeply involved in the development of the Faith in Egypt both as member in the Local and National Assemblies from the year 1922 to 1953. He was appointed member to the first Auxiliary Board of Africa in 1954 and then Counsellor in the North Africa Counsellor Board in 1975 until his death in 1981. My narrative of his biography as a Bahá'í and the events of the Faith took 4 years to be completed.

When that book was completed, Dr. Nabíl Iskandar Hanna strongly suggested that I translate the book to English. While the translation to English was ongoing, I shared it with a number of friends in extracts numbered 1 to 29. A friend who was one of the readers of my extracts introduced me to the “Tarikh” section of the Bahá'í and Bábi Studies – part of the On-line Bahá'í Library. “Tarikh” is the Arabic for History. I realised how comparatively little is written about the history of the Faith in Egypt. This encouraged me to put on record what I have and able to obtain on the history of the Faith in Egypt during its first 12 decades. In fact, it was more a moral obligation than an encouragement, having been favoured with access to documents and information which to the greater part are unique. Eventually a more detailed history of the Faith in Egypt will be written for the period 1924, the year the National Assembly was established, and 1960, when the archives of the National Spiritual Assembly were confiscated by the Ministry of Interior authorities following the Presidential decree N° 263 of the year 1960 will be retrieved.

Memoirs of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, of Ámin Battah and other Bahá'ís have helped fill in many periods that were totally void of records. Gamal Ḥasan helped very much in providing historical information gleaned from his works and from memoirs of other believers such as Ṣobḥí Elias and himself included, regarding the decade of the 1960s mainly, although his contributions extend to other periods also.

The last decade – 1971 to 1981, is covered by my direct involvement together with my wife Ulfet in the situation of the friends in Egypt.

Hopefully, this book will serve future historians and in the same time help many a reader to know how long the Egyptian friends have suffered and still are suffering.

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January 2023.

Introduction

The Faith in Egypt has been harassed from the beginning of the advent of pioneers in the early 1860s. Beginning with the Persian Consul of Persia in Egypt followed by the Muslim clergy sustained by Al-Azhar Institution and finally by the Government Authorities joining in. While the Egyptian Bahá'ís continue to support some major difficulties until this hour, the fury of the persecutions they were subjected to during those early 12 decades and after has subsided considerably since. Of course, the woes of the Egyptian Bahá'ís is not to compare with the woes of our beloved Persian Bahá'ís. Their situation is incomparable while their fortitude and steadfastness is unique. Way behind the Persian Bahá'ís come the Egyptian Bahá'ís. *"In our Holy Writings a clear distinction is drawn between the friends in general, however well-meaning and loving they may be, and those believers who have endured ordeals and trials and whose faithfulness and loyalty have been tested."*¹

The early period of the history of the Faith in Egypt is dominated by the advent of the Persian pioneers. For the first three decades, their activity was limited within the Persian community or amongst Persian Bahá'ís. It was only in the year 1896 that the first Egyptian accepted the Faith. Mirza 'Abu'l-Faḍl brought a number of Al-Azhar Institution students to the Faith amongst whom were Shaykhs who rendered historic services to the Faith in Egypt in later years.

The sejour of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt during the years 1910 and 1913 brought many new Bahá'ís and the Community began to form with centres and local Assemblies. A typical centre in the early days of the formation of the Community, Etay-el-Baroud, is considered with some detail as an example of how the early believers lived their Bahá'í lives. The persecutions in Port Sa'id are detailed from the memoirs of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá who lived in that town during its years of difficulties. Another centre considered in detail is where the persecution of the Bahá'ís was the cause of the independence of the Faith from Islám. An event that the Guardian lauded and hailed as a significant victory of far reaching ramifications.

The open opposition to the Faith in Egypt that began in earnest in the year 1920 in Port Sa'id has only subsided over the years. The Egyptian believers still suffer from denial of some basic rights of citizenship, mainly non-recognition of Bahá'í marriage.

I have intentionnally included details as well as some stories of individual experiences by Bahá'ís which probably a proper historian would not include. The history of the Faith in Egypt is in itself different to any other history of Bahá'í Communities. It follows that these details and stories are also different to any other known in the Bahá'í world except Iran and recording them highlights the difference.

¹ Message of the Universal House of Justice dated September 5, 1987 to the Bahá'ís in Egypt.

Timeline of historical events in Egypt up to 1981

Year	Event	Refer to page
1867	Bahá'u'lláh sends pioneers to Egypt.	
1868	Bahá'u'lláh sends Nabíl-i-Ázám to Egypt to plead freedom for imprisoned Persian pioneers.	
1868	August: Steamer carrying Bahá'u'lláh, Holy Family and exiles lays up in Alexandria port where transfer of the Exiles to another steamer takes place.	
1868	Declaration of Faris Effendi, a Syrian dentist and cleric, with Nabíl-i-Ázám in Alexandria Port prison, sent to Bahá'u'lláh, accepted.	
1868	April: Exile of 5 Persian Bahá'ís and two Egyptians to Sudan by machination of Iranian consul.	
1870 - 1880	Arrival of more Persian pioneers to Egypt including Mírzá Agha Núrid-Din Afnan, Siyyid 'Alí Yazdi, Hájí Niaz Kirmaní, Agha 'Alí Akbar Yazdi, Hájí Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Karim Tihraní, Hájí Muḥammad Yazdi, Hájí Muḥammad Ḥasan Khurasani.	
1896	Declaration of 'Alí Ibrahim in Port Sa'id – considered first Egyptian convert to the Faith.	
1896	Arrival in Egypt of Mírzá 'Abu'l-Faḍl, sent by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.	
1903	Death of Gabriel de Sacy on the day of Naw-Rúz in Cairo.	
1910	Publication of first Bahá'í Books in Cairo.	
September 1910 – December 1913	Intermittent sojourn of 'Abdul-Baha in Egypt visiting Port Sa'id, Alexandria, Cairo, Zaytún, Ismá'íliyyih, Abúqir, Ramleh and Mansoura – where he visited the tomb of Hájí 'Abu'l-Qasem Shírází	
1914	Passing away of Mírzá 'Abu'l-Faḍl Wednesday January 21 at 4 pm in the home of Agha Muḥammad Taqí Işfáhání where he was being nursed for many days.	
1914	Star of the West April 9, 1914 – Mention is made of a letter from Shaykh Muhyid-Dín (Şabri Al-Kurdi) on behalf of the Spiritual Assembly of “Misr” i.e. Cairo.	
1917	Dispersion of Etay El Baroud Bahá'ís.	
1918	Establishment of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Qawm'ul-Şa'ayda	
1920	Serious attacks on the believers in Port Sa'id.	
1921	Shaykh Muhyid-Din Şabri Kurdí goes to Tunis at the request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and opens Tunisia to the Faith.	
1922	Establishment of the Local Spiritual Assembly in Port Sa'id bringing the number of LSAs in Egypt to 4.	

1924	Establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt.	
1925	Deliverance of Opinion and Judgement of the Appellate religious court of Beba on May 10, 1925 regarding the Bahá'ís of Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda – verdict of the Muslim Court in Egypt pronouncing the Faith to be an independent religion.	
1926	Visit to Egypt of Mountfort Mills and Hippolyte Dreyfus at the request of the Guardian to investigate the matter of marriage, cemeteries and other civil rights for the Egyptian Bahá'ís.	
1926	Adoption of Bahá'í Marriage Certificate similar to that of Iran. First Bahá'í marriage without any traditional ceremony.	
1927	Preparation of the Constitution of the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt which is practically identical to the Declaration of Trust and By-Laws of the National Assembly of the United States and Canada.	
1929	First birth certificate where religion of newborn and both parents recorded Bahá'í.	
1930 to 1932	The National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt prepares Bahá'í Code of personal status based upon the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and sent petitions for recognition to Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior and Minister of Justice. The American National Assembly also made appeal to the Egyptian Government.	
1932 To 1934	<p>Attacks against the Faith in daily papers and the publishing of 4 articles in answer by Judge 'Abdu'l-Jalil Sa'ad.</p> <p>1933 - Pioneering of Şabri Elias of Alexandria, Egypt to Ethiopia and the formation of the first LSA in the Capital Addis Abeba on November 26, 1934.</p> <p>1933 – Pioneering of Ḥassan El Sa'id of Port Sa'id to Súdán.</p> <p>Tentative attempt by a Ma'ázoun (Muslim Marriage Registrar) to upraise the mobs against the Bahá'ís in Port Sa'id.</p> <p>Death of Ḥájí Muḥammad Yazdi in Port Sa'id – September 5, 1933.</p> <p>November 29, 1934, the Prosecution of the Mixed Tribunal of Cairo in Egypt, authorized the registration of the Declaration of Trust of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Egypt.</p>	

	Following Incorporation, the NSA acquired a donation of a plot of land one fedan – about 4000 m ² by Sharúbím Effendi ‘Ubayd.	
1934 To 1936	The annual convention of 1935 recorded the ultimate desire of the delegates to build a Ḥazíratu’l-Quds. Funds initiated.	
1936 To 1938	<p>October 1936, Dr. Muḥammad Šalíḥ of Alexandria visits Tunis at the request of Shoghi Effendi.</p> <p>October 21, 1936, death of Dr. Muḥammad Bashír in Alexandria.</p> <p>At the suggestion of the Guardian, the NSA of Egypt requested ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamid Eff. Ibrahim to proceed to Sudan and establish a permanent centre. He arrived in Khartúm in May 1937.</p> <p>September 17, 1937 death of Malakat Núshúgátí in Port Sa’íd – served the severing of one of last links of the chain of fetters of Islám.</p> <p>In 1937, Dr. Muḥammad Šalíḥ renders a second visit to the Bahá’ís in Tunis.</p>	
1938 To 1940	<p>Land purchased for the prospective Ḥazíratu’l-Quds of Cairo Egypt.</p> <p>Translation of “The Dawn Breakers” by Judge ‘Abdu’l-Jalil Saad: “<i>A notable service rendered to the entire Arabic-speaking world.</i>” BW vol VIII p. 86.</p> <p>Death of Muḥammad Soleiman of Ismá’íliyyih in 1938 prompted obtaining first Bahá’í cemetery in Egypt.</p> <p>August 23, 1939, death of Muḥammad Músá of Port Sa’íd.</p>	
1940 To 1942	<p>August 10, 1940 handing over of a plot of land for the first Bahá’í cemetery in Ismá’íliyyih.</p> <p>November 13, 1940, Egyptian Ministry of Health officially allocates burial ground for Bahá’í Community of Cairo.</p> <p>October 1941, laying of the cornerstone of the Ḥazíratu’l-Quds of Cairo.</p> <p>January 8, 1942, death of Philip Naimi of Ismá’íliyyih.</p>	

	<p>Re-interment of remains of Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Faḍl in the Bahá’í Cemetery of Cairo. See GPB p. 168.</p> <p>May 25, 1942 death of the distinguished and highly noble Judge ‘Abdu’l-Jalil Sa’ad.</p> <p>December 19, 1942, the remains of Mrs. Lua Getsinger who passed away in Cairo in 1916, are re-interred in the Bahá’í Cemetery in Cairo. See GPB p. 169.</p>	
1942 To 1944	<p>November 12, 1943 death of Dr. Muḥammad Šalīḥ, chair of both the National Spiritual assembly and the Local Assembly of Alexandria.</p> <p>December 27, 1943 date of deed conveying ‘Alí Sa’adid-Din property of Villa Safwan at Port Foad to the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt.</p> <p>May 23, 1944: Centenary celebration of the founding of the Faith.</p>	
1944 To 1946	<p>Persecutions continue in Egypt as the Faith progresses. BW 10 p.57-58</p> <p>Bahá’í Centenary Celebrations held in Cairo in newly completed Ḥazíratu’l- Quds 22nd to 24th May 1944. BW 10 p. 208.</p> <p>1944 Publication by the Ulama’ Council of Al-Azhar warning Muslims that the Bahá’í Faith is heretical and publication by the NSA of a response pamphlet refuting the claims of the Ulama’ BW 11 p. 27.</p> <p>First Bahá’í Summer School held in Port Sa’id July 15-30th 1944 – BW 10 p. 59.</p> <p>Death of Muḥammad Sa’id Adham September 5, 1945. BW 10 p. 528.</p> <p>October 15, 1945: Death of ‘Abu’l-Futúḥ Battaḥ BW 11 p. 499</p>	
1946 To 1950	<p>December 13, 1946: The passing away of beloved Muḥammad Taqí Iṣfáhání appointed Hand of the Cause posthumously.</p>	

	<p>February 19, 1947: Death of ‘Alí Effendi Sa’ad-Eddín whose “exemplary services enriched Bahá’í endowments in both Egypt and the Holy Land.” BW 11 p. 499.</p> <p>May 1948: Initiation of Five year Plan of the Bahá’ís of Egypt and Sudan in response to a cablegram from the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt and Súdán.</p> <p>The conflict of Palestine which broke out in 1948 produced temporary crisis to the Bahá’ís in Egypt. BW 11, p.28.</p> <p>July 8, 1948: Death of Ḥaj Taha El-Ḥamamši in Port Sa’íd. BW 11 p. 487.</p> <p>April 11, 1949: The decree in connection with the Bahá’í Burial Ground (750 sq. m) at Port Sa’íd, published in the Official Gazette. BW 11 p.305.</p> <p>August 28, 1949: The passing away of Ḥasan Mar’í Tantawi terminating “a period of heroism in the annals of the Cause in Egypt.” BW 11 p.505.</p> <p>July 9, 1950: Commemoration of Centenary of the Martyrdom of the Báb.</p>	
1950 To 1954	<p>April 9-13, 1951: UN Non-Governmental Organisations Regional Conference for the Middle East held in Istanbul, Turkey – participation for first time of Egyptian Bahá’í Delegation in UN conferences. BW 12 p.605.</p> <p>April 21, 1951: “(A) notable step (in the) progress (of) Bahá’í women (of the) Middle East (is) taken through (the) extension (of the) right (of) membership (in) local Assemblies (to) women believers (in) Egypt.” – The Guardian in his message of 1951 National Convention of the USA. BW 12, p.66</p> <p>April 1951: Mrs Amelia Collins visits Cairo on request of the Guardian.</p> <p>Early 1952: Dr. Ḥusayn Golestaneh opens Libya.</p> <p>Towards end of 1952: Mr Khodá-Bakhsh Attár and Mme Monavvár Attár - Persian pioneers, open Algeria.</p> <p>February 12 – 18, 1953, First Kampala Conference.</p>	

	<p>April 1953: End of Five-Year Plan of the National Assembly of Egypt and Súdán. – Achievements. BW 12 p. 65.</p> <p>August 1953 – Egyptian pioneers began to leave for their goals of the Ten Year Plan.</p>	
1954 To 1963	<p>May 1954: Appointment of Auxiliary Boards - Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Board Member.</p> <p>October 1954: Guardian announced the erection during Riḍván 1956 of three pillars – Regional Spiritual Assemblies, of the Universal House of Justice in Kampala, Johannesburg and Tunis in Riḍván 1956.</p> <p>November 7, 1954: Death of ‘Abdu’r-Raḥmán Rushdí. BW 13, p. 905.</p> <p>April 1956: Establishment of Regional NSA of North East Africa with seat in Cairo.</p> <p>April 1956: Establishment of Regional NSA of North West Africa with seat in Tunis, Tunisia.</p> <p>July 1957: “Let the Egyptian Bahá’ís know that they have not been forgotten.”</p> <p>August 8, 1957: Death of ‘Abdu’l-Fattāḥ Ṣabrí. BW 13, p. 905.</p> <p>January 23 to 28, 1958, Second Kampala Conference.</p> <p>February 3, 1958, Registration of first Bahá’í Marriage in Súdán.</p> <p>1959 Muḥammad Muṣṭafá completes his book “Bahá’u’lláh: The Great Announcement” in English.</p> <p>1960 Muḥammad Muṣṭafá completes his book in Arabic “النبا العظيم”.</p> <p>July 1960: President Nasser issues presidential decree 163 of the year 1960 disbanding the Bahá’í Assemblies in Egypt and confiscating all Bahá’í property.</p> <p>November 10, 1960: Death of Ḥusayn Rúḥí, only son of Háj Mullá ‘Alí Tabrízī who Bahá’u’lláh sent to Egypt. BW 13 p.938.</p>	

	<p>November 23, 1962: Death of Muṣṭafá Sálím in Tripoli where he was a pioneer. BW 13 p. 931.</p>	
1963 To 1968	<p>Early 1965: Visit of Aziz Yazdi to Egypt and holding of a large meeting.</p> <p>June 5, 1965 The Authorities take the Bahá'ís on – The Zaytún Court.</p> <p>1967 The Wayli Case.</p> <p>August 1967 The Abu Zaabal Detention Camp.</p> <p>January 4, 1968: Death of Şobhí Daniel. BW 14 p. 481</p> <p>August 23-25 1968: The first Oceanic Conference in Palermo, Sicily commemorating the voyage of Bahá'u'lláh from Gallipoli to Haifa in August 1868. Ramifications for the Bahá'ís of Algeria.</p>	
1968 To 1973	<p>They foreshadow... the erection of the Banner of Bahá'u'lláh in the Egyptian citadel of Sunni Islám. BW 15 p. 103.</p> <p>1969: Súháj – The next battle ground.</p> <p>1970: Further considerations.</p> <p>1971: Challenging the constitutionality of the Decree 263 of the year 1960.</p> <p>October 6, 1971: Death of Mrs. Muraşa' (Yazdí) Roḥání in Morocco. BW 15 p. 499.</p> <p>October 13, 1971: The Bahá'ís in Egypt submitted a petition to the Supreme Constitutional Court asking for redress and for justice to be upheld. BW 15 p.172.</p> <p>February 1972: The monumental Tanta case.</p> <p>December 31, 1972: Death of 'Abdu'l-Vahháb Roḥání, in Morocco. BW 15 p. 539.</p> <p>February 1, 1973: Death of Badi' Bushru'í. BW 15 p.545</p> <p>1973: Resorting to the Administrative Court.</p>	

1973 To 1976	<p>February 1975: The Arab Boycott Office at its meeting in Cairo announced that the Bahá'í Faith had been placed on its blacklist. BW 16 p. 136.</p> <p>1975: International action for the Bahá'ís in Egypt.</p> <p>February 25, 1975: The Bahá'í International Community released a statement regarding the announcement of the Arab Boycott Office. BW 16 p.136.</p> <p>March 23, 1975: Death of Fawzī Zaynu'l-‘Ábidin, Knight of Bahá'u'lláh to the Spanish Morocco.</p> <p>In 1975, the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt announced its decision that the 1960 decree of President Nasser banning all Bahá'í activity was constitutional and therefore the application of the Bahá'ís for annulment of the decree was dismissed. BW 16 p.137.</p>	
1976 To 1979	<p>November 14, 1976: Death of Siyyid Muḥammad ‘Azzáwí.</p> <p>1977: Signs of easing in the situation of the Bahá'ís in Egypt.</p>	
1979 To 1983	<p>January 26, 1981: Death of Şubḥí Eliás.</p> <p>August 15, 1981: Death of Muḥammad Muşţafá.</p>	

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Chapter one

Blessings of Bahá'u'lláh to Egypt

The blessings of Bahá'u'lláh have encompassed Egypt as early as His arrival in Adrianople and followed by beautifying its coastline when in August 1868, the ship transporting Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy family and the accompanying exiles, stopped in the waters of the Port of Alexandria. *“In Alexandria they transhipped into a steamer of the same company, bound for Haifa, where, after brief stops at Port Sa'id and Jaffa, they landed, setting out, a few hours later, in a sailing vessel, for 'Akká, where they disembarked, in the course of the afternoon”*² of August 31, 1968.

Egypt's history is rich with memory of its involvement with the Abrahamic Revelations from Noah to Muḥammad the Messenger of God.

At the time of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Egypt had woken up and became the leading Arab and Muslim country and with Al-Azhar Mosque institution its importance as the centre of Sunni Islām reached new heights. The Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in the year 1798 introduced progressive education and administration systems of France in the country. Many French technicians, educators, researchers came to Egypt while young Egyptians went for education in France. French and British Missionaries, as well as a few German and Italian set up schools and Scientific Education Institutions. The Suez Canal that opened for maritime navigation in 1869 simultaneously raised the country's profile and attracted worldwide interest and investments.

With this increased exposure, a sense of realisation of values such as political and religious freedom, human rights, social justice and equality of citizenship was introduced and further enhanced by a number of enlightened Egyptian educators, thinkers and writers and politicians.³

Pioneers to Egypt

Egypt was one of the early countries that Bahá'u'lláh sent pioneers to. Soon after arriving in Adrianople in the year 1864, Bahá'u'lláh sent **Hájí Bāqir-i-Kāshání** and **Siyyid Ḥusayn-i-Kāshání** to Egypt. In this connection, Shoghi Effendi wrote:

*“It was at this period that the limits of the Faith were enlarged, when its banner was permanently planted in the Caucasus... when its first Egyptian center was established at the time when Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashani and Haji Baqir-i-Kashani took up their residence in that country, and when to the lands already warmed and illuminated by the early rays of God's Revelation -- Iraq, Turkey and Persia -- Syria was added. It was in this period that the greeting of “Allah-u-Abha” superseded the old salutation of “Allah-u-Akbar.”*⁴

This makes Egypt the sixth country where the banner of the Faith was planted.

² God Passes By p. 182.

³ Gleaned from Suheil Bushrui's Arabic book “الذكرى المئوية لزيارته إلى مصر” p. 62 – 64.

⁴ God Passes By p. 176.

Bahá'u'lláh further sent **Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí Shírází** and **Hájí Mírzá Husayn Shírází** sometime during the year 1867 to Egypt.⁵

Other Persian pioneers arrived in Egypt:

Hájí Mullá ‘Alí Tabrízí came to Egypt in the year 1877. Bahá'u'lláh had given him permission to teach in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt was part of that Empire. In one of his visits, probably in the year 1877, and in the blessed presence of Bahá'u'lláh, Hájí Mullá ‘Alí Tabrízí was told to go to Egypt and marry an Egyptian woman. This is how his only son, Husayn,⁶ was born in the year 1878. Hájí Mullá ‘Alí Tabrízí continued his pioneering and teaching efforts and in his last visit to Akka he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah and asked to be a martyr. Baha'u'llah told him to continue in his teaching travels and he will attain his wish. He was killed during a teaching trip in Diyarbakir, Turkey, and there is a Tablet of Visitation from ‘Abdu’l-Baha to be chanted at his grave. Young Husayn joined the household of Háj Mírzá Hasan Khurásání who helped in his education, in his schooling and taught him Persian and the Faith. In 1899 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent Mírzá Khurásání and others to the United States and Husayn, to whom ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the name Rúhí, joined the group as an interpreter. During the two years in the United States, Husayn undertook college education and upon his return to Egypt he associated with Mírzá Ábu’l-Faḍl and established a school for boys and one for girls (the first ever girls school in Egypt). In 1920 he worked as an inspector of education in Palestine and was very happy to be near the Master. Retiring in 1935, Rúhí returned to serve the Faith in Egypt and passed away in 1960. His sons and daughters have served the Faith in Egypt, Jordan, Libya and elsewhere. Two of his sons ‘Alí, rendered great service in Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, and Súdán, while Hasan rendered great service to the Faith in Egypt. Husayn’s son Naguib pioneered to Morocco in North Africa. His daughters Asiya pioneered with her husband to Libya, while another daughter Mariam pioneered to Oman with her husband ‘Abbas Rushdy.

Muḥammad-Taquí Iṣfahání⁷ left Iṣfahán to go to Egypt in the year 1878 after being horrified by the murder of the Şultán of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs. On his way he met many believers and visited Akka and was privileged to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the first day and the following morning he was privileged to his first visit of Bahá'u'lláh at a time when the Tablets revealed in honour of the two martyrs were being chanted by Agha Jan. During his second visit Bahá'u'lláh advised him to settle in Egypt. He lived all his life thereafter in Cairo. His third visit was in the year 1891 when he was again privileged to be in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. His home in Cairo was a centre of activity over several decades and was blessed with a sojourn of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for some time when He was in Egypt. His contributions in the teaching field, in the early Bahá’í publications in Arabic, in the building of the Administration in Egypt and in helping the visitors and Iranian pioneers were most significant. Mírzá Ábu’l-Faḍl was nursed in his home during the last days of his earthly life and passed away with his hand held in the hands of Muḥammad-Taquí. Mrs. Lua Moore Getsinger was also nursed in that blessed home and passed away therein. Muḥammad-Taquí Iṣfahání attended the meetings held in the Ḥazíratu’l-Quds up to an

⁵ Baha'u'llah King of Glory p. 236.

⁶ The Bahá’í World vol. XIII p.938.

⁷ The Baha'i World vol. XI p. 500.

advanced age until shortly before passing to the Ábhá Kingdom in December 13, 1946. The Guardian appointed him to the rank of Hand of the Cause of God posthumously.

Muḥammad-Riḍa Iṣfáhání, a younger brother of **Muḥammad-Taqí**, pioneered to Egypt and served the other pioneers and the Faith in Egypt for many years before passing away.

Ḥájí ‘Abdu’l-Javád ‘Abdu’l-Vaháb Saráf of Iṣfáhán was a pious citizen who was able to see The Báb and hear Him speak, was deeply affected by this bounty as well as with the steadfastness and the beauty of character of the Babis. When the butchery of the Mullás and the mob they excited took an unprecedented level of brutality, Ḥájí ‘Abdu’l-Javád could not stand it anymore. He left his business of moneychanger with his two sons and went to India and then to Egypt where he arrived around the year 1866, by sea to the port town of Suez on the southern entry of the Suez Canal. There he was welcomed at the wharf by the spies of the infamous Persian Consul. The spies spoke Persian and knew their countrymen from their dress. At the Consul’s place, he was stripped of all his money and released with only a little change. He arrived in a lamentable condition in the Persian quarter near the Shrine of Imam Ḥusayn in Cairo where he found help and slowly took up work again and flourished. Muḥammad-Taqí Iṣfáhání and his brother ‘Alí-Riḍa Iṣfáhání introduced Ḥájí ‘Abdu’l-Javád to the Faith which he adopted fervently following a dream where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appeared to him and told him to follow Him. Ḥájí ‘Abdu’l-Javád soon married a young Egyptian girl Fatima Muṣṭafá who accepted the Faith and had four children: Fatima Sultan, ‘Abdu’l-Wahab Rohani, ‘Abdu’l-Fattáh Rohani, ‘Alí Rohani.

The three men carried the name Iṣfáhání as usual, but at some point in their adult life changed it to Rohani. All four and their children were dedicated to the service of the Faith in Egypt. Shoghi Riḍá son of ‘Abdu’l-Wahab Rohani became Knight of Bahá’u’lláh to the Canary Islands. ‘Abdu’l-Wahab Rohani with his wife Muraṣá’ Khánun, his mother and remaining son pioneered to Morocco in the year 1957. ‘Alí Rohani also pioneered to Morocco in 1957, while Dr. Chowghi ‘Abdu’l-Fattáh Rohani pioneered to Somalia in the early 1960s where he ran the risk of being killed because of his Faith. He later pioneered for many years in Kenya. Dr. Chowghi Rohani wrote many Bahá’í books in Arabic, some of which were translated into English but not published. One of his works was translated in French “*Bahá’u’lláh et le Carmel*” and made public on a personal site.

Zaynu’-‘Abidín Ismá’il of Hamadan, Iran, a carpet merchant who travelled often and went to Islámic Ḥáj in Mecca seven times. He met many Bahá’is during his travels and accepted the Faith. For that he was chased away by the family and he migrated to Egypt and established himself in Cairo. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave him the name of Zaynu’l-Mukhlisín (the adornment of the sincere ones). He was married to Ḥamídih Khánun-Aqá, daughter of ‘Alí Nakí Shírází. Ḥamídah received a Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wherein she received blessings for herself and her children. Zaynu’l-Mukhlisín and Ḥamídih had three sons and a daughter: Feridún, Foad, Fawzi and Tahera. All rendered meritorious services to the Faith in Egypt. Feridún pioneered to Libya in 1953 and Fawzi was the Knight of Bahá’u’lláh to Spanish Morocco.

‘Alí Nakí Shírází was a cloth and dye merchant in Shíráz. He travelled to India many times spending some years there, but decided to go to Egypt. There he met with the Persian Bahá’is and accepted the Faith. He brought his wife, Sultaneh, over from Persia with their

three children Hamida, Jalal and Shawkat. Sultaneh was taught the Faith from behind a curtain and accepted the Faith and their children were raised in the Faith. She was blessed by a Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The daughter Hamida married Zaynu’l-‘Abidin Ismá’il, (see previous paragraph) while the second daughter Shawkat married Faraju’lláh Zaki Al-Kúrdí and had one daughter Bahia who served the Faith in Egypt, Iraq, Libya and finally with her husband, Robert Gullick in Arizona, USA. Jalal married Narjis Músá, an Egyptian Bahá’í of Port Sa’id.

Hájí Muḥammad Yazdi, Shaykh ‘Alí Yazdi, Hájí Husayn Yazdi and Áḥmad Yazdi were the sons of a rich and prosperous businessman in Yazd Hájí ‘Abdu’r-Raḥim Yazdi. Shaykh ‘Alí was the first to accept the Báb and recognize Bahá’u’lláh. Eventually the whole family recognized Bahá’u’lláh and were active promoters of the Cause. They were persecuted, beaten and tortured and eventually lost all their property. The family then travelled to Akka and, happy to be near Bahá’u’lláh, resided there. Shortly before the ascension, Bahá’u’lláh sent Hájí Muḥammad Yazdi to Egypt and he resided in Alexandria. His younger brother Áḥmad Yazdi followed soon after and settled in Port Sa’id and married Munavvar Khánum the youngest daughter of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá but had no children. Hájí Muḥammad Yazdi had four sons: Shaykh ‘Alí, ‘Abdu’l-Raḥim, ‘Aziz, Rowshan and one daughter, Fatima – all five born in Egypt. Shaykh ‘Alí, after studying in Beirut, went to the United States and married there, while Aziz became an electrical engineer, worked for a petroleum company in Iran, pioneered to Africa, was appointed Counsellor and eventually was called to be a Counsellor at the International Teaching Centre. ‘Abdu’l-Raḥim prospered extremely well and served the Faith significantly in Egypt until he and his family were deported in 1965, and their business confiscated. Dr. Rowshan Yazdi remained in Port Sa’id where he succeeded as a doctor, and through his noble character and benevolent attitude, attracted the sympathy and love of the people of Port Sa’id not to his person alone, but to the beloved Faith also to a large extent. Shaykh ‘Alí Yazdi had a daughter called **Howieh** who was born in Egypt in 1902. Later on Howieh travelled to the Holy Land in 1920 at the request of the beloved Master and got married to Mirza Badi Bushrui. What is remarkable that after so many years and in 1948, she and her family went back to Egypt in obedience to the instructions of the beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi. She remained in Alexandria after the Passing away of Mirza Badi in 1973. Later in 1977 she spent what was remaining years of her earthly life as a pioneer to Cameroon She passed away and was buried in Yaoundé-Cameroon.

Mírzá Ábú’l-Faḍl Gulpáygání. It is also known that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had asked the most knowledgeable **Mírzá Ábú’l-Faḍl Gulpáygání** (1844-1914), one of the Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh, to go to Egypt and teach the Faith. Mírzá Ábú’l-Faḍl left Haifa and arrived in Cairo the year 1894. He had instructions from the Master to be circumspect and not to speak openly at first. Consequently, Mírzá Ábú’l-Faḍl went about wisely and started lecturing at Al-Azhar University and soon a large circle of students surrounded him.

However, the wisdom, knowledge and novel discourse of Ábú’l-Faḍl and his explanations of the verses of the Qurán attracted the attention of many of his students. He was successful in teaching the Faith to some thirty persons of whom are the following believers: Shaykh ‘Alí Bulaqí, Shaykh Ḥasan ‘Abdo, Shaykh Yusuf Soury, Shaykh Áḥmad ‘Ezzat’u’lláh, Shaykh Badr’ul-Din Ghazy, Shaykh Muḥammad Taḥboub, Shaykh Abdallah Taḥboub, Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Jalíl Sa’ad, Shaykh Sa’id Ghozzy, Shaykh Judge Ámin El-

Halaby, Shaykh Mohy-i-Din Sabry El-Kurdy, Shaykh Faraju'llah Zaky El-Kurdy, Hafiz Nadeem.⁸ Each one of these names became a pillar of the Faith in his environment and beyond. Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Jalíl Sa'ad who became Judge 'Abdu'l-Jalíl,⁹ was appointed Hand of the Cause posthumously by Shoghi Effendi. Shaykh Hasan 'Abdo taught the Faith in a town south of Egypt and developed a flourishing community that is recorded in the history of the Faith for leading to the independence of the Faith from Islám.

Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl frequented a café called Café Statia in El-'Ataba El-Khadra square in Cairo, known to be the choice of some of Egypt's outstanding intellectuals and writers at the time. It was the meeting place for such persons as Shaykh Abdel-'Aziz Djaweesh, Shaykh 'Alí Yusuf (owner of Al-Mú'ayyád paper), Áhmad Lotfi El-Sayyid (owner of the Al-Jarida journal), Muḥammad Ḥasannein Haykal, Hafedh Ibrahim and Sayyid Qadri and others. Later these personalities were to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His sejours in Alexandria and Zaytún. Café Statia is still there but has lost its previous stature.

In 1896, a certain Mírzá Riḍá Kirmaní, who was a disciple of Jamálu'd-Dín Afghání (1838-1897), killed Nasiri'd-Dín Shah. Both in Iran and among Iranian expatriates, many blamed the Bábís for this incident (few Iranians at that time made any distinction between Bábís and Bahá'ís). Until official word came from Iran through the Consulate that the Bahá'ís were not involved, a number of Shi'at Iranian expatriates were calling for a retaliatory massacre of the Bahá'ís in Egypt. Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl could not remain quiet under such conditions and openly expressed that he was Bahá'í and at the request (or invitation) of Ya'qub Sarruf and Farís Nimr, Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl wrote an article entitled "*Báb and the Babí Mouvement*" (الباب والبابية) that appeared in the magazine "*Al-Moqtataf*" in its issue of September 1, 1896. By so doing, Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl brought the history and teachings of the Faith to the attention of intellectuals throughout the Arab world. Prior to the publication of the article of "*Al-Moqtataf*", Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abdu published an article in the "*Al-Ahram*" paper of June 18, 1896 under the title "*The Bábí Movement*" wherein he loaded in most respectable terms the Central Figures of the Faith and the band of believers in Akka. A number of early treatises were published in Cairo during this period, including: an Arabic polemical history of the Bábís by Mírzá Muhammad-Mihdí Khán, the Za'ímu'd-Dawlih, was printed in Cairo in 1903.¹⁰

In the year 1898 Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl wrote a book entitled "Al Fará'íd" in answer to false information published about the Faith by Muslim Clergy in the Caucasus. When the Al-Azhar clergy read the book, they immediately denounced it and accused Ábu'l-Fadl with unbelief and decreed to ban the book.¹¹ It was during this period that at a gathering in the Iranian Consulate, Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl openly declared himself to be a Bahá'í. By this time, he had established contacts with the Egyptian press.

Early in 1899, Ábu'l-Fadl left Cairo and went to Haifa and then to the United States following the request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He then returned to Egypt in 1904 where he passed away in January 21, 1914, only a few weeks after the departure of the Master from Egypt.¹²

⁸ The list of names from an email from the Universal House of Justice to Marie Laget – grand-daughter of Gabriel de Sacy.

⁹ The Bahá'í World vol. IX p. 597

¹⁰ Parts of this paragraph are from "Rabbani – 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt Eyewitnesses pdf – p. 4-5."

¹¹ حواريو حضرة بهاء الله - الأستاذ عبد الحسين فكري - ص 82

¹² The Bahá'í World vol. XI p. 196 "*In one giant tomb are laid to rest in the Bahá'í Cemetery of Cairo, Egypt, two great teachers – Lua Getsinger, the American, Mírzá Ábu'l-Fadl, the Persian.*"

Other Persian pioneers came to Egypt. Many went to Al-Mansoura, about 120kms. NE of Cairo. The reason that many Persians, Bahá'ís and others, went to Al-Mansoura has not been noted, but probably because the wealthy and well-known Hájí 'Abu'l-Qasim-i-Shírází was in Al-Mansoura before the pioneers came to Egypt. The Bahá'ís taught the Faith to Persians in Al-Mansoura and elsewhere. They probably taught the Faith to Egyptians too. However, there is no record of Egyptian converts at that early stage.

In January 1868, Hájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí Shírází was arrested by Mírzá Ḥasan Khan, the Persian Consul-general in Cairo. The Consul persuaded the Egyptian Authorities that the Bahá'ís were dangerous people. So Hájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí was deported to Súdán (a British-Egyptian Condominium at the time) with six other Bahá'ís and one Egyptian who was teaching Hájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí the English language. The names of these six believers and the Egyptian teacher are as follows: Mírzá Ḥusayn Shirazi, 'Abdu'l Vaháb Zinjání, Hashim Naraqí Káshání, Ábu'l-Qasim Işfáhání, Dervish Ḥasan, Hájí 'Alí Hakim and 'Alí Effendi. They suffered terribly while incarcerated in the private prison of the consul who had confiscated all the writings in their possession, but they suffered even more during their trip to Khartoum in Súdán. The consul further arranged for the imprisonment of Nabíl-A'zám whom Bahá'u'lláh had sent to Egypt to appeal to the Khedive Isma'il on behalf of Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí and the six other believers mentioned above. Nabíl-A'zám's prison was located on the dockside of Alexandria port, the Tersana (in Arabic), meaning the Arsenal. Nabíl narrates the circumstances of the unexpected contact with Bahá'u'lláh and the exiles on the ship that anchored for a short while in the waters of the Alexandria port, noting:

... (a) physician was there in that prison. He tried to convert me to the Protestant Faith. We had long talks and he became a Bahá'í.

On the eighty-first day of my dream,¹³ from the rooftop of my prison-house, I caught sight of Agha Muḥammad-Ibráhim-i-Názir, passing through the street. I called out to him and he came up. I asked him what he was doing there, and he told me that the Blessed Perfection and the companions were being taken to 'Akká... and that he had come ashore in the company of a policeman to make some purchases. The police officer, he said, 'will not allow me to stop here much longer. I will go and report your presence here to Áqá (the Most Great Branch). Should the ship stay here longer, I shall perhaps come and see you again.' He set my being on fire and went away. The physician was not there at the time. When he came, he found me shedding tears, and reciting these lines: 'The Beloved is by my side and I am far away from Him; I am on the shore of the waters of proximity and yet deprived I am. O Friend! Lift me, lift to a seat on the ship of nearness, I am helpless, I am vanquished, a prisoner am I.' It was in the evening that Fáris (that was the name of the physician) came, and saw my distress. He said, 'You were telling me that on the eighty-first day of your dream, you must receive some cause of rejoicing, and that today was that eighty-first day. Now, on the contrary, I find you greatly disturbed.' I replied, 'Truly that cause for rejoicing has come, but alas! "The date is on the palm-tree and our hands cannot reach it"'. He said: 'Tell me what has happened; perhaps I could do something about

¹³ Nabíl had had a dream in which the Blessed Perfection told him "Within the next eighty-one days, to thee will come some cause of rejoicing." - H.M. Balyuzi - Bahá'u'lláh – The King of Glory" p.267

it.' And so I told him that the Blessed Perfection was on the boat. He too, like me, was greatly disturbed, and said: 'Were the next day not a Friday, and the *Seraye* closed, we could, both of us, have got permission to board the ship and attain His presence. But still, something can be done. You write whatever you wish, I will also write. Tomorrow, one of my acquaintances is coming here. We will get those letters to him to take to the liner.' I wrote my story and gathered all the poems I had composed in the prison. Fáris, the physician, also wrote a letter and stated his great sorrow. It was very touching. All of these he put in an envelope, which he gave to a young watchmaker named Constantine to deliver early in the morning... We were looking from the rooftop. We first heard the signal, and then the sound of the movement of the ship, and were perplexed, lest he had not made it. Then the ship stopped and started again after a quarter of an hour. We were on tenterhooks, when suddenly Constantine arrived. He handed me an envelope and a package in a handkerchief, and exclaimed: 'By God! I saw the Father of Christ.' Fáris, the physician, kissed his eyes and said, 'Our lot was the fire of separation, yours was the bounty of gazing upon the Beloved of the World.' In answer to our petitions, there was a Tablet in the script of Revelation, a Letter from the Most Great Branch, and a paper filled with sweet almonds sent by the Purest Branch. In the Tablet, Fáris, the physician, had been particularly honoured. One of the attendants had written: 'Sometimes I have witnessed evidences of power which I can never forget. And so it was today. The ship was on the move, when we saw a boat far away. The captain stopped the ship, and this young watchmaker reached us, and called aloud my name. We went to him and he gave us your envelope. All eyes were on us and we are exiles. Yet no one questioned the action of the captain.'¹⁴

Hájí 'Abu'l-Qasim-i-Shirází, was a rich Persian merchant who lived in Al-Mansoura in Egypt prior to the advent of the Persian Pioneers to that town which is about 120 kms north of Cairo. He became Bahá'í and enflamed went to Adrianople and was blessed with meeting Bahá'u'lláh. However, he did not slip from the grip of that same "*greedy and vicious consul-general (who) extorted no less than a hundred thousand túmáns from a wealthy convert, named Hájí 'Abu'l-Qasim-i-Shirází*"¹⁵

In his memoirs, Ámín Battaḥ provided further information regarding this distinguished Bahá'í:

Sometime before His visit to Egypt, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had asked Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí Iṣfáhání who lived in Cairo to identify the tomb of Hájí 'Abu'l-Qasim-i-Shirází in the Muslim cemetery of Al-Mansoura. Muḥammad Taqí went and searched in vain for the tomb until he noticed an old poor women weeping deeply over a tomb. When asked: '*Why are you weeping?*' she replied, '*I am weeping (my master) Sidy 'Abu'l-Qasim.*' That was how the tomb was found and a fine cover was placed over the tomb with some identification.

Ámín continues: Our friend Sabry Elias¹⁶ relates the following story: During the thirties of the twentieth century, there lived in Alexandria two Persian friends: Majdu'lláh-i-Thabet and Faḍlu'lláh-i-Thabet. During their early period in Egypt, Faḍlu'lláh lived in Al-Mansoura and told the story of his meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá as follows:

¹⁴ H.M. Balyuzi – "Bahá'u'lláh – The King of Glory" p.267/8

¹⁵ Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 178.

¹⁶ Opened Ethiopia to the Faith in 1934 and became, with his wife, Knights of Bahá'u'lláh to Djibouti.

I was living in Al-Mansoura and traded in perfumes which were placed in a glass box and carried around the streets and cafés from morning till night. One day I saw the Master walking in the street and the people sitting in the cafés stood up and humbly greeted Him while amazed by His stature as he passed by. I ran up to the Master and bowed before Him. He welcomed me and said: ‘I shall be your guest tonight.’ I lived in a small alley in a simple part of the town and I realised that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was walking towards where I lived. He finally turned into my alley and stood before my door. I hastened to open the door. He went in. I had nothing more than a humble bed. I quickly prepared the samovar and presented Him the tea and we ate together what there was in the house: bread and some olives. Then the Master slept on the bed and I slept next to Him and we were both covered with His ‘abá. In the morning, the Master visited the tomb of Hájí ‘Abu’l-Qasim and requested that on the tomb-stone be written: *This is the tomb of he who accepted all woes in the path of God and who’s soul ascended to the Concourse on High a lone sorrowful stranger in the love of God.*¹⁷

Ámin continues in his chronicle:

In the year 1961, , Muḥammad Muṣṭafá¹⁸ requested (Mrs.) Badr Elḥamamsi, ‘Abdel-Rasheed Othman and ‘Abdel-Raḥman Nofál to locate the tomb of Hájí ‘Abu’l-Qasim-i-Shirází and arrange the transfer of the remains to a new location in view of the fact that there was a plan for the construction of a road that would require the demolition of the cemetery in Al-Mansoura. The remains of Hájí ‘Abu’l-Qasim were transferred to the new cemetery and a beautiful tomb with new tombstone were made.

Muḥammad-‘Alí Al-Ḥusaynawí (Baghdadi) with his father and members of the family were Bahá’ís of Iraq. The Ḥusaynawís trace their origine to the Ta’í clan well known for their generosity and self-abnegation. When the sacred remains of the Báb arrived in Baghdad accompanied by six Persian Bahá’ís, Ḥusayn Al-Ḥusaynawí and his son Muḥammad ‘Alí Al-Ḥusaynawí decided to join the six Bahá’ís accompanying the remains of the Báb and bring the number to eight to conform to a verse in the Qurán¹⁹ believed to be relevant to the event. The journey from Baghdad to Beyrut was fraught with great difficulty and danger. They avoided joining a caravan or follow the trail that travellers normally use and bandits and robbers could assail them. They chose a route over mountains and untracked regions and travel by night to ensure the safety of the priceless load they carried. Mohammad ‘Alí went to ‘Akká, and there the Master told him not to return to Iraq, but to go to Egypt and marry an Egyptian and recommended him to see Muḥammad Riḍa Iṣfáhání in Cairo. There, Muḥammad ‘Alí taught the Faith and established a family whose descendants have served and still serve the Faith in Egypt with distinction.²⁰

Ábu’l-Qasem Gollestaneh originally from Shiráz accepted the Faith through his father. The terrible persecution of the Bábies and the Bahá’ís made him leave Iran and travel to

¹⁷ هذا مرقد من تحمل كل البلاء في سبيل الله وصعد روحه إلى الملاء الأعلى غربيا وحيدا محزوناً في محبة الله

¹⁸ Following a presidential decree banning all Bahá’í activity and Assemblies in Egypt in the year 1960, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Auxiliary Board Member, became a de-facto “point of reference” for the believers in Egypt.

¹⁹ “And the Angels will be on its sides, and eight will, that day, bear the Throne of thy Lord above them” – Qurán Surih LXIX v.17. A. Yusuf ‘Alí – translation.

²⁰ From the memoirs of Dr. Bessma Músá, granddaughter of Muḥammad ‘Alí Baghdad.

Bombay in India, but left India and arrived in ‘Akká after the ascension of Bahá’u’lláh, which gave him great sorrow. However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told him to go to Egypt. The dates are unknown, but in the year 1915 he was the secretary of the Local Assembly of Cairo in Egypt. The descendants of Ábu’l-Qasem Gollestaneh have served the Faith in Egypt and as pioneers since. Ábu’l-Qasem Gollestaneh passed away in July 1939.²¹

Goubran Sacy or Gabriel de Sacy

“In the year 1896, The Supreme Council of the Martinist Order²² asked me to entertain friendly relations with the principle adepts of Bahá’u’lláh in Cairo, known in Europe under the name of Babysme.”²³ – Goubran Sacy.

Goubran (or Gabriel) was born in Alexandria, Egypt, on 20th November 1858 to Antoine Sacy who owned cotton fields and Anastasia Michael Khoury. The Sacy family is Greek Catholic and trace their origin to the Crusaders. Silvestre de Sacy, an orientalist left France for the Orient at the time of the Crusades, gained his Knighthood and climbed into the world of Barons. The family made roots first in Akka, Alepo, Damascus, Alexandria and Cairo. Goubran was of Syrian origin naturalised Egyptian.

From the documents received from Goubran’s grand-daughter, Marie Françoise Lagente, in the year 2017, Goubran, in execution of the mandate of the Martinist Order, contacted the Bahá’ís in Cairo, mainly Persian Bahá’ís including Mírzá Ábu’l-Faḍl and quickly accepted the Faith. His deep knowledge of the Bible and Christian history was quickly illumined by his contact with the Faith. His booklet in Arabic “استدلاليات - جبران ساسي” or “Proofs” by Goubran Sacy, published in Cairo in 1902, is the first book about the Faith written and published in Arabic that I know of. Goubran Sacy published his main work “Du Règne de Dieu et de l’Agneau connu sous le nom de Bábisme” in June 1902.

In the year 1901, an article entitled *Le Credo* by Léon Tolstoï was published in the Egyptian press. Goubran initiated a correspondence with Tolstoï and wrote 3 letters (May 15, 1901 – July 26, 1901 and October 24, 1902) and received an answer from Tolstoï dated August 10, 1901 in which he expressed his long-standing interest in the Bahá’í Faith. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá highly commends Goubran and encourages him to persevere in producing irrefutable proofs of the Truth of the previous Messengers of God to Tolstoï. There are three Tablets to Goubran recorded in the Arabic “Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”.²⁴

Goubran Sacy passed away suddenly while he was on his way to the Naw-Rúz celebration with the Bahá’ís in Cairo in the year 1903. He was buried in the Greek Catholic Cemetery in Ḍaher district of Cairo. In 1911, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited the tomb of Goubran Sacy and rebuilt it anew. A Tablet of Visitation for Goubran Sacy was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

²¹ The Bahá’í World vol VIII p. 678

²² *The Martinist Order is a non-dogmatic movement with a spiritual aim created by Papus (Dr. Gerard Encausse) in the year 1891. The order is independent of any other order or initiatory organisation, church, political party or philosophical association* – The Home page of the Order in Google.

²³ (translation) – From a speech given by Gabriel de Sacy at the “*Exposition Universelle au Congrès Spirite et Spiritualiste, le 16 et 17 Septembre 1900 Paris.*”

²⁴ من مكاتيب عبد البهاء طبعة البرازيل أيلول 1982 صفحات 77-80 ، 101-102 و 131-132.

Publication of first Bahá'í Books in Persian and Arabic

The years 1910 to 1926 saw the first Bahá'í books published in Cairo by Shaykh Faraju'lláh Zaki El Kurdy who owned a publishing and printing house. Three volumes of "Makateeb Ḥaḍret 'Abdu'l-Bahá" were published between 1910 and 1920 as well as a small sized but thick prayer book entitled "Ád'iyeh Ḥaḍret Maḥboub" published in 1920.

Other Books published include: "Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh", "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", "Seven Valleys", "Four Valleys", "Some Answered Questions", "Ishraqat, Bisharat, Kalimat Ferdousiyyeh, and Tarazat", "Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Europe – Translated in Arabic". "Traveller's Narrative translated in Arabic", "Answer of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to La Hague translated in Arabic", "Nabíl's Methnawi – translated in Arabic"...

Books written by Mírzá Ábu'l-Faḍl, Al-Fara'id, Al-Dorrah El-Bahiyyeh, Al Hujjaj El-Bahiyyih and various letters were also published in Cairo.

Chapter Two

‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Egypt

Egyptian Imam, Al-Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abdu (1849 - 1905): Some years before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited Egypt and inspired its remnants of thought and tradition, a contact had been established with the famous Egyptian Imam, Al-Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abdu (1849 - 1905) with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Muḥammad ‘Abdu was considered by Shoghi Effendi as one “*of those men of eminence and learning who were moved, at various stages of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ministry, to pay tribute not only to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself but also to the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh.*”²⁵

In the year 1887, Muḥammad Abdu went to Beirut and met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and a correspondence between them ensued and other meetings took place. Muḥammad ‘Abdu was deeply affected by the teachings and knowledge of the Master. In fact, he admired the Master and when he tried to convey his opinion of the Master to his chronicler Muḥammad Rasheed Riḍa he said of the Master “He is the person Who can be called Great”. Abdu went to Paris following his stay in Beirut and upon his return to Egypt he became the Mufti of Egypt and remained in that position for the remaining 16 or 17 years of his life when, in 1905, he passed away.

When in the year 1896 the Bahá’is were accused of having been behind the assassination of Nasiri’d-Dín Shah, Muḥammad ‘Abdu published in *Al-Ahram* newspaper an article from which it was clear that he knew who Bahá’u’lláh, Báb and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were. As a recognised “*reformer*” Muḥammad ‘Abdu influenced the thoughts of people of eminence in Egypt and the middle East with his new view of Islám and of education, both during his life and well after. It was his influence that created the movement for the promotion of the rights of women in Egypt. It was his influence that led to the first Constitution of Egypt in 1923, long after Muḥammad ‘Abdu died.

Importance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sojourn in Egypt

The Universal House of Justice sums up the importance to Egypt of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sojourn there in the following excerpt from “Century of Light”²⁶:

Because of the dramatic character of the events that occurred in North America and Europe, accounts of the Master's historic journeys sometimes tend to overlook the important opening year spent in Egypt. 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived there in September 1910, intending to go on directly to Europe, but was compelled by illness to remain in residence at Ramleh, a suburb of Alexandria, until August of the following year. As it turned out, the months that followed were a period of great productivity whose full effects on the fortunes of the Cause, in the African continent especially, will be felt for many years to come. To some extent the way had no doubt been paved by warm admiration for the Master on the part of Shaykh Muhammad 'Abdu, who had

²⁵ God Passes By p. 316.

²⁶ Century of Light of the Universal House of Justice p. 14-15

met Him on several occasions in Beirut and who subsequently became Mufti of Egypt and a leading figure at Al-Azhar University.

An aspect of the Egyptian sojourn that deserves special attention was the opportunity it provided for the first public proclamation of the Faith's message. The relatively cosmopolitan and liberal atmosphere prevailing in Cairo and Alexandria at the time opened a way for frank and searching discussions between the Master and prominent figures in the intellectual world of Sunni Islám. These included clerics, parliamentarians, administrators and aristocrats. Further, editors and journalists from influential Arabic-language newspapers, whose information about the Cause had been coloured by prejudiced reports emanating from Persia and Constantinople, now had an opportunity to learn the facts of the situation for themselves. Publications that had been openly hostile changed their tone. The editors of one such newspaper opened an article on the Master's arrival by referring to "His Eminence Mirzá 'Abbás Effendi, the learned and erudite Head of the Bahá'ís in 'Akká and the Centre of authority for Bahá'ís throughout the world" and expressing appreciation of His visit to Alexandria. This and other articles paid particular tribute to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's understanding of Islám and to the principles of unity and religious tolerance that lay at the heart of His teachings.

Despite the Master's ill health that had caused it, the Egyptian interlude proved to be a great blessing. Western diplomats and officials were able to observe at first-hand the extraordinary success of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interaction with leading figures in a region of the Near East that was of lively interest in European circles. Accordingly, by the time the Master embarked for Marseilles on 11 August 1911, His fame had preceded Him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in Port Sa'id

'Abdu'l-Bahá's departure one hundred years ago from Haifa for Port Sa'id signalled the opening of a glorious new chapter in the annals of the Faith. He was not to return to the Holy Land for three years. Referring to that historic moment the Guardian would later write: "The establishment of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the Western Hemisphere—the most outstanding achievement that will forever be associated with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry—had ... set in motion such tremendous forces, and been productive of such far-reaching results, as to warrant the active and personal participation of the Centre of the Covenant Himself...." ²⁷

'Abdu'l-Bahá set foot in Port Sa'id in Egypt early September 1910 to spend in all 19 months and 16 days, intermittently in Egypt – the longest period from among the 10 countries²⁸ blessed by his visit during His historic travels from September of the year 1910 and early December of the year 1913.

'Abdu'l-Bahá left Haifa on the eve of August 29, 1910 and arrived in Port Sa'id most probably on the first of September. Only His son-in-law Mirzá Jalál was informed of His

²⁷ Message of the Universal House of Justice dated 29 August 2010.

²⁸ The 10 countries: Egypt, France, Switzerland, England, Scotland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, The United States of America and Canada.

departure. While on board the Khedivial steamer “Kosseir”, He wrote a letter to the Greatest Holy Leaf informing Her of His departure and requested that the least possible details be circulated about His departure. Mírzá Múnír-i-Zayn and ‘Abdu’l-Husayn were the only persons to accompany ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Port Sa’id.

There were no friends to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the debarkation quay which happened to be at a far end of the port, instead of the usual one. He took a carriage directly to the home of Mírzá Áḥmad Yazdi and his wife Múnavvar Khánum, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youngest daughter. Two days later He summoned Mírzá Nuri’ddín-i-Zayn, Shoghi Effendi and Khusraw and Siyyid Asadu’lláh-i-Qumí while Mírzá Múnír returned to Haifa.

For nearly one month ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remained in Port Sa’id and the friends of God came from Cairo, in turn, to visit Him. There is very little information about His sojourn in Port Sa’id, but it would be difficult to imagine that the first Egyptian Bahá’í Ibrahim ‘Alí was not introduced to His presence.

The reason why ‘Abdu’l-Bahá informed no one of his departure is explained in a letter written by Siyyid Asadu’lláh-i-Qumí and published in Bahá’í News of December 12th 1910:

One day He called me to accompany Him when taking a walk in the streets of the city. He said: ‘Do you realize now the meaning of my statement when I was telling the friends that there was a wisdom in my indisposition?’ I answered, ‘Yes, I do remember very well.’ He continued, ‘Well, the wisdom was that I must always move according to the requirements of the Cause. Whatever the Cause requires for its promulgation, I will not delay in its accomplishment for one moment! Now, the Cause did require that I travel to these parts, and had I divulged my intention at that time, many difficulties would have arisen.

After about a one-month’s sojourn in Port Sa’id, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá again boarded a steamer without mentioning His intentions to anyone. Star of the West announced this event as follows: “Word has been received from Port Sa’id that Abdul Baha has sailed from that port on a steamer for an unknown destination.” He intended to go to Europe. But it was very soon evident that His health did not permit Him to undertake such a journey. He disembarked in Alexandria, whence He left on 11 August 1911, bound to Marseilles.

From the same letter of Siyyid Asadu’lláh-i-Qumí mentioned above, we read:

The day that he left for Alexandria, he did not mention the matter to anyone; nor did this servant know the time of his departure. However, when I heard that he had left, I hurried to the steamer and there met him with two pilgrims from ‘Ishqabad. He said: “Tell the friends, how, under severe circumstances of bodily weakness, I have accepted the hardships of traveling to promote the Word of God, to spread the Cause of God and to diffuse the Fragrances of God! I have left behind friends, relatives, and home for the sake of the Cause!” By this he meant that the believers of God must follow in his footsteps and illumine the East and the West with the lights of knowledge, peace, and brotherhood.

There is no doubt that this trip is fraught with wonderful results for the Cause and many people will become awakened. In one of these interviews ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated he may go to Cairo and pass the remainder of the winter in that city. The Egyptian winter weather is ideal, temperate and agrees with him. Since he has arrived in Egypt his health is much improved, and should he decide to go to America it will not be before the springtime.

In Bahá'í News of December 31, 1910 there is a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the members of the Assemblies of Bahá'ís in America, translated by Dr. Ameen Fareed on December 8, 1910 we read:

To the Members of the Assemblies of Bahá'ís in America

To the beloved ones and the maid-servants of the Merciful

HE IS GOD

O ye dear friends and maid-servants of God!

Your epistle was received.²⁹ You have expressed joy and happiness because of the trip of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from the center of prison (Acca) to the land of the divine Joseph (Egypt). There are divine wisdoms in this journey. I am hopeful that it will be productive of results.

Now – praise be to God! – Some time is passed with the utmost of spirit and fragrance in this country, and we are occupied with the service of the Cause of God and servitude to the Holy Threshold.

When the service which is our (present) purpose is realised for the Kingdom of God, perhaps we shall journey to other parts....

A long letter by Muḥammad Yazdi in Alexandria was published in Bahá'í News of January 19, 1911 wherein he wrote regarding the reaction of the newspapers to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Egypt:

When He first arrived to Egypt, a great cry and clamour was raised by the representatives of the people (the newspapers). All were expressing opinions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. No one could form a just and impartial view of Him. Facts were exaggerated and misrepresentations abounded in every paper....

Such were the conditions when 'Abdu'l-Bahá with His might and His glory, His meekness and His humility, entered the land of Pharaoh. But lo! After a short time the clouds of misrepresentation were dispelled and the light of reality shone forth with great splendour. So much so, that at present there is not one dissenting voice in the land of Egypt about the greatness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Moggatam*,³⁰ one of the most influential Arabic newspapers, in a long article of November 28, 1910, comes out valiantly and defends in most eloquent terms the Teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Not being satisfied with this, the editor quotes from the Book of Akdas (Kitab-i-Aqdás)...

The same Bahá'í News of January 19, 1911 reports: Port Sa'id – Many pilgrims from different parts of the world are arriving and leaving here for Alexandria to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

²⁹ A letter sent by the Washington (DC) Assembly on behalf of the Assemblies of America, supplicating 'Abdu'l-Bahá to visit this country.

³⁰ Al-Moqattam المقطم.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Alexandria

In Alexandria, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá first went to Hotel Victoria and then moved into a house in the suburb of Schutz³¹ in Ramleh which is a series of beautiful suburbs extending eastwards along the coast of the Mediterranean joined by an electric tramway line. Shortly after settling in Ramleh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sends for Shoghi Effendi who was 13 years old then.

An early publication in the Egyptian papers welcoming ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was that by Shaykh ‘Alí Yusuf – the founder of the modern Islámic press in Egypt and owner of “Al-Mo’ayyid” (المؤيد) paper who had changed completely from his previous opinion regarding ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Faith after visiting the Master twice in Alexandria. In its October 16, 1910 edition, “Al-Mo’ayyid” warmly welcomed ‘Abbas Effendi and called him “A most respectful Shaykh of deep knowledge, profound erudition in the sciences of (Islámic) jurisprudence and fully apprised of the history of Islám, its fluctuations and divers sects...”³²

Al-Ahram prestigious Egyptian paper published an article on January 18, 1911 in which the well-known author Shokri Effendi Yasser highly praised ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and some history of the Faith.

It was there that Wellesley Tudor-Pole, an Englishman and admirer of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also came around mid-November 1910 and was able to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Louis Gregory also came and met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in April 1911. It was during that period also that a great feast was set up by the Shi’ite Persian community on the occasion of the ‘Ashura which He attended.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá seemed to enjoy His sojourn in Egypt. It afforded Him some physical rest and recuperation of health, but above all, it was a unique occasion to bring in person the spirit and teachings of the Faith to the head, notables, writers and the press of Egypt – the capital of the Arab and Islámic world as well as the fountainhead of thought and intellect at that time. He captured their hearts and minds with His eloquence and knowledge and His incomparable Arabic. However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was very busy, as usual, meeting the friends and seekers who came to him every day, taking care of the heavy correspondence and answering the multitude of requests and supplications.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was welcomed by most of the press and all the personalities He met by a diffusion of titles and expressions of praise and admiration that the Egyptians conceived and mastered in Arabic, even by some of those who had previously declared doubts about Him and the Bahá’í Faith. Contrary to His attitude of avoiding Royalty and Heads of State during His travels to the West, in Egypt He exchanged four known visits with the Ruler of Egypt, Khedive ‘Abbás Helmi II and met with his brother Prince Muḥammad ‘Alí Tewfik. A friendship was established with the Khedive’s chamberlain, ‘Othmán Mortaḍá Pasha who, while being instrumental in arranging the meetings with the Khedive, became in the same time an admirer of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. ‘Othmán Mortaḍá Pasha was privileged with three messages from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Early May 1911, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá moved to Cairo and settled in the suburb of Zaytún some 8 kms east of Cairo connected by railway. The suburb was known as Zaytún Gardens and included the royal Qubba Palace of the ruler of Egypt. It was then that his visits with the Khedive ‘Abbás Helmi II began and His meetings with the Mufti of Egypt Shaykh Bakri El-Ṣadfi, the Imam of the Khedive Shaykh Muḥammad Ráshid, Shaykh Muḥammad Bakhit who becomes the Mufti of Egypt in 1915, took place. Notable other persons who were

³¹ Foad Rushdy and his wife Siham Jarrah bought this house and offered it to the Faith.

³² Pages 172 and 354 “عباس أفندي – في الذكرى المئوية لزيارته إلى مصر” by Soheil Bushru’í.

privileged to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá were Sir Ronald Storrs of the British Agency, Isabel Grinevsky, a Russian poet and Lord Kitchener.³³

Many authors, writers, intellectuals and journalists travelled to Cairo to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá and enjoy His presence. Among these was the famous George Zaydán the owner of the magazine Al-Hilal.³⁴

'Abdu'l-Bahá spent some three months in Cairo.

On the 11th August 1911, 'Abdu'l-Bahá leaves Egypt for Europe

'Abdu'l-Bahá's first public address in the West took place in Thonon-les-Bains in Switzerland on the 28th August 1911. The address was also the first to be published in a newspaper. It was the privilege of the Egyptian Al-Ahram journalist to be there accidentally and to publish his experience as well as the address itself in Al-Ahram paper of September 16, 1911.

On the 7th of December 1911, 'Abdu'l-Bahá leaves Marseille in France for Port Sa'id, Egypt.

On the 12th of December 1911, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is in Alexandria where He remains until March 25, 1912.

From June 17, 1913 to July 11, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is in Port Sa'id.

July 11, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá goes to Ismá'íliyyah for 6 days.

From July 17, 1913 to October 13, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is in Ramleh in Alexandria.

For two days 13 to 15 October 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to Abú Qir.³⁵

Between the 15th of October and the 22nd of October 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in Ramleh.

Between the October 22, 1913 and November 8, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stayed in Alexandria proper.

On November 8, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sails to Port Sa'id, returns November 16, 1913 to Alexandria by rail.

'Abdu'l-Bahá remains in Ramleh in Alexandria from the 17th of November to the 2nd of December 1913.

On the 2nd of December, 'Abdu'l-Bahá travels to Port Sa'id where on the 3rd of December 1913, He leaves in the evening by ship for Haifa.³⁶

December 12, 1911, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is in Alexandria, remains until March 25, 1912.

This second period of sojourn of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Alexandria was likewise rich with meetings and visitors as the earlier one. He probably wished to get some rest after His European tour and in preparation for the forthcoming long and most tiring travel to North America and a second tour of Europe. Yet the correspondence was intense with all parts of the world specially the United States pleading for His visit to North America. However, 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not hold any public meetings such as he did in Europe, but during the month of March, He held three talks with a number of Persians and their friends in Hotel Victoria. On the 4th of March, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave a talk about Zoroaster proving that Zoroaster is mentioned in the Qurán. The second talk was on the 6th of March, which

³³ See: <https://theutteranceproject.com/the-extraordinary-life-of-abdul-baha/#top>

³⁴ “عباس أفندي – في الذكرى المئوية لزيارته إلى مصر” by Soheil Bushru'i, p. 180.

³⁵ 23 kms NE of Alexandria along the Mediterranean coast connected by rail.

³⁶ See: <https://theutteranceproject.com/the-extraordinary-life-of-abdul-baha/#top>

happened to be the Anniversary of the birth of the prophet Muḥammad. The talk explained how this birth was the cause of great changes in the Asian continent and in ignorance, many conflicting voices rose from among the followers of the Prophet that dimmed the light of His teachings.

The third talk was on the day of Naw-Rúz wherein, 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicated, new plans should be set which will consecrate that feast and future generations will remember that such and such a plan was set on the Naw-Rúz of such a year.

After spending the winter in Alexandria, 'Abdu'l-Bahá set out on the 25th of March 1912 to America, boarding the steamship *Cedric* accompanied with Shoghi Effendi,³⁷ Siyyid Assadu'lláh-i-Qumí, Áqá Khuraw, His secretaries Mírzá Maḥmúd-i-Zárqání and Mírzá Múnir-y-Zayn, and His translator Dr. Amínu'lláh Faríd.

From June 16, 1913 to July 11, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is in Port Sa'id.

Port Sa'id is hot and humid in summer and *“the travels during the last three years were taking their toll on 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Shortly after arrival, He wrote, ‘Praise be to God you are spending your days in a delectable, verdant and refreshing place. We too are, praise be to God, enjoying ourselves in the hot weather of Port Sa'id with its excessive humidity, dust and dirt, while suffering with nerve fever. As the friends are comfortable, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is in the utmost joy’.”*³⁸

Abdu'l-Bahá had decided not to travel to the Holy Land immediately and cabled the pilgrims gathered there to come to Port Sa'id. There gathered a large number of Baha'is and visitors to the extent that the hotel in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá housed had no room where that large gathering could meet. Two days after His arrival, a large “Šiwán”³⁹ was set up on the roof to take the large number of individuals and on the 19th of June 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the first of many talks and meetings. The Egyptian Gazette published in its 27 June 1913 an article entitled:

'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt
Wonderful scenes in Port Sa'id
Eastern Bahá'is Assembled in force

(...) At Port Sa'id the pilgrims have erected a huge tent on the roof of a native hotel
And there they gather and sing with touching devotion (...)

On July 3, 1913, Ḥusayn Ruḥi and his three sons were privileged with being received by the Master.

On July 4, 1913, “This morning the Master received in private many of the Egyptian friends who had just arrived to meet Him for one day.”⁴⁰ It is assumed that by “friends”, Sohrab meant Bahá'is but he did not mention any names.

³⁷ Shoghi Effendi was unjustly refused continuation of his journey to America in the port of Naples, Italy, on a false detection of eye trouble.

³⁸ The Master in Egypt by Ahang Rabbani foreword xvix

³⁹ Huge rectangular tent with tapestry flattop and sides typical in Egypt for large gatherings.

⁴⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt by Mírzá Aḥmad Sohrab.

July 11, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá goes to Ismá'íliyyah for 6 days.

On July 11, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá leaves by a train at 8 am for Ismá'íliyyih with Mírzá Áḥmad Yazdi and Khusraw. "There were several pilgrims, who had just arrived, and to them He expressed His regrets. He will stay there two or three days. If the weather agrees with Him, He will rent a house and send for us. If not, He will return and go either to Alexandria or Ramleh"⁴¹

On July 17, 1913, the visiting friends from Port Sa'íd find the Master sitting up in bed in His hotel in Ismá'íliyyih. He was not feeling well and decides to leave for Alexandria.

From July 17, 1913 to October 13, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is in Ramleh in Alexandria.

July 17, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in Alexandria in the evening and took residence for the first two weeks at Hotel Victoria in Alexandria. Then He rented three houses: one for Himself in the neighbourhood of Mazlum Pasha station, one for His secretaries and visitors and a third house for Mírzá Ábu'l-Faḍl. 'Abdu'l-Bahá felt much better in Alexandria and specially Ramleh.

On the 1st of August 1913, the Master was joined with His august sister Bahíyyih Khánum, His daughter Rúḥa Khánum and His beloved grandson Shoghi Effendi. For Bahíyyih Khánum, her travelling out of Ḥaifa must have been the cause of great happiness, added to being with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Her younger niece Múnavvār Khánum. Shoghi Effendi must have been overjoyed to be near 'Abdu'l-Bahá again.

In a letter to the Bahá'ís of the West dated 17 July 1932, the Guardian described what he felt were the feelings of Bahíyyih Khánum as she greeted 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

The enthusiasm and joy which swelled in her breast as she greeted 'Abdu'l-Bahá on His triumphant return from the West, I will not venture to describe. She was astounded at the vitality of which He had, despite His unimaginable sufferings, proved Himself capable. She was lost in admiration at the magnitude of the forces which His utterances had released. She was filled with thankfulness to Bahá'u'lláh for having enabled her to witness the evidences of such brilliant victory for His Cause no less than for His Son.

On August 15, 1913, 'Othmán Mortaḍá Pasha called on 'Abdu'l-Bahá and conveyed the loving greetings of the ruler of Egypt, Khedive 'Abbás Ḥelmí, and his longing to meet Him. The date was fixed for the afternoon of August 17, 1913. On the 17th, therefore, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the Ras-El-Tín palace and had his meeting with the Khedive for the third time.

On August 17, 1913, 'Abbás Ḥelmí II, the Khedive of Egypt, met 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the third time.

On September 3, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, accompanied with 'Othmán Mortaḍá Pasha, pays another visit to the Khedive 'Abbás Ḥelmí II who had come to celebrate the second day of the feast of the end of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, in Alexandria after celebrating it in Cairo on the 2nd of September. This was the last visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Khedive.

The next day, September 4, 1913, in the afternoon, Prince Muḥammad 'Alí, the Khedive's younger brother, calls on 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Prince who had met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in New York and in Paris, arrives by automobile at the second of the three houses 'Abdu'l-Bahá

⁴¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt by Mírzá Áḥmad Sohrab.

had rented, and hearing that the Master is in another house not far away, decides to walk there. Before a Bahá'í can run ahead and announce the advent of the prince, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrives walking from the other end of the street and meets the prince half way up the street, greeting each other most courteously. Then, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Prince continued to walk and converse together, disappearing from the eyes of the Bahá'ís marvelling at the scene.⁴²

For two days 13 to 15 October 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to Abú Qír.⁴³

'Abdu'l-Bahá went to Abú Qír by train with Mírzá Munír and Áqá Khusraw only with the intention of staying a week there. Two days later on the 15th of October, He decided to return to Ramleh.

Between October 15 and October 22, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in Ramleh.

In the afternoon of His arrival in Ramleh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá finds Constantin Teutunji, a correspondent of Al-Ahram, one of the leading Egyptian newspaper, waiting for Him and asked for an interview. The correspondent was overwhelmed with astonishment as the Master explained the sufferings of Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká.

Between October 22 and November 8, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stayed in Alexandria.

After three months living in Ramleh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá moves with the Family and attendants to Hotel Victoria in Alexandria. The time 'Abdu'l-Bahá spends in Alexandria is mostly spent answering the large volume of daily correspondence, visiting Mírzá 'Ábu'l-Faḍl and entertaining visitors, mostly western, taking long walks in gardens and deep prayers and meditation.

On November 8, 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sails to Port Sa'id.

On November 8, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sails to Port Sa'id, returns November 16, 1913 to Alexandria by rail.

The Master met with the pilgrims who were called from Haifa, as well as friends from Cairo. On November 16, without previous notice, He leaves Port Sa'id early in the afternoon for Alexandria by train, exchanging the line at Benha station.

'Abdu'l-Bahá remained in Ramleh from November 17 to December 2, 1913.

'Abdu'l-Bahá departed from Port Sa'id to Haiffa on the 3rd December 1913

Egyptian Bahá'ís who met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt

Here is a record of the names of the Egyptian Bahá'ís who were blessed with meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His sojourn in Egypt or later as pilgrims to Haifa. This list is only what I have gleaned from memoirs of friends and from Bahá'í World editions. I hope that descendants of those, whose names should be added to that list, may help add more names:

Shaykh 'Alí El-Bulaqí

⁴² See <https://theutteranceproject.com/the-extraordinary-life-of-abdul-baha/#top>

⁴³ 23 kms NE of Alexandria along the Mediterranean coast connected by rail.

Shaykh Ḥasan ‘Abdo
Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Jalīl Sa’ad
Ḥafiz Nadeem
Moḥy-i-Din Sabry El-Kurdy
Shaykh Faraju’llah Zaky El-Kurdy
Muḥammad Sa’id Adham,
Muḥammad Effendi Músá
Raḥim Elyaho
Metwally Amer
Muḥammad Ḥassan Battah
Ábu’l-Futuḥ Battah
‘Abdel-Aziz Ḥasan Battah
‘Alí Ibrahim
Enayat ‘Alí Ibrahim
‘Alí Saad-Eddín
Ḥusayn Ruḥi
Ḥasan Ḥusayn Rúḥí
‘Alí Ḥusayn Rúḥí
Naguib Ḥusayn Rúḥí
Hag Taha El-Ḥamamsy
Hag Ḥasan Ryḥan
Maḥmúd Noshúgátí
‘Alí El-Bazzár
Dr. de Bons
El-Sayyid Talib
Muḥammad ‘Abdel-Basset
‘Alí El-Bazzar
‘Alí El-Roqa’í
Philip Na’ímí

Chapter Three

Birth of the Egyptian Bahá'í Community

The beginning of the spread of the Faith among the Egyptians, however, effectively did not take place until the year 1896. In that year, a customs officer in Port Sa'id, Ibrahim 'Alí, became Bahá'í through the friendship that was established with the merchant Persian Bahá'ís of Port Sa'id, who came in contact with him to custom clear the goods they imported from abroad.

Ibrahim 'Alí passed away in the year 1928 and on that occasion the Bahá'í Magazine of the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt of that date published the obituary "of the first Egyptian Bahá'í".

With the advent of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Egypt, the Faith in Egypt took an ascending curve amongst the Egyptians. Some became Bahá'ís when they simply saw the Master, others when they were present at His meetings and many through the effulgence of His bounties upon the whole country.⁴⁴

Cairo, Alexandria and Port Sa'id quickly developed into lively communities that had a number of Persian pioneers serving in each of these centres. Qawm'ul-Şa'áida, a village south of Cairo, had a community of Egyptian Bahá'ís only and through the indefatigable efforts of Shaykh Hasan 'Abdo and his spiritual son Hasan Marí'i Tantawi a group of dedicated Bahá'ís was established with a school for children and that quickly developed to a local Assembly.

The case of the Etay'el-Baroud centre in the heart of the Nile Delta north of Cairo, may well be considered with more detail, because of its contribution to the development of the Faith in Egypt over many decades later, by some members of that small and nascent community with special reference to Muḥammad Muşţafá – the youngest among them.

Etay-el-Baroud

Muḥammad Muşţafá completed his studies at the Telegraph School in 1913, having gone through 6 months of training, split between Cairo and Kafr-el-Zayat. His posting was to the Telegraph office of Etay-el-Baroud, that small town midway between Tanta and Damanhur.

Telegraph offices in those days were part of the setting within railway stations. Telegraph operators took shifts, and in the case of Etay-el-Baroud a house was provided to accommodate, these telegraph operators. One of the operators already assigned to that office was 'Abdu'l-Raḥman Rushdy who took up his post before knowing the Faith. When he knew the Faith through the efforts of Shaykh Hashem, he taught his two brothers 'Abdel-Fattah Şabrí and Áḥmad Serry and others.

Etay-el-Baroud was a small place at the time, it is still small today when compared with Damanhur or Kafr-el-Zayat or Tanta, towns not far away. The story of Etay-el-Baroud

⁴⁴ At a certain moment when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in Alexandria and in the home of Hájí Sherif, there were demonstrations outside. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked Ábu'l-Futúḥ Battah - who was 21 years old at the time, what is there outside? Battah said that the demonstrators say: "Egypt for the Egyptians." 'Abdu'l-Bahá smiled and tapped his chest three times and said: "Egypt is for the Baha'is" – repeated three times, "Leave the Egyptians to me. I have my own plans for their benefit." (Gathered from memoirs of Ḥusayn Ruḥí.)

begins less than one year from the departure of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from Egypt and His return to the Holy Land after His historic visits to Europe and North America – the United States and Canada, that is in 1914, while World War I was about to start.

Etay-el-Baroud and its natural unfolding to the Faith had a marked effect on the eventual development of the Faith in the rest of Egypt. Referring to the year 1914 or a little earlier, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá frequently expressed his astonishment of how he was led to come to Etay-el-Baroud, and a further constellation of Bahá’ís and not yet Bahá’ís, came to be gathered in that place. I shall follow what he said in his recordings with Gamal and Somaya Ḥasan:

Many a time, one would reflect and try to understand whether what happened was destiny or was it an accident. Etay-el-Baroud is not an important locality by any measure in comparison with other localities nearby, and yet when considering the history of the Faith in Egypt, it behoves us to reflect on what took place in spot.

In those years, 1914 and the following years, Bahá’í visitors came to Etay-el-Baroud from Cairo and from Alexandria. In the same time Áḥmad Ṣafwat (a Bahá’í) was the deputy Attorney in Delingát, only 14 kms from Etay-el-Baroud, and Yusuf Ḥabīqa (a Bahá’í) was post-master in Delingát also. Ibraḥīm ‘Abdu’l-Massiḥ accepted the Faith in Etay-el-Baroud when he read an article written by the editor of the El-Bayán magazine. That magazine contained a beautiful picture of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and an honest article describing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in very heart-touching and sublime terms, saying: “(That) great man who teaches love and peace and the elimination of all kinds of prejudice etc. etc...”. While Ibraḥīm ‘Abdu’l-Massiḥ and some friends of his were there in Etay-el-Baroud, Shaykh⁴⁵ Hashem, who had recently accepted the Faith, was transferred from the Shariaa Courts⁴⁶ of Cairo to a post in the secretariat of the Shariaa Court of Etay-el-Baroud. Shaykh Hashem kept his Bahá’í identity undisclosed.

One day, Shaykh Hashem put the Al-Bayán magazine in front of ‘Abdu’l-Raḥman Rushdy, and that is how Rushdy became Bahá’í.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá continues remembering those early days when he felt as though he was walking on air:

As one ponders over those few who were in Etay-el-Baroud and on the impact they had on the fortunes and evolution of the affairs of the Faith over the years, one can but marvel at the power of the Word and its effect on those otherwise ordinary souls, who may rightly be called the vanguard – vanguard of the Egyptian believers. Take for example ‘Abdu’l-Raḥman Rushdy... Before Etay-el-Baroud there was no active teaching among the Egyptians. Whatever activity there was, it was among and between the Persians, who were for the greater part in Cairo, while some were in

⁴⁵ The title of Shaykh means that the person is a graduate of Al Azhar Institute.

⁴⁶ Sharia courts are Islamic Jurisprudence courts as opposed to civil courts.

Alexandria and a few in Port Sa'id. This is what we were told by Said Adham,⁴⁷ 'Abdu'l-Wahab Roḥani⁴⁸ and others.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá continues:

Etay-el-Baroud, small and insignificant though it may seem, actually shaped up as a Bahá'í hub and centre of activity. Teaching the Faith was undertaken with wisdom, Shaykh Hashem was obliged in view of his position to be specially so. Abdu'l-Raḥman Rushdy was also wise, understanding and generally soft spoken and quiet in action. At the same time, however, there was that other hotheaded Muḥammad Muṣṭafá spearheading the dash to teach around town, gaining one reprimand after the other from his fellow believers for lack of wisdom. He would ask forgiveness after each reprimand, only to repeat his irrepressible urge soon after. Nothing apparently would rein him in.

During the second year after Muḥammad Muṣṭafá accepted the Faith, that is sometime during 1917 and 1918, the Bahá'ís of Etay-el-Baroud, all government employees, were transferred to various cities. Not intentionally transferred and not because they are Bahá'ís, but simply routine administrative shuffling of the employees. Some went to Tanta, others to Alexandria, and other postings. This meant that the friends of Etay-el-Baroud became forced pioneers to some cities where there were no Bahá'ís.

Living the Life of Early Believers

I frequently ponder over how these new believers, my father included, managed to conduct their lives, blending in a faith they have little information about, with a life as individuals in among their acquaintances, colleagues and society at large.

In those days, Bahá'í Administration was unknown except for the embryonic Spiritual Assemblies in two or three countries. Bahá'í literature was scarce, especially Arabic literature. But the publishing in Egypt and in Arabic of the authoritative treatise “Al Fará'id” of Mírzá Ábu'l-Faḍl circa 1898 AD was so significant that it was soon censored by Al Azhar, and so had very limited distribution and readership.

However, the newly converted Bahá'ís of Etay-el-Baroud during that second decade of the 20th. Century, had no Arabic Bahá'í books available for them. And yet by some mystery a copy of a Western Bahá'í publication “Ten Days in the Light of ‘Akká” found its way to that little railway station in Etay-el-Baroud in 1914 and it brought Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to the beloved Faith.

In the memoir recording of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá there are glimpses of how those new Bahá'ís used some of their time in fostering a Bahá'í group atmosphere. The following are some extracts:

From Alexandria, a certain Muḥammad Khalil came over sometimes to Etay-el-Baroud. He had weak eyesight and brought with him every time a book, of authors such as 'Abdel-Qader Jilani or Moḥyid-Din Ibnu'l-'Arabi and we would all sit

⁴⁷ Sa'id Adham was strolling in the El-Nouzha gardens of Alexandria sometime in 1911, when he perceived 'Abdu'l-Bahá and some friends walking in that same garden. Sa'id Adham followed the Master and never ceased to do so until the end of his life of active service of his Beloved.

⁴⁸ 'Abdu'l-Wahab Roḥani is a descendant of a Persian emigrant who became Bahá'í in Egypt.

together, read and discuss the different subject in an atmosphere of joy. We also had the pleasure of visits from Hafidh Nadeem and Shaykh Hussein Bishara, wonderful Bahá'ís, who both enriched our knowledge in the Faith as we all met in harmony. We felt the existence of an attachment between the friends in Etay-el-Baroud and the visitors, an attachment that cannot be described. The Faith simply manifested its values. For example, Bahá'u'lláh enjoins the holding of a feast every 19 days. We were not aware of that requirement, yet we had feasts almost every week. One of us, in turn, would invite all of us and we would meet and dine together in utmost happiness.

It was necessary to be circumscriptive in propagating the Faith. We were conscious of that requirement. Yet, however careful one may be because of the prevailing conditions, the Faith simply has to shine out of the clouds of life. We were those few in town enlightened with our Faith. What about all the other people in town? Do they not have the right to know? Yes, they do. Our discussions together slowly engaged some others, individually. Then those others went into discussions with friends and relatives. Soon, it was felt that danger was getting near.

More on Etay-el-Baroud

Muhammad Muṣṭafá continued to speak in his recorded memoirs of Etay-el-Baroud remembering more of the friends he considered to have been among the vanguard of the Faith in Egypt:

It was in Etay-el-Baroud or through the early Bahá'ís of that town, that Mikhail Yusuf accepted the Faith. Ahmad Hosny became Bahá'í in Ábu-Suwaire when he met with 'Abdu'l-Rahman Rushdy. The two brothers of 'Abdu'l-Rahman Rushdy, 'Abdu'l-Fattah Sabry and 'Alí Sirry accepted the Faith, as well as Al-Sayed Fahmy Muṣṭafá who met with 'Abdu'l-Rahman Rushdy when they were posted together in Al-Ḥadara Railway station in Alexandria... and others followed.

These few individuals who accepted the Faith through the Grace of Bahá'u'lláh were instrumental in the progress of the Faith in Egypt over time, because they were the ones who taught the Faith. They were steadfast and dedicated. Their hearts were full of love and desire to serve.

Yet it was not the destiny of Etay-el-Baroud, that little town almost invisible in the labyrinth of villages and towns joined by streams and canals of the Nile Delta of Egypt to remain a Bahá'í centre. It served as a spiritual cradle where the depositories of the Master, those early and young souls, gathered and were given their new lives. They were posted to Etay-el-Baroud by the Government departments that employed them. They did not choose their destiny. The Master did. Then He chose the moment to scatter them to different localities in order to propagate the Faith. The Government departments that posted them together, sent each one of them to some other locality as was the normal routine of the Government. Muhammad Muṣṭafá who belonged to the area of Etay-el-Baroud was also transferred.

Transfer to Tanta

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Ibraḥim 'Abdu'l-Massiḥ were transferred to Tanta⁴⁹, a town where 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the resting place of Áḥmad al-Badawi. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá continues in his recorded memoirs:

Finally, Ibraḥim 'Abdu'l-Massiḥ and I were transferred to Tanta, Shaykh Hashem was also transferred to another town as well as a certain Taha who worked in the Inspection Department was also transferred. No one remained in Etay-el-Baroud. The transfer of the believers created activity in the localities to which they were transferred.

The activity was such in Tanta as to incite the contesters to bring out the book “Al Ḥirab fi Sadr el Bahá wa'l Báḥ”⁵⁰ (Spears in the chest of el Bahá and el Báḥ”) as a confrontational rebuttal to Ibraḥim 'Abdu'l-Massiḥ and me. However, Divine Protection graciously encompassed us. A certain Bardakoush and an Englishman were both Inspectors in the Telegraph Department where we worked. These were the years when WWI was raging and the British Authorities in Egypt posted inspectors in all the telegraph offices. Bardakoush was Palestinian and had known 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Our colleagues would speak about us in our absence and pour venom against me specifically. The fact that Ibraḥim 'Abdu'l-Massiḥ was of Coptic origin made him less culpable in the consideration of these contesters. For me, being of Muslim background, the crime of being a renegade or disbeliever, or miscreant was much more serious.

One day Bardakoush spoke out. He said to them, “When Muḥammad Muṣṭafá is away you speak against him and when he is present you shut up! You do not know the Bahá'í Faith and I know the Bahá'í Faith and I know 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is a great man, He has sublime teachings...”. He spoke highly of the Faith and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and showed loyalty and admiration to the Master. This person's intervention was Bahá'u'lláh's way of protecting us.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá did not remain long in Tanta. Some six months, and a period loaded with fateful events. From Tanta he was transferred temporarily to Port Sa'id, and again after a short time was moved back to Tanta. However, he finally settled in Port Sa'id around 1918 when he had a substantive transfer back to that city.

Port Sa'id⁵¹

Port Sa'id was one of the early cities in Egypt where Persian pioneers sent by Bahá'u'lláh and later by 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to settle. During the different periods He spent in Egypt between departures to the West, Port Sa'id was one of the favoured towns for 'Abdu'l-Bahá

⁴⁹ Tanta is the capital of Gharbia Governorate and a centre for the cotton-ginning industry. Three annual festivals are held in Tanta in honour of Ahmad al-Badawi, a revered Sufi figure of the 13th century.

⁵⁰ A book by a certain Muḥammad el Fadel published in 1911 vehemently attacking Bahá'u'lláh and Báḥ.

⁵¹ Prior to the flourish of air travel, Port Sa'id was one of the two main portals for Egypt, Alexandria being the second and more important, but more commercial, one. The importance of Port Said was its entrance to the Suez Canal, from the Mediterranean, thus acting as a conduit to and from the Far East.

and many a western and oriental visitor chose to meet with Him there. The Greatest Holy Leaf blessed Port Sa'id with her visit, so did Shoghi Effendi. The youngest daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Menavvar Khanum lived in Port Sa'id with her husband, Aḥmad Yazdi. It was in Port Sa'id that the first Egyptian became Bahá'í in 1896.

What also added to the prestige of Port Sa'id from the point of view of the Faith was that most pilgrims from the West had to disembark there for their onward journey to Haifa and Akká. Many would sojourn for a few days before proceeding either on the inward or outward journey, and would naturally meet with the friends who were resident in the city and exchange stories and notes.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was transferred to Port Sa'id in the year 1918. The Community there was active and known to be Bahá'í because a wave of protest and molesting the Bahá'ís had developed four years earlier in 1914 in that town.

A short period of a few months had barely elapsed when early in the year 1920, a fresh wave of persecution, more vicious than the one of 1914, began. A third wave of lower intensity followed this second wave of persecution in 1926. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá explained that for some unknown reason the three waves of persecution were separated by six-year periods: 1914 to 1920 to 1926.

It is interesting to see how Muḥammad Muṣṭafá saw those historic events from his memoirs:

The year 1920 saw terrible events in Port Sa'id. Friends were ejected from their homes; some had their shops looted, while others died from the cold and from the shock of what took place. Reports were regularly sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and He sent a guidance to this servant in a Tablet where He said:

ولا بأس في هذه الأثناء إذا رحلوا بعض الأحباء ابتغاء الراحة من أولي
البغضاء الذين يسومونهم سوء العذاب فسيعلم الظالمون أي منقلب هم
منقلبون

Meanwhile, there is no harm if some friends choose to move away seeking comfort from those hateful people who are the cause of their dire suffering. The unjust will eventually know what will befall them. (Translation – personal effort).

Subsequent to this guidance, a number of friends decided to leave Port Sa'id. Muḥammad Músá and Ḥag Ḥassan Reyḥan, Ḥag Ḥassan Seweisy and Ḥag Taha El-Ḥamamsy and others took the train for Alexandria. I got on the train with them to go to Alexandria. However, when the train stopped in Ismáíliyyih, I was surprised to see the Telegraph Inspector get on the train and ask me to go down and take up work for the Telegraph office there. I therefore, found myself landed in the town of Ismáíliyyih.

More on Port Sa'id

In his recorded memoirs, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá gave Port Sa'id a good part and ample importance. He developed the history of Port Sa'id randomly and I have followed his sequence because I think it makes easier, and hopefully more agreeable, reading. It is also true that Port Sa'id suffered for a longer period compared to other towns, and while most of

the troubles of Port Sa'id were the result of the whims of clergy inciting mobs and Shaykhs, it slowly and over the years spilled over to other towns. He also laid out a panorama of events and developments for the Faith in Egypt in general. Here is what Muḥammad Muṣṭafā said more about Port Sa'id:

The history of the Faith in Egypt developed in the centres of Cairo, Alexandria and Port Sa'id, because 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited these towns during the periods he was in Egypt between the years 1910 and 1913. He also visited Ismáíliyyih, Tanta and Mansoura. That is why events took place mainly in that area.

There were no acts of violence against the Bahá'ís in Cairo, but there were publications and newspaper and magazine article against the Faith. These drew eloquent and strong answers with corrections and explanations published in response by the Bahá'ís to counter the false allegations of the opponents.

The first acts of violence, however, took place in Qawm'ul-Ṣa'áyda as explained by Ḥassan Muḥammad Ḥassan⁵², with the ruling in Beba Jurisprudence courts announcing the independence of the Faith from Islám. Some troubles took place in Alexandria following Qawm'ul-Ṣa'áyda, but these were minor attacks on a few Bahá'ís.

The severe attacks on the Bahá'ís took place in the Canal Zone – first in Port Sa'id then in Ismáíliyyih.

The first attacks took place in Port Sa'id in the year 1914 when demonstrations against the Faith occurred. The Authorities quickly opposed these at the time and quiet was restored. The reputation of the Faith was in ascendance even though it was generally misunderstood. The opponents of the Faith came up with the idea of calling the Bahá'ís "Khamsawiyeh".⁵³ The troubles started with this name "Khamsawiyeh". There was no intention to investigate and understand the Faith. The opposition was to the Bahá'ís who were forced to "wear" this name and undergo persecution as a result.

In the year 1920, the persecution of the Bahá'ís started to take a different shape, being led by those who did not understand the Faith. These were essentially not enemies of the Faith, because some of them later became Bahá'ís. Others who opposed the Faith directed their enmity on individual Bahá'ís whom they called «Khamsawiyeh». These were highly motivated people and they grasped every opportunity to harm the Bahá'ís.

In the year 1920, these people were able to organise their ranks against the friends who were few in number and well known to all. They did not really warrant such an organisation as was put up by those opponants.

⁵² Ḥassan Muḥammad Ḥassan is Gamal Ḥassan's father. Gamal says that unfortunately the recording of history of his father was confiscated by the Authorities in 1985 when Ḥussein Bikar and 47 other Bahá'ís in Egypt and outside Egypt were taken to court. Gamal hopes that the confiscated recordings or written notes by his father will one day be retrieved.

⁵³ "Khamsawiyeh" means belonging to a fifth Islamic doctrine which is not acceptable. The four acceptable being the Maleky, Hambely, Shafe'i and Ḥanafy doctrines.

So how did the troubles start?

Port Sa'id is on the West bank of the Canal and opposite to Port Sa'id on the East bank is Port Foad. The two towns are connected by frequent ferries criss-crossing the port waters. The Suez Canal Company arsenal, ship repair yards and diverse workshops and facilities were, and still are, on the Port Foad side.

The workers of the Suez Canal Company arsenal and workshops of Port Foad⁵⁴ finished their daily work in two batches: 3pm and 6pm. They returned to their homes in Port Sa'id by ferry and walked along a street called Kawala street. On that street lived the Bahá'í friend Muḥammad Núshúgátí. Núshúgátí dedicated the ground floor of his house for Bahá'í activity, rest-house for Bahá'í travellers, Assembly and Bahá'í meetings. The Canal company workers were in the thousands in number and all had to take that street and pass in front of the Bahá'í House.

The workers were incited against the Bahá'ís and they started by demonstrating before the House – throwing stones and crying out false accusations and profane insults. The Bahá'ís informed the Security Authorities, but these did nothing to stop the aggression. The situation became worse every day. The Governor's house was on the other side of the street from the Bahá'í House and he was witness to what was happening. Not only did he ignore the aggression but later pretended that he was not aware of what took place. The aggression continued and the friends reported to the Security asking for their intervention. The Security said: "Close your premises!" The friends said "we are not the aggressors; we are the victims of aggression. We shall not close our House and you, the Security, must protect us."

One day the Bahá'ís decided to go and stay in the House, sit in the meeting room and leave the front door open⁵⁵ and come what may. Should the mob come forth and kill every one of them, then let them do so. They will not move. This is what the Bahá'ís decided.

On the day chosen for this experience, the Bahá'ís sat in the meeting room with the door wide open, while the crowd gathered in the street menacing, and threatening the worst outcome. The friends took no notice and laid their affairs in the Hands of Bahá'u'lláh.

One of the crowd, a ruffian of abnormal size and stature came in while the crowd looked on: What will that colossus do? They were waiting for his first gesture to come in and kill the Bahá'ís present.

The ruffian came in and stood before the seated Bahá'ís one after another, looked down on them with hatred and desire for aggression clearly visible on his face and

⁵⁴ Port Said is on the West bank of the Canal and opposite to Port Said on the East bank is Port Fouad. Communication between the two towns is via ferries crossing the port waters. The Suez Canal Company arsenal, ship repair yards and divers workshops and facilities were, and still are, in Port Fouad.

⁵⁵ I have a vague picture in my mind of that House when I went with my father to a meeting there many years later to this episode of aggression of the year 1920. The street entry to the ground floor was a wide door leading immediately onto a wider corridor of a few meters long which opens up to the large meeting room to the front and left. With the street entry door wide open, passers-by on the street can actually see some of the believers seated in the meeting room.

in his eyes. The Bahá'ís were quietly seated, hoping that the ruffian will make no gesture that will provoke the mob outside and encourage them to attack them.

At this moment, Jalal Afshar, one of the Persian friends, came in and saw this man looking down on the Bahá'ís with possibility of attacking them. Jalal went up to him and with a sonorous voice asked: "What are you doing here you..." and at the same time gave him an awfully sounding slap on his face. Jalal himself was a big man and his hand was also big so that the blow on the face of the ruffian must have been really painful. The man put his hand to his aching cheek and exclaimed "Akh! I deserve that..." and went out and away. The crowd, in astonishment, followed and dispersed. Bahá'u'lláh saved the believers.⁵⁶

On the last day, the attackers went to the Egyptian Quarter and looted Muḥammad Fayed's shop – his was a big grocery. Then they broke down shops belonging to Muḥammad Músá and Taha El-Ḥamamsi and went into Ḥassan Reyḥan's home and drew him down the stairs onto the street and beat him severely while on the ground to the extent that one of the ruffians cried out: "Alright men, stop! The man is dead". That ruffian took Ḥassan Reyḥan to the Police station. The Police told him: "Take him to his people" meaning the Bahá'ís. He was transported to the Bahá'í House. The ruffian who had joined in the beating of Reyḥan was the one who saved him⁵⁷. Such was the protection of Bahá'u'lláh!

News of what took place in Port Sa'id were continuously sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the following beautiful Tablet⁵⁸ was received:

حضرات أحبباء الله الَّذِينَ ابْتَلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمُ التَّحِيَّةُ وَالنَّشَاءُ هُوَ اللَّهُ

أيها الممتحنون في محبة الله. قال الله تعالى في القرآن العظيم «ألم أحسب الناس أن يتركوا أن يقولوا آمنا وهم لا يفتنون». ولابد من الامتحان والافتتان. وكذلك قال الله تعالى «ولنبلونكم بشيء من الخوف والجوع ونقص من الأموال والأنفس والثمرات وبشّر الصابرين الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ». وكذلك قال الله تعالى «أفحسبتم أن تدخلوا الجنة ولما يأتيكم مثل الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أَصَابَتْهُمُ الْبُاسَاءُ وَالضَّرَاءُ» إلى آخر الآية ولا شك ولا شبهة أن هؤلاء الأحباء تجرعوا كأساً مريرة في محبة الله ولكن هذه المصائب عين المواهب لأنها وقعت في سبيل الله البلاء للولاء. وقال عليه السلام ما أؤذي نبي بمثل ما أؤذيت قال «يا أهل الكتاب هل تنقمون منا إلا أن آمنا بالله وآياته وما أنزل إليكم وما أنزل إلينا» إلى آخر الآية.

⁵⁶ Foreigners had privileged status compared to the Egyptians in Port Sa'id in those days. That was one reason why the town was divided into foreign quarters and Arab or Egyptian quarters. Egypt was under British rule.

⁵⁷ I knew Haj Ḥassan Reyḥan, later of course. He trembled as he walked and Gamal Ḥassan says that was the after-effect of the incident just described.

⁵⁸ موجود في مكاتيب جزء 3 ص 218

خلاصة الكلام إن اللّنام أعداء الكرام، وهذه سنة الله من قبل ومن بعد ولن
تجد لسنة الله تبديلا فاطمنوا يا أحبّاء الله أنّ الملاء الأعلى يذكرونكم بأبدع
الأوصاف ويقولون مرحبا بالنّفوس المطمئنة مرحبا بالقلوب المستبشرة
مرحبا بالوجوه النّاضرة مرحبا بالأعين النّاظرة إلى الله طوبى لكم من هذه
الموهبة الكبرى بشرى لكم من هذه المنحة العظمى.

Shaykh El-Gamal the instigator

During the recording of the memoirs of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Gamal and Somaya asked him about the role of Shaykh El-Gamal in the troubles of Port Sa'id, here is what Muḥammad Muṣṭafá said:

Shaykh El-Gamal⁵⁹ had a role in the troubles of 1914 and in the uprising of 1920. Immediately after the return to calm of the 1920 uprising, some friends from Port Sa'id went to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Haj Hassan Reyhan and others. They said that when 'Abdu'l-Bahá mentioned the name of El-Gamal he did so with anger, stamping his foot on the ground and said: El-Gamal, El-Gamal, El-Gamal... in manifest anger.

As it happened was that a few years later, El-Gamal decided to marry a relatively young girl. His wife and sons and daughters were against such a marriage, but he ignored them and went ahead and married the young girl. His sons took him and undressed him but for his underwear and ejected him in the street. Such was his humiliation.

Another incident to which I (that is Muḥammad Muṣṭafá) was witness, showed how frightened that man became. After the 1920 uprising behind which El-Gamal was the main instigator, and when calm was re-established, it happened that Judge 'Abdu'l-Jalíl Sa'ad came to Port Sa'id on a temporary assignment in his work as a Judge. Maḥmúd Núshúgátí and I went to greet him in the courthouse and we were sitting with him in the waiting room when El-Gamal, who had a court hearing for some personal case of his on that same day saw us with the Judge. He immediately recognised us, the Bahá'ís he was harassing and thought that we had come to turn the Judge against him. He went to his lawyer, trembling, and told him, "look, these two people are Bahá'ís, they came to turn the Judge against me." The lawyer came over to Judge 'Abdu'l-Jalíl and said, "Please your honour, my client saw these two gentlemen with you and trembled because he thinks they came to turn your honour against him." Judge 'Abdu'l-Jalíl smiled and said, "Not at all. Tell your client to come and I will speak with him." The lawyer went and brought El-Gamal over with him. Judge 'Abdu'l-Jalíl spoke with him and comforted him saying, "Justice should never be biased in one sense or another. Justice must remain Justice." El-Gamal became assured.

⁵⁹ Shaykh El-Gamal was an Imam Jomaa in Port Said with a sizeable following, explained Gamal Hassan. One of his daughters became a famous actress: Malak El-Gamal.

More on some friends and examples

The memoirs of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá were recorded in the late seventies when he was over 80 years of age, and he was covering almost 70 years of history. It seems that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá felt that he must speak about some friends he had known and loved for their love of Bahá'u'lláh. He knew that he is the only one to remember them for they were the essence of humbleness and selflessness. Of material wealth, they had none. However, their love for Bahá'u'lláh was boundless.

Here is what I found in his memoirs:

Talking history and what took place is endless. There were troubles every day. Friends were insulted or pelted with stones or disgraced...

Shaykh Rashwan: Consider for example Shaykh Rashwan, one of the Bahá'ís of Port Sa'id. He was one of those who were pelted with stones when he went out in the street. When a stone hit him, he would bend down, pick it up kiss it and drops it on the ground. He wore a green turban, a sign of the Ashraf.⁶⁰ A persistent effort of his enemies was to oblige him to undress of that turban, while he insisted on keeping it on. He preferred to remain indoors and meet no one.

Shaykh Rashwan was a gang leader before knowing the Faith. Those within the port area feared him. That was Shaykh Rashwan before he became Bahá'í. When he became Bahá'í, he immediately went to the Police authorities and told them that he was Bahá'í and that they need have no more fear of him anymore. He changed from a thug to one who picks up and kisses the stone from an opponent that hit him.

Ḥag Yusuf Madian: There was also a certain friend by the name of Yusuf Madian and his wife. Both Bahá'ís. Yusuf was an ambulant salesman of Kerosene.⁶¹ With the persecutions, the wife fell sick and contracted tuberculosis, and then he also contacted tuberculosis. His wife died and when he was alone with his illness, I went to him to comfort him, embrace him and spend some time with him. Many a friend suffered and their health irreparably damaged.

'Omar Maḥmúd and 'Alí Ismael: There was quite a number of Bahá'ís in Port Sa'id, but only a few taught the Faith. Those few, however, were inflamed with the desire to teach. I am now referring to the early 20s.

One of those dedicated souls was 'Omar Maḥmúd.⁶² He was simplicity itself, almost totally edentulous, and very poor. All he had was a basket with old clothes to buy

⁶⁰ The Ashrafs are those who are related to the Prophet Muhammad. Their origin is Beni Hashem.

⁶¹ Kerosene was in use in all kitchens at the time, for kerosene cookers, stoves, paraffin etc.

⁶² In her biography of her father, Claire Hanna, daughter of Khalil Ayad of Ismailia wrote on February 4, 1989: My father Khalil Ibrahim 'Ayad accepted the Faith in 1920 at the age of 19 in Ismailia. His maternal uncle 'Omar Maḥmúd taught him the Faith... 'Omar Maḥmúd himself was taught the Faith at the turn of the century (20th century) by the early Persian believers who settled in Port Said. He also taught the Faith to many other seekers in Port Said and Ismailia and to members of the family among whom was his sister Zaynab 'Abdu'l-Raḥmán known as Khalty Ommi Zlikha, and a nephew Muḥammad Soleiman.

and sell, which he carried along the streets hoping to gain enough for his everyday bread and some food to go with it. His was a day to day livelihood.

'Omar began his teaching work in Ismáíliyyih. He taught the Faith to Ámin Darwish and to Muşţafá Kamel (not to confound with Muşţafá Kamel 'Abdalláh). Muşţafá Kamel had a shoe shop. 'Omar also taught the Faith to Ommi Zelikha and probably she taught Khalil 'Ayad. It was he who taught the father of Ábu 'Eish also. Then he transferred to Port Sa'id and taught the Faith to 'Aly Isma'il.

'Alí Isma'il: 'Alí Isma'il used to work in a café on the Thalathini street in Ismáíliyyih. He was a waiter there and usually took his shift in the afternoons until midnight – the second shift. Sometimes clients came to the café late at night and seemed very depressed. Usually these were narcotique addicts. 'Alí would counsel them to go over across the street to a European bar where alcoholic drinks are served. "You go there and with 15 milliemes you buy a drink. You say to the barman Mikhaelli: Mikhaelli give me a drink. You drink the glass and go home and sleep and you will forget the world and its condition..."

That was 'Alí Isma'il – neither faith nor character, no such thing as spirituality at all. He was one of those lost in life.

One night an old man carrying a bag of old clothes came to his café almost at midnight when he was about to close the café. 'Alí thought - no one of that age would come to the café at such a late hour. This man must be a narcotic, thought 'Alí. When 'Omar asked for a coffee⁶³ without sugar, 'Alí's doubts were confirmed, but he still came and sat with 'Omar at the table. They were alone, both in the café and on the street. While 'Alí was grumbling over the difficulties of life, 'Omar's words were different: "Difficulties are there in every step in life, but if one is spiritually comfortable, these difficulties will not affect him," said 'Omar, among the exchange of conversation that took place. 'Alí was impressed.

The next day at the same late hour came 'Omar to the café. 'Alí was happy and received 'Omar with pleasure. Coffee without sugar was served and they sat together and talked. During the previous meeting 'Omar Maḥmúd mentioned one of the verses of Bahá'u'lláh that says: «Regard not the children of the world and all their doings but fix thy gaze upon God and His never-ending dominion.» This verse remained in 'Alí's mind and impressed him. Although 'Omar Maḥmúd was poor, yet he invited 'Alí Ismael to dinner in his lowly habitation. There was no more than bread and roquette or gargir as it is called in Egypt, yet 'Alí's heart was opened to Bahá'u'lláh and he declared his faith.

People heard about the conversion of 'Alí and brought him and his wife to court to divorce them. 'Alí's wife pleaded, "Your honour, when 'Alí was Muslim he came home and treated me badly and insulted me, and when he gained any small amount of money he drank alcohol with it and came home aggressive and beat me. Why did you not divorce us then? Now that he is Bahá'í, and is calm and gentle and stopped drinking you want to divorce us? What justice is this?" The Judge told her, «If you

⁶³ For the non-middle eastern reader I would explain that we are talking here of Turkish coffee. Quite a strong beverage compared to western coffee, rarely taken without sugar.

stay with your husband you will have to make your ablutions with milk!⁶⁴ She answered, “What milk are you talking about, your honour. We do not have money to buy milk for my baby whom I cannot feed because I do not have milk in my breast. Are we going to find milk to make our ablutions?” The Judge then asked, “Are you both of the same belief?” She answered, “Yes, your honour”. The couple were dismissed; so was the case.

In closing this chapter, the chapter of the persecutions of the Bahá'ís of Port Sa'id, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá mentioned that those years were difficult for the friends. During the most difficult days of 1926, Farida (Mohammad Muṣṭafá's wife later) who lived in the European Quarter took some of the friends from the Egyptian quarter who were severely affected – took them in her house and served them and they were happy away from the persecutors and in the house of Bahá'u'lláh. Farida gained the fame of being the maidservant of the friends.

⁶⁴ A horribly false accusation created by hatred and total baseness of individuals.

Chapter Four

Judgement of Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda

While the events of Port Sa'id in the North of Egypt were unrolling their fury during those seminal years of the twenties of the 20th century, a dramatic event of worldwide import was under preparation in the remote village of Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda in the Beni Souif Province. Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda is some 100 kms south of the capital Cairo and known only to its inhabitants and the few villages around.⁶⁵

When Shaykh Ḥasan 'Abdu, a villager of Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda, was studying in Al-Azhar during the early years of the twentieth century, he was introduced to the Faith by no less a teacher than Mírzá Ábu'l-Faḍl himself.

Gamal Ḥasan, who is one of the grandchildren of Ḥafez Muḥammad Zeidan, one of the first believers of that village gives the following explanation to the background of the Faith in that village as well as of the development of the famous Court Judgement concerning the Bahá'ís that took place:

I was able to collect the story of the introduction of the Faith to the village and the circumstances of the court Judgement, from the descendants of the early believers of the village including my father, Ḥasan Muḥammad Ḥasan. He was two years old when the Faith was introduced to the village.

Shaykh Ḥasan 'Abdu first taught the Faith in the village. Among the early believers were Shaykh Ḥafez Muḥammad Zeidan and his daughter Fatima who is my mother. Other believers were Shaykh Ḥasan Marei'i Tantawy and his brother Abdu'l-Tawab, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Wahab Tewfik, Shaykh Ḥasan 'Abdu'l-Hamid who lived until well within the 50s of the 20th century, Muḥammad Áḥmad 'Abdu, Shaykh Ḥasan 'Abdu's younger brother who stealthily listened to his brother while he was discussing or teaching the Faith with visitors and finally he himself became Bahá'í and Ḥasan Effendi Muḥammad 'Abdu – son of that brother.

Some of these believers taught the Faith to women in their families. One of these women was my paternal grandmother Mrs. Nozha Mari'i Tantawy. Mrs. Ḥamida Farghaly wife of Shaykh Ḥafez Zeidan followed. The acceptance of the Faith by these two women insured the continuity of the generations of these families to remain firm Bahá'ís afterwards.

When the number of believers in the village attained nine adults, they formed their Local Spiritual Assembly and proceeded immediately after to establish a school where only Kuttab⁶⁶ to teach the Qurán existed. Shaykh Ḥasan Mari'i volunteered to take direction of this first private Bahá'í School in Egypt and probably the first anywhere in the world except Iran. The curriculum of that school combined scientific and moral education of children from the age of 5. My father Ḥasan Muḥammad Ḥasan proudly says that he started going to this school when he was 5 and continued until it was closed following the persecutions raised by a fanatic clergy and villagers.

⁶⁵ See "God Passes By" pages 354-356

⁶⁶ Kuttab is where children go to learn the Qurán from age 5 or even 4.

The director of the school, Shaykh Mari'í had to leave the village after he was divorced of his wife and unable to take another wife as long as he was there.

To return to the story of the village. As soon as Shaykh Ḥasan 'Abdu returned to the village after his Al-Azhar graduation, he immediately started to teach the Faith closely aided by Shaykh Ḥasan Mari'í. Quickly the fame of the Faith became known not only in the village, but also in the nearby villages, to the extent that upset the village 'Omda⁶⁷ and its Má'zhoun⁶⁸. These two reported the subject of their anxiety to the Head of the police and to responsible persons in the central town of the region as well as to a renowned Shaykh by the name of Shaykh Bakri. Their endeavours eventually led to the convocation of four of the believers of Qawm'ul-Ša'áyda who graduated Shaykhs from Al-Azhar for a confrontation with these responsible officials and Shaykh Bakri. The importance of an individual and his stature in society was measured, during those days, by the degree of religious studies and references. The four Bahá'ís had the qualities to be of importance by these measures. When during the confrontation, the Head of the police realized that these Bahá'ís were knowledgeable and those confronting them were not, he tried to persuade them to discard the ideas they were propagating and join the Wafd⁶⁹ political party and serve their country in this better way. Shaykh Bakri however, strongly rebuked them. At one point, he asked one of the believers: "What is the name of your sect?" and when the believer answered: «We do not have a sect», the Shaykh ordered a policeman to slap the believer on his face.

Finally, the efforts of the Officials and the Shaykh Bakri failed, the village 'Omda and its Má'zhoun had no other way but to raise a court case requiring the separation of the wives of the four believers from their husbands on the basis that they are renegades of Islám. The believers had legal marriage certificates under Islámic Law⁷⁰, the only available for Muslims in Egypt.

The case was raised in the Ecclesiastic Court of the town of Beba, the central town to the village of Qawm'ul-Ša'áyda. The four summoned believers had to force their way with the help of the police through a large mob of ruffians and people excited by the false accusations and wrong attributes of moral decadence of the believers spread everywhere by those wicked opponents to the Faith. At the end of that first session, the believers asked the court for protection as they go out to their homes. A policeman was told to accompany them. That policeman took a turban cloth of one of the believers, unwound it and tied one end around the neck of the believer and went out pulling him behind him. When they went out of court with the scene of the policeman trailing the believer with a turban cloth, the fury of the mob was unleashed. The believers were insulted, spat upon and badly beaten. Their clothing was torn and their turbans knocked off and finally animal dung was rubbed on their

⁶⁷ The civil head of the village.

⁶⁸ The Muslim priest.

⁶⁹ The Wafd political party was the strongest in Egypt, its aim was to oust the British occupation out of Egypt. The events of Qawm'ul-Ša'áyda took place during a turbulent political period.

⁷⁰ Islamic Law allows Muslim men to marry Christian or Jewish women but prohibits Muslim women from marrying other than Muslims.

heads and faces and what was left of clothing. They arrived to the train station in a most pitiable condition looking to Bahá'u'lláh alone for solace.

The National Spiritual Assembly asked the believers not to attend any further court sessions and that left the court free to summon false witnesses and listen to perverse clergy. The ruling was expected: the believers are renegades of Islám and their wives should be divorced. The Case was appealed at the court of appeal in the province capital city of Beni Souif . This time lawyers were recruited to defend the believers and the Judges studied the case by referring to Writings and Bahá'í books. The judgement was dated May 10, 1925.

We are now in the years 1925 when these court cases took place. The National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt was first formed less than one year earlier. There were strong Bahá'í centres in Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, Ismá'íliyyih, Qawm'ul-Ša'áyda and Tanta and other isolated centres. Through opposition, the Faith became known. Gamal Ḥasan continued his analysis of the situation:

It may be useful to consider the condition of the state and the people of Egypt at the time. Egypt adopted its first Constitution in the year 1923, just about the time The Qawm'ul-Ša'áyda uprising started to incubate. The Constitution guaranteed freedom of belief and abolished long time established rulings such as killing the renegade, cutting the hand and foot of the thief, punishing adultery by dilapidation and many other inhuman and uncivilised laws. In fact, in the case of the Bahá'ís of Qawm'ul-Ša'áyda, it was the ruling of killing the renegade that the opponents of the Faith were seeking, but the Constitution abolished that law or ruling and provided for every religious community to apply its own laws of marriage, divorce, burial, inheritance etc... The only tool of vengeance left to the opponents of the Faith was that of separating the Muslim wives from their non-Muslim husbands which the court of appeal justified in considering the Bahá'í Faith “a new religion, entirely independent, with beliefs, principles and laws of its own” different to those of Islám...

The actual separation of the wives from their husbands was applied to two of the four defendants because one's wife had passed away and the fourth wife Ḥamida Farghaly refused to separate from her husband Shaykh Ḥafez Muḥammad Zeidan declaring that she is Bahá'í like her husband and the ruling of the court does not apply in her case.

The Judgement

Of all the diverse issues which today are gradually tending to consolidate and extend the bounds of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, the decision of Egypt's religious tribunal regarding the Bahá'ís under its jurisdiction appears at the present moment to be the most powerful in its challenge, the most startling in its character, and the most perplexing in the consequences it may entail.

This statement of the Guardian in his message to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States dated February 27, 1926 was followed by further explanations regarding the

aspects of the *momentous* verdict of the Appellate Ecclesiastic Court of Beba, in Egypt, of May 10, 1925 concerning the Bahá'ís of Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda.

The negative aspect:

I have stressed in my last reference to this far-reaching pronouncement the negative aspect of this document which condemns in most unequivocal and emphatic language the followers of Bahá'u'lláh as the believers in a heresy, offensive and injurious to Islám, and wholly incompatible with the accepted doctrines and practice of its orthodox adherents.

The positive aspect:

(T)hey proceed in a formal manner to declare in the text of that very decision their belief that the Bahá'í Faith is a 'new religion', 'entirely independent', and by reason of the magnitude of its claim and the character of its 'laws, principles and beliefs', worthy to be reckoned as one of the established religious systems of the world. Quoting various passages judiciously gleaned from a number of Bahá'í sacred books as an evidence to their splendid testimony, they proceed in a notable statement to deduce the fact that henceforth it shall be regarded as impossible for the followers of such a Faith to be designated as Muslim, just as it would be incorrect and erroneous to call a Muḥammadan either Christian or Jew.

Shoghi Effendi further refers to the effect of the decision on the Egyptian Bahá'ís:

It cannot be denied that in the course of the inevitable developments of this present situation the resident Bahá'ís of Egypt, originally belonging to the Muslim Faith, will be placed in a most humiliating and embarrassing position. They, however, cannot but rejoice in the knowledge that whereas in various Muslim⁷¹ countries and particularly in Persia the overwhelming majority of the leaders of Islám are utterly opposed to any form of declaration that would facilitate the universal recognition of the Cause, the authorized heads of their co-religionists in one of the most advanced communities in the Muḥammadan world have, of their own initiative, published to the world a document that may justly be termed as the first charter of liberty emancipating the Bahá'í Faith from the fetters of orthodox Islám.⁷²

The Aftermath of the Ecclesiastic Court Judgement

The Bahá'ís of Egypt could not have been happy with the Ecclesiastic Court Judgement and in fact it caused concern. Yet Shoghi Effendi saw the matter differently and that view is explained in the following excerpt:

The actions initiated by Muslim leaders led, however, to the court decision that the Bahá'í Faith is an independent religion, not to be viewed merely as a sect within Islám⁷³. This determination of official attitude is a matter of fundamental

⁷¹ *Muhamedan* in the original text

⁷² The Bahá'í World vol II p. 31-32. The statement was dated February 27, 1927.

⁷³ In the original text "Muhammadanism."

*importance, creating the legal basis upon which the Egyptian Bahá'í community can in time claim and secure recognition of a code based entirely upon the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.*⁷⁴

Thus it is clear: the decision of the court has opened a door before the Bahá'ís to obtain legal recognition of a code of personal and administrative status based entirely upon the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Further to this objective, and to follow along the line of action the Guardian indicated,

*... the Egyptian Bahá'ís have applied to the government not merely for recognition as a legal corporation empowered to hold property and transact its religious affairs, but also for recognition of the National Spiritual Assembly as a Bahá'í religious court having, for members of the Bahá'í community, the same scope and authority as is exercised by the Muslim Supreme Court itself upon Egyptian Muslims.*⁷⁵

What was required to attain was outlined in the petition addressed by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada to the Prime Minister of the Egyptian Government⁷⁶ dated December 14, 1931.

Here are the three points:

(1) Recognizing the Bahá'í community of Egypt as an integral and fully coordinated religious body, among the several religious sects or groups, fully qualified and entitled to jurisdiction over its own internal religious affairs; and over the personal status of its adherents;

(2) To prohibit the application of the rule growing out of the *Hisbih*⁷⁷ case (which appears to have been a religious case against heretics) to the religious status of Bahá'ís in Egypt;

(3) And to so order that the Bahá'ís of that country be permitted to apply the Bahá'í law in all matters of personal and family status, and, in accordance with the Bahá'í law, administer the marriage sacrament and act in all matters of divorce between themselves and in the adjustment of legacies and inheritance.

The strategy that was called upon the Egyptian National Assembly to follow in order to achieve these objectives was to start immediate contact with the Egyptian Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of Justice, bring the case to their attention through petitions, including a petition from The National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada.⁷⁸ A Compilation of The Bahá'í Code of Personal Status based upon the *Kitáb-i-Áqdas* revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, together with the text of the Bahá'í Declaration of Trust of the Egyptian National Assembly, which was identical to the Declaration of Trust of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States were to be added to the petitions.

Judge 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad⁷⁹ led the application of this strategy. There was no one else in the Egyptian Bahá'í Community at the time who could have taken up that task. 'Abdel-Jalíl

⁷⁴ The Baha'i World vol v p. 51.

⁷⁵ The Baha'i World vol iv p. 78.

⁷⁶ The Baha'i World vol iv p. 166.

⁷⁷ Religious power to promote virtue and prevent vice.

⁷⁸ Dated: December 14th, 1931, The Baha'i World vol iv p. 166-168.

⁷⁹ The Baha'i World vol ix p. 597.

Sa'ad was a Judge in the Ministry of Justice. Considering that the subject matter took place in the late 20's/early 30's of the last century in Egypt, a judge of the calibre of 'Abdel-Jalíl was quite a prestigious person. Of all the friends in the picture of the Bahá'í Convention of 1925, whom I have personally known, except Áḥmad Yazdí, I cannot see any one of them other than 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad who could have accomplished that work.

Muḥammad Muşţafá speaks very highly of 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad in his memoirs. It was 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad who personally prompted the work of building the National Ḥazíratu'l-Quds of Egypt at a time when World War II was raging, and there was a scarcity of construction material. It was he who personally attended to the newly acquired area for the Cairo Bahá'í Cemetery and surveying the work himself. It was 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad who translated the "Dawn Breakers" into Arabic during the periods he was sort of exiled to distant posts in the south of Egypt.

For an obvious reason, 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad took Muḥammad Muşţafá to help in the preparation of the Bahá'í Code of Personal Status and the Declaration of Trust of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Egypt. Muḥammad Muşţafá had talked with the Guardian on the subject of marriage of Egyptian Bahá'ís following the Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda judgement and had discussed the same subject with Hippolyte Dreyfus and Mountford Mils.

In his memoirs, Muḥammad Muşţafá says that the success in getting the Declaration of Trust registered at the Mixed Court of Egypt is due to the indefatigable efforts of Judge 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad. Both 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad and Muḥammad Muşţafá were among the signatories of the Declaration of Trust.

This success and others of 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad's rich life of service did not go without taking its toll on his career. He was moved many times to remote places in Egypt by the Ministry as a reprisal for being Bahá'í. Muşţafá Salem, long time NSA member and pioneer, told me that at a certain time, the Ministry of Justice had presented a list of names of Judges for promotion to King Fouad – King of Egypt, for his approval. The King stroked, with anger, the name of Judge 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad with red ink saying: *he is Bahá'í*.

The Declaration of Trust of the National Spiritual Assembly is dated December 26, 1934.⁸⁰

The authorization for registration of the Declaration of Trust is dated November 29, 1934.⁸¹

An Endowment

The registration of the Declaration of Trust, important as a first step towards obtaining official recognition, had to be consolidated. The dear Bahá'í Sharúbeem 'Ubeyd donated a feddan (4000 sq.m.) of cultivated land which was eventually registered as an endowment of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Egypt.⁸²

⁸⁰ The Baha'i World vol vi p. 303.

⁸¹ The Baha'i World vol vi p. 302.

⁸² The Baha'i World vol vi p. 77.

Chapter Five

MARRIAGE

We are now in the year 1925 when the court case of Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda took place. The National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt was first formed towards the end of 1924 with strong Bahá'í centres in Cairo, Alexandria, Port Sa'id, Ismáíliyyih, Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda and Tanta and other isolated centres. Through opposition, the Faith gained fame.

Muḥammad Muşţafá was visiting in Haifa early in 1926, a few months after the judgement of the Qawm'ul-Sa'áyda case. His memoirs carried the following information:

The Guardian was very happy and jubilant with these two documents: The Qawm'ul-Şa'áida ecclesiastic court Judgement and the Constitution of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada recently prepared. He told me, *"I give you the Constitution for you to translate and send to me a copy and I also give you the Judgement of the ecclesiastic court (concerning Qawm'ul-Sa'áida) to translate and send to me a copy"* These were the words of His Eminence (Ḥaḍratuhu).

I was all joy with this assignment, I did not feel worthy of such bounty nor capable of such a task, but this was the desire of Shoghi Effendi.

Then the beloved Guardian said, *"Mr. Mountfort Mils⁸³ and Mr. Hippolyte Dreyfus Barney⁸⁴ will come to Cairo and to Port Sa'id. You will meet them in Port Sa'id and discuss the subject of your marriage with them"*.

The two friends, Mr. Mountfort Mils and Mr. Hippolyte Dreyfus Barney, did come to Port Sa'id and I discussed the case of my marriage with them and understood as much as I was able to understand. Then they went to Cairo and met with the Government Officials, the Prime Minister and the Counsellor to the King. The Counsellor was called 'Abdel-Ḥamid Badawi. He later became a member to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

In their meeting with 'Abdel-Ḥamid Badawi, the friends explained to him the effect of the Judgement of Qawm'ul-Şa'áyda. The Counsellor informed them that a civil code of personal status that will apply to all the people in the country is under preparation by the Government.⁸⁵ When the friends asked him what would the

⁸³ Prominent American Bahá'í and lawyer who was one of three whom Shoghi Effendi consulted regarding the subject of early establishment of the Universal House of Justice. The other two being Hippolyte Dreyfus and Faḍel Mazandarani.

⁸⁴ The first French Bahá'í, a disciple of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, historic services to the Cause.

⁸⁵ The civil code of personal status that Counsellor 'Abdel-Ḥamid Badawi said was under consideration in 1926 when Mountfort Mils and Hippolyte Dreyfus met with him has not seen any light yet to this day in the year 2022 as I write these lines. In February 2019, Counsellor Hisham Sa'ad of Egypt visited Tunisia and I asked whether he had any news of that code. He explained that around 300 members of the Egyptian parliament, out of a total of some 500, have requested the modification of the present laws of personal status which although meant to solve problems of Muslims, may contain such new articles concerning marriages of non-Muslims that will also help the Bahá'í problem. However, Al-Azhar has injected its recommendations that are stagnant suggestions that lack any progress. Some parliamentarians protested against the intervention of Al-

Bahá'ís do in the meantime if they wish to marry? He answered jokingly that they should not marry! And they all laughed. To the question what happens if a Bahá'í dies? The Counsellor said, 'They should not die!'. The friends said, 'That is a wonderful guarantee for the Bahá'ís, they do not die!' They all laughed and the friends left.

Dreyfus knew very well Shaykh Muṣṭafá 'Abdel-Razzaq who was the Director of the Department of Jurisprudence (Al Idarat'ul-Shar'iyah) – a State department. He went to see him and was received with great affection and gladness. Dreyfus discussed with him the ecclesiastic Judgement of Beba – Qawm'ul-Ṣa'áyda and Bahá'í marriage. Shaykh Muṣṭafá suggested that the Bahá'í couple should present themselves to the Jurisprudence Judge, if the Judge is intelligent he will proceed with the marriage, otherwise the Judge will refer the case to me and I will approve and conclude the marriage.

That suggestion was not accepted. The Guardian said the Assemblies must process the marriages.

Marriage of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Farida Naimi

The Bahá'í Community of Port Sa'id, tried and persecuted for some years and now in the middle of the year 1926, was confronted with a question that not only concerned Port Sa'id, but indeed also the Bahá'ís elsewhere in Egypt. What future is there for their personal status when Qawm'ul-Ṣa'áyda ruling regarding their marriages becomes applicable to the whole Community?

In the middle of this period of uncertainty, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Farida Naimi, both of Port Sa'id, decided to get married. Farida, Lebanese born and of Maronite Christian background, had accepted the Faith through her elder brother Philip Naimi, who in turn was taught the Faith by Muḥammad 'Aly Baghdadi.⁸⁶

The couple presented their request for marriage to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Port Sa'id and the Assembly had to decide whether it was necessary to hold their marriage before a Muslim Má'zhoun which means that they would be married in accordance with Islámic Jurisprudence. That was definitely not what the couple were looking forward to. They were looking forward to a Bahá'í Marriage.

According to the message on behalf of the Guardian dated December 7, 1926 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Port Sa'id consulted with Mountfort Mils and Hippolyte Dreyfus and further took the matter up with the National Spiritual Assembly. The subject of consultation, as recorded by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, was to see whether holding a Bahá'í marriage only would endanger the life of the couple or cause the effusion of blood, in which case this solution should be abandoned. If it would be the cause of some difficulties and inconveniences only without effusion of blood, then Bahá'í marriage only with no other marriage, should be adopted. The Assemblies concluded that a Bahá'í marriage only would cause nothing more than some difficulties and inconveniences – to the delight of all the parties concerned.

Azhar on the basis that Al-Azhar is not a legislative body and therefore cannot take part in the consultation of the parliament.

⁸⁶ Muḥammad 'Aly Ḥuseinawi Baghdadi was one of eight porters of the sacred remains of the Báb from its hiding in Baghdad to Beirut in Lebanon.

The Bahá'í marriage of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was concluded and was the first of the kind in Egypt. The Guardian generalised this rule in Egypt. Bahá'í marriage is the only marriage to be held for Bahá'ís in Egypt and Egyptian Bahá'ís can only marry from among Bahá'ís.⁸⁷

The Message dated December 7, 1926⁸⁸ on behalf of the Guardian approving the action taken by the Local Assembly of Port Sa'íd is included here

7 ديسمبر 1926 ميلادية

من حيفا إلى بورسعيد أعضاء المحفل المقدس الروحاني زيد اجلالهم وافضالهم
هو الله تعالى

اولياء الرحمن، ان قلب حضرة ولي أمر الله فديت أحبائه الذين قاموا بالوفاء على عهده
الأوفى لا زال مسرورًا من خدماتكم في أمر الله واشتغالكم بذكره الأحلى واشتغالكم بنار محبة
الله ويطلب التأييد الجديد من ملكوت ربنا العزيز الحميد لتلك العصابة الرحمانية والنفوس المقدسة
المطمئنة.

وأما في خصوص العقد البهائي ومشورة أعضاء المحفل الروحاني مع حضرات مستر ميلز
ومسيو دريفوس و الرجوع إلى المحفل المركزي قال حضرة المولى نعم ما عملتم وكتبتم إلى
أعضاء المحفل المركزي واسأل الله ان يلهمهم ما يكون سببًا لارتفاع أمره المبين وصيانة لأحبائه
المخلصين وعزة لأرقائه الموحدين وانه لمقتدر العزيز الحكيم وكتبْتُ هذا بأمره المبارك المنيع.
العبد الذليل زرقاني

اني بقلب طافح بمحبتكم وروح مستبشر بخلوصكم ووفائكم وسعيكم في خدمة أمر الله احييكم
من هذه البقعة النوراء ملتصمًا لكل منكم تأييداته الخفية ونصره المبين اذًا تثبتوا الأقدام وتمسكوا
بجبل المشورة وتوكلوا على الله مسبب الأسباب حفظكم الله في جميع الشؤون و الأحوال.
شوقي

Translation of the Arabic paragraph in *Italics*:

Regarding the Bahá'í marriage contract and the consultation held by the members of the Spiritual Assembly with Mister Mils and Monsieur Dreyfus and the referring of the subject to the National Assembly, the Guardian said, "Well is what you have done and have written to the members of the National Assembly. I pray God to inspire them with what will elevate His Cause, protect His loyal friends and be the

⁸⁷ Memoirs of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá.

⁸⁸ As received from the World Centre

(نموذج ٢١)

محضر بصفحة: ١٠٠

وزارة الصحة

ادارة الاحصاء والتسجيل

رسم دفعة ١٠٠ فليم

صورة قيد ميلاد

للاوقات القليلة قبل أول يناير ١٩٦٢

بيانات المولود

اسم المولود ولقبه: <u>محمد حسن محمد</u>		
محل الميلاد: <u>محافظة القاهرة</u>		
نوع المولود	الساعة: <u>١٢</u>	تاريخ الميلاد كتابة
	التاريخ: <u>١٨/٨/١٩٢٩</u>	
	الشهر: <u>أغسطس</u>	
	السنة: <u>١٩٢٩</u>	

بيانات الوالدين

الوالدين	الاسم بالكامل	الجنسية	الديانة	المهنة	محل الإقامة
الاب	محمد حسن محمد	مصري	إسلام	تاجر	محافظة القاهرة
الام	إلهة محمد محمد	مصرية	إسلام	خادم	محافظة القاهرة

ملاحظات:

المولود مفيد بدفتر واقعات الميلاد بكتب صحة: محمد حسن محمد محافظة: محافظة القاهرة
بتاريخ: ١٩٢٩/٨/١٨ رقم: ٥٤٠ جزء: ٢٤ صفحة: ٧٧

تحريري في ١٩٢٩/٨/١٨
اسم المحرر بالكامل: محمد حسن محمد اسم المراجع أو رئيس القسم: محمد حسن محمد
وظيفته: مدير وظيفته: مدير
توقيعه: محمد حسن محمد توقيعه: محمد حسن محمد

الهيئة المصرية العامة للتأجير سنة ١٩٧٢/١٣٣١

First official birth certificate stipulating the religion of both parents and child "Bahá'í" dated August 18, 1929.

A case in context: The marriage of Ḥassan El-Sa'id

Muḥammad Muṣṭafā developed the subject of Bahá'í Marriage in his memoirs and spoke about a case of another marriage following his marriage which reflects the procedure the Guardian asked for as well as details that had to be introduced in order to safeguard the independence of the Faith and the interest of the Bahá'is:

Following our marriage, which inaugurated the application of the Bahá'í Law of marriage in Egypt, Ḥasan El-Sa'id, a Bahá'í youth of Port Sa'id, intended to marry the daughter of Ḥag Taha El-Ḥamamsi and there was mutual consent to this union. Ḥag Taha, his wife, and the mother of Ḥasan, who was not Bahá'í, approved of holding to the Bahá'í Marriage only. In other words, all parties except the father of Ḥasan had agreed. Ḥasan's father, however, was adamant to the Bahá'í Marriage. The matter went to the Assembly, which presented the case to the beloved Guardian. The Guardian instructed that the approval of the father is necessary and the Spiritual Assembly should endeavour to obtain the approval of the father. The efforts of the Assembly succeeded in obtaining his consent to a Bahá'í Marriage only, but the father refused to sign the marriage certificate or any paper. The Guardian's instructions were that the father must sign the marriage certificate; otherwise, the marriage should not take place. The Assembly tried again to persuade the father, but his position was, "I approve of the marriage, but I shall not sign any paper!" Finally, the Assembly told Ḥasan El-Said to cancel his intention to proceed with that marriage, which he did in spite of all the preparations that were made.

The case of Muṣṭapha 'Alí Abdallah⁹⁰

Although the Constitution of Egypt has always stipulated the right to freedom of religious belief and that all Egyptians are equal before the law, yet a close look into its many articles will show clearly that such pretensions cannot practically be adhered to. The most apparent example is that the constitution limits religious belief to three religions: Islám, Christianity and Judaism and prescribes dealing with matters of personal status for every religious community to the laws of its religion. In the absence of a constitutional code for personal status for all citizens the country was, and always is, in a sense already divided into two principle communities, Muslim and Christian, plus a third minor one – Jewish.

Any other communities in Egypt would remain in limbo (unrecognised). That was exactly the case of the Bahá'í Community until the believers of Qawm'ul-Ṣa'áida with much sacrifice brought it to light in the year 1925 and the marriage of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā and Farida Naimi set the rules for Bahá'í marriage in the year 1926. Yet these two events, important though they may be, continue to be the touchstone for ending the government discrimination towards the Bahá'is with regard to their identity documents.

Mustapha Ali Abdallah (1912-1968) had researched in the Bahá'í books of his father and grandfather and accepted the Faith. He was active as a youth and continued to be so until the end of his life.

In 1947 he was married, in a ceremony under the auspices of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of Ismailia. His bride, Bahiga Khalil Ayyad was born to a Bahá'í family in Ismailia. During that time, Mustapha was an employee of the Egyptian State Railways.

⁹⁰ Gleaned from Dr Nabil 'Alí's: Bahá'í Egypt Blog, with his permission.

Following his wedding, he applied to his employer for a married family allowance, to which he was entitled. As requested, he submitted his marriage certificate to the government. In response to his request, the government denied him the allowance stating that it did not recognize the Bahá'í marriage certificate.

A year later, on January 1, Mustapha 'Alí and Bahiga had a son. Mustapha submitted a second request for a family allowance and for an additional allowance for his son, as he was entitled to. Again, after the submission of the Bahá'í Marriage certificate and his son's birth certificate stating that his son was born as a Bahá'í, the request was denied.

In response to this flagrant injustice, Mustapha 'Alí acquired the help of two attorneys and sued the government agency. His attorneys were Saba Habashy Pasha, former Egypt's Minister of Justice, and Mr. Saad el-Fishaawy. The defendant, the government's Ministry of Transportation was represented by Mr. Galal el-Din Abd el-Hamid. The Judges were Justice Abd el-Magid al-Tohamy, Justice Ali Ali Mansour, and Justice Abd el-Aziz al-Beblawy. Chief Justice Badawy Hamoudah headed the constitutional court. In its final ruling in 1952, the court denied the right of the request of Mustapha.

In 1970, a book entitled "Bahá'ism between Shari'a and Law" was published about Mustapha's litigation. Its author was Ali Ali Mansour, the Chief Justice of the Administrative Court who ruled on the lawsuit in 1952. At the time of its publication, Justice Mansour was holding the position of Chief Justice of Libya's Supreme Court, and prior to that, he was the Chief Justice of Cairo's Court of Appeals.

In his book, he was clearly biased against the Bahá'ís. He had documented in writing how he really felt about the Bahá'í Faith and its followers. Except for the introduction, the 54-page book was a reproduction of his published proceedings and court ruling of 1952 case of Mustapha 'Alí.

In his introduction, he claimed that the purpose of the lawsuit of Mustapha 'Alí was not so much for its financial rewards, but rather for the desire to obtain a Judgement that would legalize 'that religion' in Egypt and to make Bahá'í marriages legal under the civil laws of the country. He also stated that the court had asked the plaintiff to provide it with the Bahá'í Holy books, but instead of elaborating on the content of the material provided to the court, he repeated the usual false accusations that had been circulating in Egypt by enemies of the Bahá'í Faith for several decades. He claimed that Bahá'ís, like Freemasons, meet secretly. He then wrote that the Masonic movement was an offshoot of Zionism!

First Bahá'í Marriage Certificate of the Government of Súdán.

Following the subject of marriage it is interesting to note that Bahá'í marriages are recognised by the Government of Súdán while the Government of Egypt continues to refuse to certify Bahá'í marriages.

Dr. Nabil Mustapha, Egyptian national, pioneered in Súdán in the year 1957 and held a Bahá'í marriage with Laila Rúhí, Jordanian national, before the Local Spiritual Assembly of Khartoum North, part of Khartoum, the triple capital city of Súdán. The Bahá'í marriage not being recognised, they considered the necessity of trying to register their marriage in the civil registry.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Nabil's father was there in Súdán and wrote the following:

Nabíl was in Ábu Ushar,⁹¹ he presented a request to hold a civil marriage. After the 15 day notice required by law from the date of his request, Nabíl and Laila went to the Governor House for the official procedure. The necessary papers were ready and Iskandar Hanna⁹² and I were there as witnesses. Laila and Nabíl brought in a cake and plenty of sweets, Coca Cola and other drinks. That was on the 1st of February ... The Governor of Khartoum, who was officiating quite suddenly realised that the names of the two to be spouses were Islámic names. The Civil Marriage was supposed to be for "Non Muslims." So the Governor apologised that he is unable to continue with the ceremony. We tried to explain that we are Bahá'ís and so we are not Muslims. He said that he is not qualified to accept this explanation and the only alternative was to obtain a Fatwa (a religious Decree from the Grand Mufti) effectively confirming our Non-Muslim status. The Governor was most helpful in preparing the request to the Grand Mufti for a Fatwa on the spot and allowed us to take it by hand to the Grand Mufti.

With the help of a well-known Súdánese owner of a newspaper (Mohammed Mekki) who had to relinquish his Bahá'í voting rights because of his involvement in politics although he retained his love for the Faith, a meeting with the Grand Mufti was hurriedly arranged. The Grand Mufti allowed us almost an immediate audience, and received us with every kindness. When he learned of the reason for our visit he asked many questions about the Faith, its laws and especially its marriage laws, and we were blessed by an ability to give him answers that satisfied him.

Then he turned to Nabíl and asked him what his job was and where did he reside. When Nabíl answered him he was surprised and exclaimed joyfully, "Then you are the Egyptian Doctor who saved my nephew and helped us so much in Ábu 'Ushar?" Nabíl asked, "Who is the brother of your honour?" He answered that his brother was the school director to which Nabíl said, "I am pleased to be so considered and I feel a great gratitude to the brother of your honour." Here the Mufti said, "My brother praised you and your wife greatly. You have helped us and I shall therefore, help you." And he smiled. He then jovially looked at Laila (a very pretty young woman) and asked her: do you want to marry this man? She answered shyly, yes. The he said "I shall make you marry him then." He said he will immediately contact the civil court Judge and the Governor and will have the Decree (Fatwa) ready for us to collect the following day. He will also contact the Governor's office to request them to proceed with the registration as requested. He asked Nabíl to return the following day before noon.

We thanked the Mufti and departed with joy in our hearts and decided to help the process in another way. We went to see Mekki⁹³ and explained the whole matter to him and suggested that we prepare the wording we wanted to be contained within

⁹¹ In the south of Súdán.

⁹² An outstanding Egyptian believer.

⁹³ Mr. Mekki was one of the Sudanese believers who due to his work in journalism had political activity and affiliation. He chose to have his name removed from the Community but remained in contact with the friends and renders services whenever he can. He had visited Tunisia with his wife a year or so earlier, and father informed Laila, my sister, and I of their visit. We met with them and Laila took care of the wife during their stay in Tunis, and generally, they both were grateful for Laila's services.

the Fatwa that the Mufti was to prepare regarding the holding of the civil marriage for Nabil and Laila Ruhi. Mekki picked the phone, dialled the Mufti, with his tactful manners referred to the case of the marriage, and arranged to see him the next day at ten in the morning. The next morning we went to Mekki and gave him a suggested draft for the Fatwa for the Mufti to copy if he found it suitable. One hour later, just ONE hour, Mekki came with the Fatwa in original copy for the Governor and a copy with the stamp of the High Shari'á Court for us.

Do you know what the answer of the Mufti was? This is the answer:

In reference to your ... The Bahá'í Faith is a religion different to the Religion of Islám. It follows that Bahá'ís who have names apparently Islámic or Christian are not considered Muslims. The Bahá'í Faith is an independent religion

Álláh U Ábhá!

Photocopies of the Documents of this great victory were sent to the Hands of the Cause (probably he meant the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land) and to the National Spiritual Assembly (in Egypt).

سري جدا

الموضوع: = عقد زواج نجل محمد مصطفى (علي) ليلي علي الله

العمرة م ش/العموم / ٣٦ / صوي / ١٩٥٨

الخرطوم في ٢ / ٢ / ١٩٥٨

السيد محافظ مديرية الخرطوم المحترم

بالاشارة الى خطاب سادكم عمرة م م خ / سري / ٣٦ - د - ٢ الموجه اول فبراير / ١٩٥٨
ان البهائية دين غير دين الاسلام وعلى ذلك فالبهائيون سواء منهم من كان يحمل
اسما اسلامية في الظاهر او مسيحية لا يعتبرون مسلمين وان هذا الذين دين قائم بذاته
وعلى ذلك فبمككم السير في اجراءات عقد الزواج وشكرا

محمد ابوالقاسم
قاضى قضاء
السودان



The Fatwa of the Mufti of Súdán declaring the Independence of the Bahá'í Faith
from Islám

THE NON-MOHAMMEDAN MARRIAGE ORDINANCE, 1926.
Marriage celebrated in the District of KHARTOUM in the Sudan.
CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE

قانون زواج غير المسلمين ١٩٢٦
 الزواج للمسلمين بمطابقة
 بالشهادة
 بالتاريخ

Number KMP/16771 Date 3rd FEB., 1958.

Names and Surnames الاسماء والألقاب	Full Age or Minor بالغ أو لاصغر	Condition الحالة	Occupation, Profession or Rank المهنة أو الوظيفة أو الرتبة	Residence at time of Marriage محل الإقامة عند الزواج	Nationality and religious denomination (if 1937) الجنسية والمذاهب (إن وجدت)	Father's Name and Surname اسم الأب ولقبه	Occupation, Profession or Rank المهنة أو الوظيفة أو الرتبة
DR. NABIL MOHD. MUSTAFA	26	BACHELOR	MEDICAL OFFICER	KHARTOUM	EGYPTIAN BAHAI	MOHD MUSTAFA	
LAILA ALI MUHAMMAD RUHI	22	SPINSTER	NURSE	KHARTOUM	JORDANIAN BAHAI	ALI MUHAMMAD RUHI	

Married at KHARTOUM before me AMRO ABEER ABDEL
 This Marriage was celebrated between us ... { NABIL MOHD MUSTAFA LAILA ALI MUHAMMAD RUHI }
 This Marriage was celebrated in the presence of us ... { FEROZ HASSAN AMRO ABEER ABDEL }
 NOTE — The wife should sign her maiden name.
 SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON BACK.

بشهادتي أو أمانتي
 عند الزواج لي
 عند الزواج بيننا
 عند الزواج بحضورنا
 به — على الزوجين توقيع اسمها الأول قبل الزواج
 انظر التعليمات على الوجه الآخر

Civil Marriage Certificate of Nabíl and Laila showing religion Bahá'í

Chapter Six

Pioneering and Teaching Plans

The Spirit of Pioneering

Historically the Egyptian is neither a traveller nor a nomad. Almost 99% of the Egyptian population have always lived in the Nile valley occupying no more than 6% of Egyptian soil. The Egyptian fallah or husband-man, knows he can get up in the morning, go to his field and cultivate and produce his family food and livelihood day in day out and the Nile will not leave his plants thirsty. Leaving one's village or town and pioneering was not really in Egyptian blood. For thousands of years the seasons and weather followed more or less the same pattern and the Nile rarely changed its rhythm.

Although the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th brought changes to the lifestyle through a modern and educated class, yet the effects of thousands of years remained. And while since the middle of the last century, millions of Egyptians have gone to the Gulf States, Europe and North America, they have done so for jobs or studies, but rarely through impulse of curiosity and exploration or simply travellers.

The Faith, however, changes the nature of the being and during the 30s of the 20th century Egyptian Bahá'ís began to pioneer outside Egypt.

Pioneering

Egypt was the first country in Africa opened to the Faith and it remained practically so until 1920. Mírzá Haydar 'Alí was exiled to the Súdán and remained a prisoner there for over nine years in the late 1870s and 1880s, while a group of Bahá'ís developed in South Africa in the year 1911 and disappeared leaving no trace.

In the year 1920 Fanny Knobloch, the first Bahá'í teacher in South Africa, arrived in Cape Town.⁹⁴ In her first week she met Miss Busby who within a very short time is the first person to become a Bahá'í in South Africa.

Tunisia

Towards the end of 1920 or early 1921, **Shaykh Mohyid-Din Šabri El Kurdi** of Cairo, travelled to Tunisia at the request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá⁹⁵ and was successful in teaching the Faith to a number of Tunisians. He further visited Tunisia in 1923 and in 1927 and thus enabled the establishment of a strong Bahá'í Centre with a Local Assembly. Tunisia was the last country opened to the Faith during the lifetime of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and thus became the 35th worldwide.

In 1954, **Rowshan Mušṭafá** and his sister **Laila Mušṭafá**, both of Cairo, Egypt, pioneered to Tunisia. Rowshan settled in Tunisia while Laila left four years later to settle in Italy.

⁹⁴ Bahá'í World vol ii p. 40

⁹⁵ مكاتیب حضرت عبد البهاء ج 3 ص. 495

Súdán

Súdán is a natural extension of Egypt southward or vice versa. The river Nile unites them. There is a feeling of affinity between the two peoples, especially so for the southern Egyptian and the northern Súdánese.

In 1931 **Ḥasan El-Sa'id** of Port Said pioneered to the Súdán settling in its capital Khartoum, thus marking the beginning of actual pioneering in the Egyptian Community. Ḥasan was followed by his brother El-Sayyid El-Sa'id two years later in 1933. They both settled with their families and set the example for other Egyptian Bahá'ís who followed later in the field of pioneering.

In 1950 **Dr. Ḥusayn Gollestaneh** (MD) of Cairo went to the south of Súdán, thus opening this southern part which is considered Black Africa, distinct from the north of the Súdán which is considered Arab. Dr. Gollestaneh remained there for one year.

Many Egyptian Bahá'ís rose to pioneer to the Súdán after Dr. Ḥusayn Gollestaneh. I hope to include them all or at least most of them, with a short note on achievements.

Dr. El-Sayyid Muhammad Al-'Azzawi and his wife Huriyyih, pioneered to Súdán, where he worked as a teacher for a couple of years after their marriage. Dr. Al-'Azzawi embraced the Faith earlier in Baghdad, Iraq, when he came in touch with Dr. Bahiyyih Farjulláh Al-Kurdi and her mother Shawkat Khánum, both of Cairo. There he began his illustrious translation career starting with the Persian Hidden Words, and later with the English major writings of Shoghi Effendi. While they were in the Súdán, and using a Súdánese travel document, the couple were the last Egyptians to have had the blessing of pilgrimage in 1952 and meet with Shoghi Effendi. After this pilgrimage the family returned to Egypt at the request of the Guardian, and Dr. Al-'Azzawi visited Iran, at another request of the Guardian, to introduce to its Bahá'í community the newly published *God Passes By* – a volume that he later translated into Arabic. In Egypt, he was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly until the disbandment of Bahá'í administration in 1960. After a glorious period of service under difficult circumstances, Dr. Al-'Azzawi passed away unexpectedly in 1976 at the age of 52.

In 1957 **Dr. Nabíl Muşţafá (MD) and his wife Laila Rúhí** of Cairo, pioneered to the South of the Súdán where they remained six years. They were successful in obtaining the approval of the Súdánese government to certify marriages between Bahá'ís – a facility that the Egyptian government had denied Bahá'ís until this day: the year 2022. They presented the Faith to many Súdánese.

Eng. Hibat'ulláh 'Abdu'l-Şamad and his wife Mrs. Tahireh Gollestaneh pioneered to Súdán sometime in 1955 or 1956 following their forced departure from Libya where they had pioneered first. Although he was laid-off from his work as a dam engineer because of being a foreigner, Hibat'ullah decided to remain in the Súdán against all odds. He accepted menial jobs to earn a living during that period of unemployment until he managed to get a Súdánese citizenship, something that he got because all who met him dearly loved him. He was re-employed in his former post, yet without the lucrative privileges that he used to earn previously as an expatriate engineer. Hibat'ullah passed away in 1986 - one year after reaching the age of pension. His work colleagues in a leading national newspaper, extolling his "detachment, humility, and consecration", published a moving obituary. Tahirih joined

him in the Abha Kingdom in 1988 respectively. Both were buried in the Bahá'í cemetery in Khartoum North.

Mr 'Alí Rúhí and his wife Malakout pioneered to Rombek, in the South of Súdán in 1958 and remained in Súdán until 1965. Ali was the principal of Rombek Secondary School, and many South Súdánese Bahá'ís embraced the Faith through him. It was during that time that the first introductory book to the Faith in the Dinka vernacular was compiled and printed. This helped very much in the teaching work. After a brief stay in Egypt, Ali and Malakout returned to Jordan and lived there until their passing away. Ali died while he was in London on a visit and was buried near the resting place of Shoghi Effendi. Malakout passed away in Amman, Jordan.

Hasan 'Alí Sa'ad-edeen, his wife Ensaf Habib and their children Aliyya, Ali, Samira, and Samir pioneered to Khartoum, in the mid-1950s, and returned after a few years to live in Alexandria, Egypt. It was Aliyya's and Samira's experience in Súdán as young children that encouraged them to re-pioneer later with their husbands and children, as indicated below.

Magdy El-Sayyid Fahmy and his wife Khairiyya El Hamamsy, pioneered in the mid-1960's, settling in Khartoum, with Magdy working as a school teacher, for a few years until they returned to Egypt and settled in the town of Tanta.

Dr. Shawky Marei'í, and his wife Nadia of Cairo, went to Súdán sometime in the late 1970s. The couple became members of Súdán's first National Spiritual Assembly in 1971, and remained there for a few years until they moved on to Abu-Dhabi in what later became the United Arab Emirates. Eventually, the family moved in the mid-1980's with their daughter Zarin for retirement in Australia.

Dr. Suhail Bushru'í and his wife Mary of Alexandria, pioneered to Súdán around in 1956, where he was a university lecturer of English. He remained there for a few years, when he moved on to Lebanon, and later to Canada, where he was elected to its National Spiritual Assembly. During another stay in Lebanon he taught the country's President Amin Al-Jumayyil at the American University in Beirut, and was approached for a political job that he turned down. Suhail's Bahá'í translations were remarkable, including *The Promise of World Peace*. His last Bahá'í service was that of manning the Bahá'í Chair for Peace at the University of Maryland, USA, until his passing in 2015.

Anwar Iskander Hanna and his wife Claire 'Ayyád pioneered around the mid-1950 and resided in Port Súdán. There Anwar served at the branch of an Egyptian Bank. The couple captured every heart by their exemplary and angelic behaviour. Anwar's contract ended in 1964 and he returned to Egypt.

Eng. Rashad El-Ḥamamsy and Dawlat Al-Ḥusayni and their two daughters and two sons pioneered to Súdán sometime in mid-1950's residing in Khartoum. The family returned after a few years and resettled in Edfu, an industrial centre in South Egypt, where Rashad was occupying a leading engineering job in one of its factories until his passing in 1970.

'Essam Muhammad Isma'il, his wife Samira Hassan Saad'eddeen, and two young daughters Iman and Do'aa, arrived Khartoum on 19 July 1978. 'Essam took up a teacher's job while Samira worked as a pharmacist. In the course of two years, more pioneers came from Egypt to settle in Khartoum, something that urged 'Essam and Samira to move to Juba, South Súdán in the year 1980. There, the couple and their young children captured the hearts

of the Súdánese, Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike. They accepted their low salaries with resignation. However, in September 1983 the Súdán Government decreed the application of Islámic Shari'a Law, and an anti-Bahá'í sentiment developed in that naturally tolerant country. During the month of March 1984, two Súdánese Bahá'is from the North and five from the South who were visiting the centres around the town of Juba in the South of Súdán were arrested and imprisoned for two months and a half. 'Essam was also arrested in Juba and imprisoned. He was deported to Khartoum by a military aircraft and Samira and the children insisted to join him. When the aircraft landed in Khartoum airport 'Essam was taken away alone and locked into the notorious Kobar Prison. Under a prolonged attempt from the authorities to build a case against him, 'Essam had to remain behind bars for a period of four months and 10 days under extremely harsh conditions. During this imprisonment 'Essam had a chance to bring the Faith to the attention of leading ousted politicians who were also spending prison sentences, as well as other prisoners who hailed from the Republican Brothers Islámic movement. After failing to build any case against 'Essam, and the successful endeavours of the National Spiritual Assembly of Súdán to establish the non-political character of the Faith to the authorities, 'Essam was released and allowed one week to gather the belongings of the family from Juba before being deported from Súdán to Egypt on 1st September 1984. However, 'Essam and Samira were very intent on continuing their pioneering career in Africa. 'Essam secured a teacher's contract in Nigeria, but the Security Authorities refused their departure at the Cairo Airport – a measure the power of while the Security avails itself of arbitrarily. The family received guidance from the International Teaching Centre to remain and serve the Faith in Egypt. 'Essam died in a tragic car accident in 1994, when he was only 47 years old. Samira and the children continue their service of the Faith in Egypt since.

Hosny El Kosheiry: Hosny followed 'Essam in pioneering in 1981, first as a bachelor, and later as a married youth when Miss Siham Shawky Fahmy travelled as a single pioneer to Khartoum in 1982, and later to Juba, where they met and agreed to marry. Hosny first worked in the North, possibly in Wad Madani, Al Jazeera Province, as a teacher and shifted to Juba after 'Essam and Samira moved there. Both 'Essam and Hosny were teaching at the same School, Juba Girls. After the imprisonment and deportation of 'Essam in September 1984, Hosny was ordered by the Súdánese authorities to leave the country, which he did before end 1984. Like 'Essam, Hosny did not live long and passed away in a Cairo hospital.

Hany 'Attiyyá: A self-taught Bahá'í, Hany embraced the Faith in Austria when he was studying arts in Vienna, Austria. Upon returning to Egypt in early 1980, he and his wife, 'Effat Muḥammad Ḥasan, agreed in 1982 to pioneer to Súdán, and located themselves in Waw, in Bahr Ghazal Province in the South. Braving harsh conditions and very modest livelihood, they remained happily in this remote outpost, until they received orders to leave the country following the deportation of 'Essam. The family returned to Egypt, and settled for a teacher job in Mansourah. There, they were blessed by their only daughter. However, Hany died of heart problems soon after.

Shawky Muḥammad Ḥasan: a brother of 'Effat, followed her and her husband Hany 'Atiyya in Waw in the south of Súdán, early in 1983. He worked also as a school teacher and left Súdán shortly after their departure. In spite of his physical disability due to polio that he contracted in childhood, he managed to work as a calligrapher in Jordan, and then joined the BBC Arabic Service as a radio presenter based in London where he is living today as an entrepreneur.

Shawky Se'údi and his wife Tahira and children pioneered to Súdán in 1977. They were posted in Port Súdán and through Tahira's efforts, a community of over 20 Bahá'ís was established there in a short time. Unfortunately, Tahira succumbed to a virulent malaria in 1983, and passed away and was buried in this pioneering post. Shawky remained a few years after Tahira's passing with the five children until 1986, when it was necessary to return to Egypt because of the children's education.

Salwa Shawky Gaafar and her husband Nader Ghoneim: Salwa pioneered to Súdán alone first, choosing Khartoum North as her post. This was around 1983. She worked in a home bakery that was run by a Bahá'í businessperson. She was followed a year later by Nader and they got married in the Súdán, and settled in Wad Madani, with Salwa establishing herself as a seamstress, and Nader running a modest dairy business. The arrival of their first born, Motassem, made it difficult for them to take care of him given their limited finances and difficult business conditions. They returned to Egypt in 1988, where they settled in Alexandria.

Shawky El-Sayyid Fahmy and wife Ruhiyyih Ḥabib Shehata: After going on pension from sole career as vocational training teacher in Egypt, the couple decided to pioneer to Súdán in 1982, following the footsteps of their daughter Seham. They settled in Khartoum North and became the caretakers of the National Bahá'í Centre. Soon, they were befittingly regarded as the mother and father of the Bahá'í community. While their daughter had to leave the country in 1984, they decided to remain in the Súdán. Upon their arrival in 1982, Ruhiyyih used to work at the same home-bakery with Salwa Gaafar until the project was shut down due to economic reasons, but later she dedicated herself to serving with Shawky in taking care of the National Bahá'í Center. Shawky was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly for several years, and used his vocational skills to produce Bahá'í books and pamphlets in a very professional manner. After performing a difficult surgery in a local hospital in 1987 under very primitive conditions, his health deteriorated due to advanced age and it was necessary for the family to return to their other home base in Alexandria, Egypt.

‘Abdel-‘Aziz El-Hadi and his wife Dr. Sawsan Maḥmúd Hosny and children: daughter Hanan and sons Ḥazim and Ḥatem, pioneered to Súdán in 1983. This wonderful family had embraced the Faith in the United Arab Emirates and enabled many members of their extended families to the Faith. They resided in Omdurman near the bridge that connects this part of the Súdánese “tripartite capital” with Khartoum North and near the National Bahá'í Centre. They were active in attending and encouraging every ongoing activity without exception. They accepted teaching jobs with menial salaries, and used their savings to cover the monthly deficit of living expenses. Their three children attended local schools and became part and parcel of both the community and the society at large. They did their best to reach out to anyone who would cross their path and bring him/her in touch with their dear Faith. Their pioneering continued around three years until 1984, when it was necessary for the family to return to Egypt for health reasons and the education of their children. Soon the family was to pioneer to China and accompany Ruhiyyih Khanum in her historic visit to that virgin country, and the years that followed witnessed the much wider international ramifications of their Bahá'í endeavours. China, Macao, New Zealand, Singapore, Bahrain, the UK, the United States, and most of the Arab countries became part of the family's arena of service.

‘Abdalláh Ibrahim and ‘Aliyya Hasan Sa’ad-edeen, and their children ‘Alaa and ‘Abeer. ‘Abdalláh arrived in Súdán in 1983, and settled in Khartoum proper. ‘Aliyya, who spent her early childhood as a daughter of pioneers to Súdán in the mid-1950’s felt quite at home when she returned as an adult pioneer. Soon she found employment as a successful accountant in a leading manufacturing business and maintained this job until this pioneering career ended in 1989, due to deteriorating economic conditions following the coup of June 1989. Abdallah run a mechanical workshop of his own and was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly for a couple of years. The family had their last born daughter, ‘Ola, one year before their return to Egypt.

Áḥmad ‘Abdel-Fattaḥ and Nadia Ali Farag and their children Bahá’a, Ashraf, and Nahed, pioneered to Súdán in 1983. Like Abdallah Ibrahim, Ahmad embraced the Faith in 1964, while residing in Súháj. After the death of his first wife of cancer in 1969, he moved to Cairo and married Nadia the following year. In Súdán, they settled in the remote region of New Halfa. However, the unbearable social and economic conditions of this post did not enable this pioneering to continue more than two years, when they returned to Egypt.

Miss Bahga Ramzey Gollestaneh married the Súdánese Bahá’í Abu-Baker Salih Ahmad in early 1980’s, and the couple lived together in New Halfa. Bahga still lives in this remote pioneering location, even after the passing of Abu-Baker in 2019. Their children completed their university education and lead successful careers in Khartoum.

Arzák ‘Alí Farag married the Súdánese Bahá’í Salah Ahmad Kheir Elsid in 1983, and settled in Umm-Durman, and were blessed by two daughters, Wesam and We’am. After the daughters completing their secondary school education, they moved to Cairo for further education, with Arzak and Salah occasionally accompanying them. Salah has been all time member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Súdán until its dissolution, and is now serving on Súdán’s Administrative Committee.

Bahiyyih ‘Abbás Músá: In 1978, Bahiyyih, a lecturer at the Faculty of Pharmacology of Cairo University met and married a devoted Súdánese Bahá’í: Dr. Nour El-Dayim Al-Tayyib. Nour was a meteorologist who served in Saudi Arabia, and obtained his Master’s and Doctorate degrees in the Soviet Union under demanding circumstances. By 1983, he returned to Súdán, residing in Khartoum and was elected to Súdán’s National Spiritual Assembly. Bahiyyih became a lecturer in her profession at the Faculty of Pharmacology of Khartoum University. Two wonderful children, Eman and Abbas, who captured the spirit of selfless service from their parents, blessed the couple’s life. After moving to Kassala for a short period, the family found it necessary to make Cairo, Egypt, their permanent residence around 1990. Soon, Nour was appointed to Egypt’s Bahá’í Administrative Committee (then known as the Corps), that took the reigns of the Faith until the re-election of Egypt’s National Spiritual Assembly in 2014. Nour passed to the Abha Kingdom in 2021.

Gamal Ḥasan and his wife Somaya Daniel and their two young daughters pioneered to Súdán towards the end of August 1984 and were directed to the town of Kosti on the virtual dividing line between north and south Súdán. Upon their arrival and until the April 1985 Revolution, the family was instructed by the National Siritual Assembly to keep a low-key profile, as far as Bahá’í activities are concerned, in view of the earlier dismissal of ‘Essam Ismail and many other Egyptian pioneers from the country. As soon as this restriction ended with the removal of the Regime, their teaching work began and a local Assembly was established in the town, as well as purchasing a land for the future Hazirat’ul-Quds, that was

registered in the name of the National Spiritual Assembly, with (then) Counsellor Gila Bahta as a witness to the title deed. After being noticed by the Security, which seems to have not changed with Regime change, Gamal was arrested and confined, like ‘Essam, to the notorious Kobar Prison on 20 April 1989, and instructed to leave the country straight from the prison. This time Gamal refused to heed the orders and requested, instead, to be put to trial for any criminal offense, other than being a Bahá’í. After two months in Kobar, Somaya secured a permission by the Second Vice President, who was once a colleague of theirs at Cairo University, to release Gamal for a two-week period during which he would liquidate his business and leave the country. Ironically, before the end of this period of grace, the 30 June 1989 coup that brought the Súdánese Army to power for the next 30 years toppled those who signed Gamal’s dismissal orders and confined them to the same Kobar prison cell where he was once incarcerated. After pretending to be protagonists of the freedom of religion, the new Regime ordered Gamal to leave the country, in spite of his persistent petitions to allow him to remain. On 27 September 1989, Gamal left Súdán, but instead of returning to Egypt, he moved on to East Africa and continued their pioneering career. Today, he and Somayya are based in Entebbe, Uganda, while their two daughter, Manar and Neda, moved on with their personal lives and settling in the Czech Republic and the UK, respectively

Ethiopia

Ethiopia, previously known as Abyssinia, is also one of the countries dear to the Egyptians. The furthest source of the river Nile’s most abundant tributary, the Blue Nile, starts in the Ethiopian highlands. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is quoted by an early devoted US Bahá’í woman who sought His permission to pioneer to Ethiopia, to have said that the country will be opened to the Faith by an Egyptian.

Sometime in early 1933, the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt received Shoghi Effendi’s request to send a pioneer from Egypt to Ethiopia. Following immediate consultation the Assembly saw no better person for this enterprise than young **Şabrí Elias**.⁹⁶ He arrived in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia on the 25th of November 1933. During the short span of less than three years, Sabri was able to teach enough souls to form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Addis Ababa, publish newspaper articles, and translate and print *Baha’u’llah and the New Era*, and other Bahá’í literature in the local language Amharic. The community that embraced the Faith at his hands were so diverse: Ethiopian royalty and commoners, Yemenis, Egyptians and Greeks, with two of them from among the high-ranking Muslim clergy. However, the looming invasion of Ethiopia by Italy forced Şabrí, who was single at the time, to leave Ethiopia in a hurry, using inconvenient transport means, out of the country back to Egypt. He was blessed by pilgrimage, both before and after this first Ethiopia pioneering term, and was told by Shoghi effendi on his second pilgrimage by mid-1936 that his pioneering was normal at the onset, but will assume a very different dimension later. He was to return to Egypt, take a wife, and return to Ethiopia after restoration of peace there.

⁹⁶ The fascinating story of Şabrí Elias and his pioneering to Ethiopia, and later with his wife Raissa, is most adequately and inspiringly related in a book “Moths turned Eagles – The Spiritual Conquests of Şabrí and Raissa Elias” by Gamal Ḥasan. The information in this chapter on Ethiopia is derived from that publication.

In February 1945, Sabri returned to Ethiopia, this time with his wife **Fahima Yakút ‘Aḥmád**, alias Ra’issa, and their two sons Hussein and Safa - a suckling babe. Again, this second term began with a third pilgrimage for Sabri, the first for Ra’issa, and Shoghi Effendi bestowed upon Sabri the title of “the Spiritual Conqueror of Ethiopia”. In the span of two years after the family’s return to Addis Ababa The Local Spiritual Assembly of the City was re-established in 1947, after more teaching that replaced the earlier Bahá’ís who left Addis Ababa during the turmoil of the war years. Notable among the new believers was Mr. Gila Bahta, a prominent lawyer and successful person. Mr. Bahta, in addition to his election to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Addis Ababa and the subsequently established National Spiritual Assembly of Ethiopia, was appointed to serve at the Bahá’í Continental Board of Counsellors for Africa (1983-1998).

Gamal Rushdy and his wife Hoda ‘Enayát Ibrahim with their two children, Nahid and Sherif pioneered to Ethiopia and settled in Addis Ababa mid-march 1955. They remained in Addis Abeba for more than eleven and a half years, helping Šabrí and Ra’issa in the teaching field and consolidating the new believers. after which they moved on to Bujumbura, Burundi, for another 23 years, when Gamal was requested by the World Centre to run the Office of Arab Bahá’í Affairs, based in London.

Libya⁹⁷

Although Egypt and Libya share an almost strait border line North/South of some 1000 km from the Mediterranean in the north, yet it is unlike Súdán in that there is a wide area of desert that separates the Egyptians and the Libyans. Added to this, the population of Libya in 1951, the year of its independence, was no more than 1.25 million including foreigners, spread thinly along the 1500 km plus Mediterranean coast in the north. The country covers 1.76 million km² more than 95%⁹⁸ of which is pure desert. It is divided into 3 provinces; Tripolitania in the North West with Tripoli as capital with a population of some 700,000, Cyrenaica in the East with its capital Benghazi and a population of 300,000 and Fezzan South of Tripolitania with its capital Sabha and some 30,000 inhabitants. The country was poor when the Bahá’ís went there. Petroleum had not been discovered yet. It was the Italians who had constructed most of the infrastructure and towns during the period of their occupation between 1911 and 1942, and much of it that was in Cyrenaica, was destroyed during the Second World War. However, it was to the most desolate Fezzan in Libya that the Sultan ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd had threatened to exile ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the year 1907. This historic particularity of Libya is of importance to the Bahá’ís.

Socially, the inhabitants are divided in a number of tribes. Only a few Libyans had medium education. During the Italian occupation, many Libyan families migrated to Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq. With independence, many of the immigrants returned to their country amongst whom were highly educated young generation members.

⁹⁷ Paragraphs under the heading “**Libya**” are based on the files of Board Member Muḥammad Muṣṭafá that include correspondence of the LSA of Benghazi and other documents which the writer has, as well as the personal experience of the writer who was one of the earliest pioneers to Libya and has continuously followed the history of the Faith there since.

⁹⁸ Estimate of the writer.



In April 1951, a United Nations Non-Governmental Organisations Conference for the Middle East was held in Istanbul, Turkey April 9 – 13, 1951 to which Bahá'í Delegates and Observers were present. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was the delegate from Egypt and the Súdán.

That was the first International event to which the Bahá'ís in Egypt were invited to participate by sending a representative. The situation in the Middle East was turbulent because of the Arab – Israeli conflict and communication with the Guardian was badly hampered.

Upon return from this trip to Turkey, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá informed the National Assembly of the Guardian's wish for Egyptian Bahá'ís to pioneer to Libya and Algeria, both countries being virgin territories, to use the terminology of the Ten year Plan not yet announced at that date.

During the 19 Day Feast of Nour 1951, I remember clearly when Sobḥi Elias, member of the LSA of Alexandria and probably also NSA member at the time, made the following announcement: "*Muḥammad Muṣṭafá returned from Turkey and said that the beloved Guardian wants pioneers from Egypt to open Libya and Algeria*".⁹⁹ The feast ended and Fouad Rushdy and I walked home. We were both decided to pioneer to Libya. We did, as the following paragraphs show.

A couple of months later when I transferred from Alexandria to our home in Zaytún, Cairo, I found Moḥsen 'Enayát, my junior of 2 years, already decided to pioneer to Libya. Elder Bahá'ís eventually pioneered to Libya, but I mention these two youths: Moḥsen 'Enayát and Fouad Rushdy for the imprint they made in the history of the Faith in Libya.

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

The Bahá'ís who pioneered to Libya:

Benghazi, Cyrenaica

⁹⁹ Because Egypt was at war with Israel, correspondence between the Guardian and the NSA was difficult.

Dr. Munib ‘Abdu’l-Hussayn Gollestaneh (MD) of Cairo, Egypt, was the first pioneer to Libya. He arrived in February 1952 and took up work in Ajedabia hospital – 170 kms westwards from Benghazi along the road to Tripoli. He taught the Faith to Áḥmad El-Ghedamsi, the first Libyan to accept the Faith in the spring of 1954. Dr. Gollestaneh remained in Libya until 1964 and then left to the United States.

Eng. Yusuf Jarrah and his wife Hayat and two children Hala and Nabíl came to Benghazi around mid-August 1952. Yusuf and Hayat came from Lebanon, but they are originally from ‘Akká.

Mohsen ‘Enayát, of Zaytún, Egypt, the youngest Bahá’í among the pioneers to Libya, arrived Benghazi end of August 1952. He took a job of teacher in Ajedabia where he remained until July 10, 1953, when he left for Sabha in Fezzan.

Eng. Rowshan Muṣṭapha of Zaytún, Egypt, arrived Benghazi early September 1952. He remained in Benghazi until the Government terminated his work and residence permit in 1954. He continued his pioneering by going to Tunisia.

Muṣṭafá Salem of Alexandria, Egypt, who was a member of the NSA in Egypt came to Benghazi probably in September 1952 also, and went to Tripoli on July 16, 1953, where he was joined by his wife **Ra’úth Gabriel**. Muṣṭafá Salem passed away on the 23rd November 1962 and was buried in Tripoli.¹⁰⁰

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

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

Riadh Gollestaneh of Cairo, Egypt, arrived in Benghazi mid-1953. He was joined later with his wife **Maheen** (née Abreshami). They both remained in Benghazi until Riadh died in January 15, 1993 and Maheen died in March 18, 1993. They lived and died like martyrs.

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

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

Tripoli, Tripolitania

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

¹⁰⁰ The Bahá’í World xiii p.931

Mrs. Shawkat ‘Alí Faraj’ulláh née Khanum, mother of Bahiyyih arrived with the Gulicks. She passed away February 15, 1956.¹⁰¹

Miss Ella Bailey arrived with the Gulicks also. She passed away a few weeks after arrival.¹⁰² The beloved Guardian signalled her pioneering to Libya and her death there. She had met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Chicago in 1912 and was blessed by Him. In the cabled Message of Shoghi Effendi at the close of the Holy Year 1952 – 1953 we read:

Irresistible unfolding Crusade sanctified death heroic eighty-eight-year-old
Ella Bailey elevating her rank martyrs Faith shedding further
lustre American Bahá’í Community consecrating soil
fast awakening African Continent.¹⁰³

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

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

Mrs. Katayún arrived with the Shahrokh to settle in Tripoli.

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

Miss Esmat Kamal of Iraq came with the ‘Abdel-Wahíds and went with them to Tripoli. Miss Esmat is the sister of Mrs. ‘Abdel-Wahíd.

Miss Rizvanieh Ighrari came from Iran to Benghazi on the 17th of September 1963. The LSA directed her to Tripoli, but later she returned to Benghazi and married with Dr. Monib Gollestanah and the couple remained and maintained the Benghazi centre for many years after most of the other pioneers had left.

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

Sabha, Fezzan

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

Foad Rushdy of Alexandria, **Egypt** arrived in Sabha before the departure of Mohsen in order to keep the locality open to the Faith. He was later joined in marriage with Siham Jarrah of ‘Akká and they remained in Fezzan for 3 years after which Foad’s employer, the

¹⁰¹ The Bahá’í World xii p.915

¹⁰² The Bahá’í World xii p. 685

¹⁰³ The Bahá’í World XII p. 688.

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

Derna, Cyrenaica

Eng. Hebat'ulláh 'Abdu'l-Şamad and his wife Tahireh Gollestaneh arrived from Cairo, Egypt, to Derna in Cyrenaica in April 1954 and were obliged to leave in August 1954 because the government terminated his services because the couple were Bahá'is.

Later the following pioneers came to Libya:¹⁰⁴

- Ishaq Ghebrial & Salwa Iskandar with their three children Ráuf, Baha'a and Sameh. Lived in Zliten and Ghirian.
- Sabri & Ra'issa Elias accompanied by their daughters Carmel and Malakoot. Lived in Tripoli. Arrived late 1969).
- Abdul-Karim Asfahani (of Syria). Lived in Tripoli and Benghazi . Arrived late 1968 or early 1969.
- Fu'ad Abdu'l Razzaq Abbas & Salwa Sabri (both of Iraq) accompanied by their two children. Lived in Baidha.
- Enayat Rushdi and Ragaa' Ruhi (and their children Hassan and Rania). Lived in Tripoli.
- Abbas Rushdi and Mariam Ruhi. Lived in Tripoli.
- Muhammed Abdul-Magid Ahmad, a Baha'i from Sudan. Arrived in Tripoli early 1970's but didn't stay for too long to my knowledge.
- Rifát and Fatima Shirazi (Egypt) accompanied by their three daughters Malakoot, Iman and Hala. Lived in Zuwarah.
- Riadh Ali and Rose Ali (née Roumani 'from Syria'). Riadh though Iraqi by birth. Lived in Gharian, Tripoli and Sirte (June 1969 to June 1976).

Algeria

No Egyptian Bahá'í was able to go to Algeria. The barriers for the Egyptians were unsurmountable because of language – French was required, and of politics – Egypt had just had the Nasserian Revolution and the colonial French of Algeria at the time were wary of any Egyptian going there. The only young Bahá'í who tried to pioneer to Algeria was Miss Laila Muşţafá who graduated in a French Lycée. I understand that Shoghi Riaz Rohani of Alexandria who is a Lycée graduate also, tried to obtain a visa for Algeria but without success.

However, the Persian friends rose to the challenge and the first pioneers to Algeria were Mr. Khodabakhsh Attár and his wife Monavar Attár who arrived towards the end of 1952.

Around 1953 and the beginning of 1954 there were a number of other Persian pioneers and a Local Spiritual Assembly in Algiers, the capital of Algeria, was formed. The list of

¹⁰⁴ List provided by Riadh 'Alí 25.02.2023 will be further developed in my: The Bahá'í Faith in Libya.

pioneers that I have from Board Member Muḥammad Muṣṭafá files and Mr. Rochan Mavaddat (son of Rúholláh Mavaddat) is as follows:

Mr Khodábakhsh Attár *	Mr Rúholláh Mavaddat*
Mrs Monavar Attár *	Mrs Muniréh Mavaddat
Mr ‘Ezzat’u’lláh Baghdádi *	Mr Eḥsánu’lláh Baghdádi
Mrs Farahnáz Baghdádi *	Mr Eḥsánu’lláh Máher
Mr Ibrahim Máher *	Mr Šáleḥ Vahdat
Mrs Behjat Máher *	Mrs Belghis Vahdat
Mr Rabi Baghdádi *	Miss Nosrat Vahdat
Mrs Narguès Baghdádi *	Miss Mahin Vahdat

The names marked with (*) are the members of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Algiers.

Other pioneers to Algeria later followed, and I make special mention of **Dr ‘Ezzat’u’lláh Tá’i (MD)** and his wife **Dr Rúḥíyyih (MD)**. The Tá’is came to Algeria in 1963 after some two years in Tunisia and were successful in teaching the Faith in their new pioneer country.

In 1953, **Ámin Khoja ‘Abdel-Karim** became the first Algerian to embrace the Faith. He resided in Algiers, the capital.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Algiers was established in 1954.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Oran in the year 1961 was formed with the participation of Algerian members.

In the year 1964 ‘Abdel-Hamid Kherbouche, a new believer himself, established a Bahá’í Centre in Constantine and two years later the Local Spiritual Assembly of Constantine was formed with all Algerian members.

In the year 1967 The National Spiritual Assembly of Algeria and Tunisia was established with its seat in Algiers.

In the year 1968, Muḥammad Zeggat in a timeline history of the Faith in Algeria, indicates that a relatively large number of new Bahá’is were registered in the region of the capital Algiers.

The First Teaching Plan for Egypt 1948 to 1953

After launching the second seven year plan of the American Bahá’í Community in April 1946, the Guardian envisaged accessory plans for the other seven National Spiritual Assemblies in the Bahá’í world.

The National Assembly of Egypt and the Súdán was likewise encouraged by Shoghi Effendi that, despite the disabilities from which they were suffering, the adoption of a teaching plan was advisable. Egypt was in a leading position in both the Islámic and the Arab world where the Islámic canonical code known as the Shari’a was regarded to be binding on the civil authorities and the beginning of its first teaching plan coincided with that of the Arab Israeli war.

At the end of the plan the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies was raised to nine, six virgin provinces were opened to the Faith and a plot for a permanent summer school was purchased. Three new centres were established in the Súdán and a new locality was opened

in Eritrea. Two Bahá'í centres were established in Libya, pioneers settled in Algeria and the Spiritual Assembly of Tunis, Tunisia was reinvigorated.

The Guardian was pleased with these accomplishments and invited the Egyptian Bahá'is to join the Ten Year Crusade as one of its generals.¹⁰⁵

The principle goals of the plan were:

- 1) To raise to nine the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies
- 2) To raise to thirty-three the number of localities where Bahá'is reside
- 3) To send pioneers to Tunisia, Algeria and Libya
- 4) To acquire property for a Bahá'í school
- 5) To issue a Bahá'í magazine.
- 6) To consolidate the community in Ethiopia.

The Ten-Year Crusade – In Egypt

In his book *Shoghi Effendi : Author of Teaching Plans*, 'Alí Nakhjavani explains how Shoghi Effendi prepared the Bahá'is the world over to that all important Plan which Shoghi Effendi commonly called "Crusade", a title that is misconstrued in the Muslim Middle East for obvious historical reasons.

The following paragraphs are extracted from the book of Mr. Nakhjavani.

The year 1948 saw each and every National Spiritual Assembly engaged in successfully carrying out the **tasks** of a Teaching and Consolidation Plan of its own. The American Community were in the third year of their second Seven Year Plan. In a Message to the American Bahá'í Community dated November 8, 1948, Shoghi Effendi refers to future tasks which will be assigned before the end of the first epoch in the evolution of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, which he could see would have to be in 1963. He wrote: '*...upon the outcome of the assiduous efforts now being collectively exerted . . . must solely depend the timing as well as the nature of the **tasks**¹⁰⁶ which must be successfully carried out ere the closing of an epoch of such transcendent brightness and glory*'¹⁰⁷

Over two years later on February 25, 1951, the Guardian referred to the uniqueness of the African Campaign to which five National Spiritual Assemblies cooperated stating:

*On the success of this enterprise (The African campaign), unprecedented in its scope, unique in its character and immense in its spiritual potentialities, must depend the initiation, at a later period of the Formative Age of the Faith, of **undertakings**¹⁰⁸ embracing within their range all National Assemblies functioning throughout the Bahá'í World*'¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Shoghi Effendi: Author of Teaching Plans by 'Alí Nakhjavání.

¹⁰⁶ The bold and underlining are by the writer to stress a point coming up later in this chapter.

¹⁰⁷ Citadel of Faith 62.

¹⁰⁸ The bold and underlining are by the writer to stress a point coming up later in this chapter.

¹⁰⁹ Unfolding Destiny 261.

From these two quotations we can confidently draw the conclusion that the future 'tasks' referred to in 1948, and the worldwide 'undertakings' mentioned three years later in the second quotation, were hints by Shoghi Effendi for the forthcoming rise of the orb of the Ten Year Crusade above the horizon of the community of the Most Great Name.

I ('Alí Nakhjavani) remember the deep emotion of those days in 1952, when these messages were received. They had an electrifying impact on the minds and hearts of the friends...

In his messages, immediately before the inception of the Crusade and until the end of his life, which coincided with the first four and a half years of the Crusade, Shoghi Effendi described this collective enterprise of the Bahá'í world in such terms as these:

*A world-embracing Crusade
A world-encompassing Crusade
A world-girdling Crusade
An epochal, global, spiritual, decade-long Crusade
This momentous and challenging Crusade
This irresistibly unfolding Crusade
This pre-eminent Crusade
This incomparably glorious Crusade,
This unspeakably potent Crusade
This systematic World Crusade
This prodigious Crusade
This gigantic, divinely propelled Crusade
This soul-stirring Crusade
This World Crusade which in its magnitude and potentialities
transcends any previous collective Bahá'í enterprise*

*The battle cry animating its heroes and heroines is the cry of
Yá-Bahá'u'l-Abhá, Yá 'Alíyyu'l-A'lá.*

Roll of Honour and Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

In a cable dated May 28, 1953 to the American National Assembly, Shoghi Effendi unveiled for the first time the terms "Roll of Honour" and "Knight."

Planning to inscribe, in chronological order, the names of the spiritual conquerors on an illuminated Roll of Honour, to be deposited at the entrance door of the inner Sanctuary of the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh, as a permanent memorial of the contribution by the champions of His Faith at the victorious conclusion of the opening campaign of the Global Crusade which is destined to attain consummation at the Most Great Jubilee commemorating the Centenary of the Declaration of His Mission.

*Anticipate making periodic announcements of the names of the valiant knights upon their arrival at their posts to discharge their historic missions.*¹¹⁰

Then in a cable dated December 7, 1953 to that same National Assembly, Shoghi Effendi launches the title «Knights of Bahá'u'lláh» that confers everlasting honour upon those who have listened and responded to his call:

*The number of sovereign States and dependencies within the orbit of a divinely propelled Order now totals two hundred five. No less than seventy-seven territories have been won over by the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh during a little over half a year, representing two thirds of the total number of virgin areas exclusive of Soviet-controlled Republics and satellites which must needs be opened in the course of the whole decade. Every single territory, whether island or situated on a continent, with the exception of the above-mentioned Republics and satellites has been definitely assigned.*¹¹¹

Four Intercontinental Conferences

In a cablegram dated November 30, 1951, Shoghi Effendi announced his call for four Intercontinental Conferences to celebrate the Holy Year October 1952 to October 1953 marking the hundredth anniversary of the first intimations to Bahá'u'lláh's Message while in Siyáh-Chál in Tihiran. These conferences would inaugurate the «*long anticipated intercontinental stage in administrative evolution of the Faith.*»¹¹²

The first of these conferences, the Kampala Conference, was held over the period February 12 – 18, 1953. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá together with 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi represented the National Assembly of Egypt, El-Saied Muḥammad Al-'Azzawi and Zaynu Dimitri represented the Bahá'ís of Súdán, Yusuf Jarrah and Dr Hussein Gollestaneh represented the Bahá'ís of Libya. Moḥsen 'Enayát of Benghazi, Libya, attended the Stockholm Conference and was considered by the NSA of Egypt as representing the Bahá'ís of Egypt to that Conference.

In that Conference, the details of the Ten Year Plan for Africa were unveiled.

Moḥsen 'Enayát's significant Stockholm Conference attendance

Moḥsen 'Enayát was 21 years and a few days old when he pioneered to Benghazi, Libya, in late August 1952, a mere 3 days before I got there. He forfeited his university studies in order to pioneer to Libya. During Riḍván 1953, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Benghazi was formed and Moḥsen was a member. Shoghi Effendi asked that new Assembly to send a pioneer to Fezzan, the place where Sultan 'Abdu'l-Ḥamid II of Turkey intended to exile 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the year 1907. Fezzan is a Governorate of Libya lying southwest of the country and is part of the great western desert of Africa. In 1953, Fezzan with its capital Sabha was a very poor and uncomfortable place to be.

¹¹⁰ Shoghi Effendi Cablegram, May 28, 1953 – Messages to the Bahá'í World – 1950 – 1957.

¹¹¹ Shoghi Effendi Cablegram, December 7, 1953 – Messages to the Bahá'í World – 1950 – 1957.

¹¹² Shoghi Effendi Cablegram, November 30, 1951 – Messages to the Bahá'í World – 1950 – 1957.

Mohsen volunteered to go to Fezzan. He decided to go to the Stockholm Conference, return to Tripoli and from Tripoli go to Sabha, the capital of Fezzan.

During one of the Stockholm Conference sessions Ugo Giacheri, Hand of the Cause, read a cablegram from Shoghi Effendi to the Conference. When he read “*pioneer on route to Fezzan...*” he called Mohsen to stand up and pointed to Mohsen saying something like “and this pioneer is here – Mohsen stand up that the friends may see you...” and Mohsen was all sweat with the conference clapping fervently in applause.

Mohsen went to Fezzan, and his is a story to tell. He served, and is still serving, the Faith in historic events with outstanding vigour, even at this moment when I am writing these lines in the year 2022.

Egyptian National Spiritual Assembly Crusade Territorial Goals

Territories to be opened to the Faith (all in Africa)

1. French Equatorial Africa
2. French West Africa
3. Morocco International Zone (Tangiers)
4. Rio de Oro
5. Spanish Morocco
6. Spanish Sahara.

French Equatorial Africa: Max Kanyerizi of Uganda, himself a new Baha’i settled this territory. He joined Enoch Olinga in ‘Alí Nakhjavání’s car in Kampala, Uganda, and was dropped in Brazzaville, the capital of French Equatorial Africa – now Congo. Thus, he attained the status of Knight of Bahá’u’lláh.¹¹³

French West Africa, this vast territory which developed into eight different countries during the early sixties, was opened to the Faith by the brothers, **Ḥabib Iṣfáhání and Labib Iṣfáhání** of Port Said, Egypt. Labib, the younger, went first in 1953 to Dakar and moved later to Abidjan. Ḥabib arrived in April, 1954, in Abidjan of the Cote d’Ivoire.¹¹⁴

Morocco International Zone (Tangiers), was opened to the Faith by a number of Persian and American Bahá’ís. Here are the names: **Manouchehr Hezari, Hormoz Zandeh, Muḥammad ‘Alí Jalali, Ḥusayn Ardekani and Nosrat Ardekani, ‘Alí Akbar Rafi’i, Shayistih Rafi’i and ‘Abbás Rafi’i, Elsie Austin, Richard Suhm and Mary Suhm, and Evelyn Walters and Richard Walters.** All became Knights of Bahá’u’lláh.¹¹⁵

Rio de Oro was opened to the Faith by **Ámin Battaḥ** of Cairo, Egypt in October 1953 and became a Knight of Bahá’u’lláh. Ámin was an active youth in Cairo when the call of Shoghi Effendi to pioneer was announced. His father, ‘Abu’l-Futúḥ Battaḥ had passed away leaving him the only man with his mother and 5 sisters. He had a good job with the government, but all this did not stop him from answering the beloved Guardian’s call. He was not allowed long in Rio de Oro and he continued his pioneering in Libya.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ The Knights of Bahá’u’lláh by Earl Redman p. 68.

¹¹⁴ The Knights of Bahá’u’lláh by Earl Redman p. 43.

¹¹⁵ The Knights of Bahá’u’lláh by Earl Redman p. 15.

¹¹⁶ The Knights of Bahá’u’lláh by Earl Redman p. 39.

Spanish Morocco was the goal to which **Fawzi Zein and Bahiyyeh Zein** (and their two youngest sons Kamal and Cherif) of Cairo, Egypt, chose to go and open to the Faith in 1953 and both became Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.¹¹⁷ They went to the town of Tetuan and after a year of dire suffering Fawzi was able to obtain the work of teacher of arts, which is his speciality. A number of young Moroccans quickly accepted the Faith and the local Assembly was established. In 1961 the Bahá'ís of Spanish Morocco were subjected to a most severe test when fourteen were imprisoned and judged for their Faith with three condemned to death and the others condemned to diverse heavy imprisonments. Their case took international dimensions and terminated three years later with total freedom. Fawzi and Bahiyyeh had to leave Morocco. They came to Tunisia where they served for two years, and then went to the United States.

Following the Zeins arrival in Spanish Morocco by two weeks, **Luella Mckay, John Fleming and Earletta Fleming and Alyce Janssen**, all four from the United States, arrived in Spanish Morocco and were designated Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

Other pioneers to Spanish Morocco were **Foad Taḥan and his wife** and young 'Essam of Syria. Foad was one of the three condemned to death in the Tetuan court.

Naguib Rúḥí and his wife Olfat Iṣfáhání of Cairo, Egypt, pioneered to Spanish Morocco.

Spanish Sahara was opened to the Faith by **Muḥammad Muṣṭafá** of Cairo, Egypt in October 1953 who became Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. He was a member of the first Auxiliary Boards in Africa in 1954 and a Counsellor for the last six years. Although his sojourn in the Spanish Sahara was shortened by political considerations of the Spanish Authorities, yet he was able to teach the Faith to two citizens there.

Other Territories not assigned to the Egyptian National Assembly

1. Djibouti (ex-French Somaliland)
2. Canary Islands.
3. Somalia

Djibouti: **Fred Schechter** of the United States who arrived there on a ship on August 2, 1953 opened Djibouti to the Faith. Two months later Fred had to leave Djibouti because he was refused a visa to remain there. Šabrí Elias and his wife Raissa, both of Alexandria, Egypt, who were in Ethiopia, decided to pioneer to Djibouti arriving there on May 6, 1954 and thus attained the status of Knights of Bahá'u'lláh. The rich history of service of Šabrí Elias who had pioneered to Ethiopia in 1933 and who is considered the father of the Community in that country and later with Raissa in 1944 crowned their memory with everlasting laurels. Now they pioneered to one of the goals of the Ten Year Crusade and became Knights of Bahá'u'lláh. In February 1956, Shoghi Effendi asked them to establish a Local Assembly in Djibouti at that time there were 7 Bahá'ís. On her return journey from a visit to her children in Addis Ababa, Raissa was able to confirm one traveller in the Faith. *“On April 19, the Djibouti Bahá'ís still numbered only eight. Raissa had a Bahá'í niece who*

¹¹⁷ The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh by Earl Redman p. 35.

*had expressed interest in joining them but had not done so. Then at two o'clock in the morning on 20 April, there was a knock at the door. When they opened it they found her niece, Fawziyya, there. The Assembly was formed".*¹¹⁸

In 1954, and after the arrival of more pioneers to Ethiopia from Iran, the US, and Egypt, Sabri and Raissa pioneered to **Djibouti** and became Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

Canary Islands When the announcement of the Ten Year Crusade reached the ears of Shoghi Riaz Rouhani, a Bahá'í youth of Alexandria, Egypt, he immediately decided to pioneer to The Spanish Sahara. Sometime in November 1953, Riaz took the road from Alexandria along the Mediterranean shore through Libya and then by sea to Spain and Tangiers. There he tried to obtain a visa for the Spanish Sahara to which Muḥammad Muṣṭafá had already been. He was not successful, yet he persisted. Meanwhile, a call for pioneers to join the Bahá'ís in the Canary Islands to form their first Local Spiritual Assembly brought Riaz to the Canary Islands, when he was designated Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. His heart's desire to go the Spanish Sahara, now that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was forced to leave that post, only increased in intensity and for many years, he tried all possible means to go there without success. In 1957, he brought his brother and parents to Morocco where they all served for many years. His brother and parents and uncle passed away and were buried in Morocco. He married one of the Persian pioneers, Soraya Rizvani in 1957 and spent the last few years of his life in Rouen in France.

Somalia The Italian Somalia (later Somalia), witnessed the arrival of **Dr. Chowghi Rouhani (MD) and his Jordanian wife Amal Ehsan** in the early 1960's. By 1963, another Bahá'í woman, **Miss Naz Bushru'i**, of Alexandria got married to an Iranian pioneer to Somalia, **Mr. Iraj Yighani**. While Naz and her husband resided in Mogadishu the capital of Somalia, Chowghi and Amal moved to Kismayo, near the Kenyan border. By the time all international pioneers were forced to leave Somalia in the early 1980's, a viable Somali Bahá'í community was formed. However, the country descended into total chaos and most of the Somali believers had to leave the country for their lives.

The Regional Spiritual Assembly of North East Africa

In Riḍván of the year 1956, the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt became the Regional Spiritual Assembly of North East Africa covering beyond Egypt and Súdán the territories of Libya, Eritrea, French Somaliland, Ethiopia and Socotra Islands.

¹¹⁸ The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh by Earl Redman p. 60.

Chapter Seven

Burial and Cemeteries

The problem of burial of Baha'is slowly surfaced following the Qawm'ul-Sa'áyda court ruling that established the independence of the Faith from Islam, as the Faith became known in Egypt and the Community increased in number and in localities. The exchange of articles against the Faith and the Bahá'í answers published in the "Assiyasa" paper in 1934 helped strengthen the Muslim opposition chiefly on religious grounds.

In the meantime, the Bahá'is turned to their Assemblies in all matters regarding marriage, interment according to Bahá'í rites, divorce and other personal issues.

Some examples regarding burial difficulties:

The case of Miss Malakat Maḥmúd El-Neshúgati of Port Sa'id

On the 17th of September 1937, Miss Malakat – the daughter of Maḥmúd Effendi El-Neshúgati of Port Sa'id passed away. Maḥmúd Effendi and his wife were the only Bahá'is in their respective families who were all Muslim. Both Maḥmúd Effendi and the Local Spiritual Assembly of Port Sa'id decided to conduct the funeral ceremonies entirely according to Bahá'í rites. Non-Bahá'í relatives of the deceased threatened that unless Muslim rites were observed, they would cause an uproar in Port Sa'id and would take away the body by force. The Bahá'is stood their grounds, the relatives then begged that the funeral procession should at least stop at the Mosque for prayers; again, the Bahá'is, realizing the implication of this, refused, and communicated with the Chief of Police, who provided them with an armed guard. Draped with a rose-coloured cloth and covered with flowers, the coffin was borne through the streets of the city; musicians preceded the casket, school girls dressed in white and carrying red roses accompanied it, and the local Bahá'í community and their friends followed. The streets were thronged with those who had come to watch the Bahá'í cortege. Bahá'í Tablets were chanted at the grave, and later a great number of Muslims, Christians and Jews came to the Bahá'í Centre to offer condolences and listen to Bahá'í prayers. The friends felt that the last link binding them to the old order had now been broken.¹¹⁹

The case of Muḥammad Sulaymán of Ismá'íliyyih¹²⁰

The writer was 9 years old when he accompanied his father, Muḥammad Muştafá, to see a friend Muḥammad Sulaymán,¹²¹ a Bahá'í of Ismá'íliyyih who was lying in bed with appendicitis. I think it was in the hospital that we saw him. He was uneasy about the operation and I heard him say that he will die. My father encouraged him and explained that so many such operations are made every day. That was in the year 1938. Today appendicitis is not considered an operation, but in 1938, any operation was a source of anxiety. However, Muḥammad Sulaymán left instructions that he was to be buried as a Bahá'í not as a Muslim. When he passed away a short time later, the clergy refused to allow his burial in the Muslim cemetery and mobs gathered around the house throwing stones, shouting insults, obstructing

¹¹⁹ The Bahá'í World vol. vi p. 24.

¹²⁰ See "God Passes By", p. 367.

¹²¹ The Baha'i World vol. viii p. 680

the burial to take place and threatening to burn the place down. That situation continued for three days and the situation became dangerous. Finally, the police took the coffin during the night and buried it in the desert along the road to a locality called El-Ferdan. The family and friends had no clue to where the coffin was buried.

The case of Muḥammad Músá of Port Sa'id

Muḥammad Mussa¹²² of Port Sa'id was a staunch believer and a courageous and dauntless teacher in Port Sa'id. During the disturbances of the 1920s in that town *“he was pelted with stones, beaten and wounded”* and had to migrate to Cairo for some time at the advice of the Guardian. He passed away on August 23, 1939. The news of his death quickly spread and a great disturbance took place. Large masses obstructed the moving of the body out of the house and attempted to burn both house and body. With difficulty the Authorities prevented the disaster, in the darkness of night, took the body, and buried it in an unknown place in the desert sand along the road to the locality of Ferdan, some 40 miles south of Port Sa'id. The family and friends were not able to locate the burial spot, and like what happened in the death of Muḥammad Sulaymán, the resting place remained unknown.

First Bahá'í Cemetery in Egypt – Ismá'íliyyih

The incident of the burial of Muḥammad Sulaymán gave ground for the Bahá'ís of Ismá'íliyyih to ask the local Government Authorities to allocate a plot for a Bahá'í cemetery. The National Spiritual Assembly had already approached the Government for the allocation of land for Bahá'í cemeteries in Cairo, Alexandria, Port Sa'id and Ismá'íliyyih, presenting the Bahá'í Laws regarding matters of Personal Status with the request. The matter went from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice.

The Ministry of Justice presented a request for a religious opinion or Fatwa regarding the burial of Bahá'ís in Muslim cemeteries accompanied with a copy of the Bahá'í Laws on Personal Status.

On the 11th of March 1939, The Mufti of Egypt issued his Fatwa that the Shari'a Law does not allow the burial of Bahá'ís in Muslim cemeteries and further developed that any Muslim who becomes Bahá'í is an apostate and the law of apostasy should be applied on him.¹²³

On the 3rd of November 1940 a Decree was issued authorising the allocation of plots of land for Bahá'í cemeteries in Cairo, Alexandria, Ismá'íliyyih and Port Sa'id.

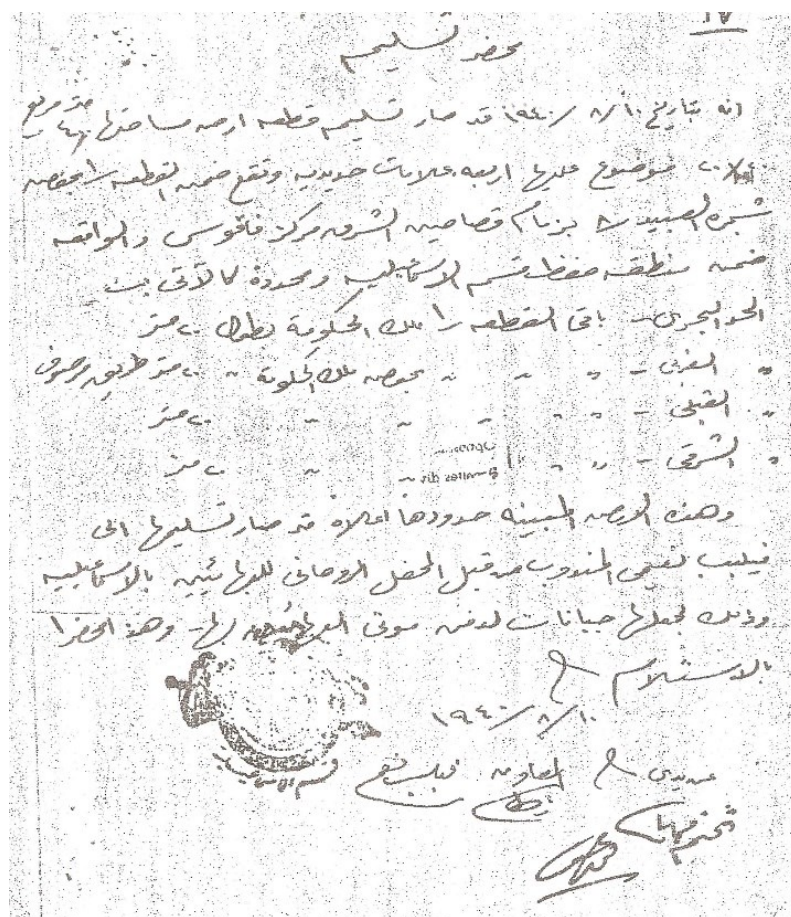
The case of Ismá'íliyyih was different due to the fact that WW II had started soon after the death of Muḥammad Sulaymán and the whole Suez Canal area became a British or Allied military zone.

It was due to Philip Naimi who negotiated with the Authorities that after two years allocated a plot some walking distance from Ismá'íliyyih on the El-Ferdan road. World War II was on, and the whole Suez Canal area: Port Sa'id – Ismá'íliyyih – Suez, became a British military zone. Approval of the British military had to be obtained and one day during the school holidays which I spent with my uncle Philip in Ismá'íliyyih, I was told to go with Naguib Mlika, one of the Bahá'ís of Ismá'íliyyih, to the Commanding British officer at a military camp some 17 kilometres away to obtain the approval for this allotment. Naguib

¹²² The Baha'i World vol. ix. p. 644.

¹²³ “God Passes By” p. 368.

spoke no English and I was to help with my English. We went on bicycles and it was a memorable experience. The act of transfer of the plot for the Ismá'ílyiyh Bahá'í Cemetery to the Bahá'í Community was signed by Philip Naimi on behalf of the Local Assembly on August 10, 1940 and destiny decided that he, Philip Naimi, would be the first to be buried in this new cemetery on January 8, 1942.



Minutes

handing over of the plot of land for the
Bahá'í Cemetery of Ismá'ílyiyh

of the

The Bahá'í Cemetery in Cairo

Since cemeteries in Egypt are public property that are not subject to sale or transfer, the Egyptian Ministry of Health officially allocated a plot of land just outside Cairo, in an area called “Basateen” for use as a Bahá'í place of burial.¹²⁴

At the centre of Cairo Bahá'í Cemetery is a monument of the joint graves of Lua Moore Getsinger and Mírzá Ábu'l-Faḍl, as well as a marble grave of Hand of the Cause Muḥammad Taqí Iṣfáhání.

The advent of armed hostilities between Egypt and Israel in 1948 and the gradual transformation of the Suez Canal zone to become the frontline of the conflict caused the migration westwards of the population in the towns along the Canal to the interior of the country. The cemeteries of Port Sa'id, Ismá'ílyyih and Suez were lost.

The year 1971 saw a fine ray of light in the affairs of the Faith with the Government. It concerned the dead rather than those alive. The subject concerned the Bahá'í Cemetery in the area of Cairo called Basateen. Next to the cemetery there was a Pilot Tannery that belonged to the Government. The Tannery had to expand and the only possibility it had was to extend into the land of the Bahá'í Cemetery. By order of the Governor of Cairo, representatives of the Governorate and the Head of the Board of Directors of the Tannery had to negotiate with the Bahá'ís for the transfer of the Bahá'í Cemetery to a new site, at about one kilometer distance, all expenses to be covered by the Tannery.

A meeting was held on Saturday the 15th of May 1971 with the presence of the Head of the Board of Directors of the Tannery, Engineers from the Cairo Governorate and the Bahá'ís represented by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Súlaymán, Ḥasan Ḥussein Ruḥi, Ḥussein Ámin Bicar and Ámin Battah. The Bahá'í Delegation recorded that they designate Muḥammad Muṣṭafá as their speaker.

All parties signed the minutes of the meeting. It was a Cairo Governorate document with the signatures of the Bahá'í Delegation as shown in the scan that follows.

Fortunately the transfer did not take place.

Gamal Ḥassan who was present and had guided the Bahá'í Delegation to the proposed new site explained that it was providential that the transfer never took place, because a few years later a motorway was constructed that went over the suggested site, and had the Bahá'í Cemetery been transferred it would have been necessary to transfer it again. This time it would have gone far into the desert beyond all habitation, where water and electricity would have been unavailable.

¹²⁴ The information in this paragraph is gleaned from The Bahá'í World editions.

شركة المدايخ النمودجية

الاجتماع الذي عقد لبحث موضوع نقل جبانة البهائيين المتداخلة
بالارض المنصصة لشركة المدايخ النمودجية بالبيضاين الى
الموقع الجديد الذي خصص لهذه المقابر

انعقد في يوم السبت الموافق ١٥ / ٥ / ١٩٧١ اجتمع كل من :-

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| ١ السيد / الدكتور زامل ز. وطن شمس | رئيس مجلس ادارة | من شركة |
| ٢ السيد / الاستاذ سبير السزوسي | عضو شركة المدايخ | ال نمودجية |
| ٣ السيد / المهندس محمد احمد سليمان | ادارة التخطيط العمراني | من محافظة |
| ٤ السيد / المهندس محمد الحزيري | ادارة ترميم الملكية | التاخره |
| ٥ السيد / محمد مصطفى سليمان | المقيم ٥ حارة احمد موسى بن طائفة | البيهايين |
| ٦ السيد / حسن حسين رويحي | ١٤ شارع رسمي | |
| ٧ السيد / حسين امين بوكسار | ١٦ شارع حسن عليم | |
| ٨ السيد / امين ابو الفتوح بطاح | ١٤ مركزيا الانصار | |
| | مدير البديسة | |

وقد تم الاجتماع بقر الشركة ٣٧ شارع نصر النيل بالتاخره بناء على مكاتبات شركة
المدايخ النمودجية للمادة السابق ذكرهم بمعية والبرر ٤ / ٥ / ١٩٧١ وذلك
لبحث الخطوات التي ستتبع لتقلى جبانة البهائيين الى الموقع الجديد المنصص
لها بقرار السيد / محافظ التاخره رقم ١٧٨ لسنة ١٩٦٨ هـ حتى تتمكن الشركة
من استغلال الموقع الحالي لهذه الجبانة في التوسيع المضاف .

وقد ابدى مندوبى الشركة رغبتهم في اخلاء الارض المنصصة لهم والمشتول
حاليا بمقابر البهائيين لتنفيذ المرحلة الثانية من مقررات الشركة .

وقد اوضح السادة الاعضاء رين عن طائفة البهائيين انهم يمثلون الطائفة البهائية
وانهم جميعا ينيبون عنهم السيد / محمد مصطفى سليمان لانه بالشرية فسمى
موقع نقل المقابر الى الموقع الجديد المنصص لهذا الغرض . وقد طلبوا ان تتحمل
محافظة التاخره تكاليف نقل الرفات وانشاء مقابر لا من الموجودة حاليا واتامسة
سور حول الموقع الجديد وفترتين في مدخل السور لاقامة حارسين بهائيه وبكسار
لقضاء الحاجة . وان تتحمل شركة المدايخ النمودجية هذه التكاليف بمشتها البهيه
المستفيدة . واذ ان اعزاء الطائفة البهائية لا يقدرين على تحمل هذه التكاليف

Chapter Eight

Bahá'í Administration in Egypt **The period between 1914 and 1959**

Establishing the Bahá'í Administration in Egypt

The first Local Spiritual Assembly to be established in Egypt was that of Cairo and first mention of that was found in Star of the West Vol 5 – N° 2 dated April 9, 1914. A letter was received by the Star of the West from Shaykh Mohyid-Din Šabrí El-Kurdi on behalf of the Spiritual Assembly of Egypt regarding the passing away of Mirzá Ábu'l-Faḍl. However, this information about an Assembly, has to be understood with some reserve because there was little notion about the Administration at that time. A tentative effort to establish an Assembly in Cairo and consider itself the Assembly of the whole of Egypt similar to the one established in Tihran was for the whole of Iran, could have been made.

Another information regarding the establishment of the Administration in Egypt came to me from Gamal Ḥassan. A local Spiritual Assembly was established in Qawm'ul-Ša'áida in upper Egypt in the year 1918.

It is certain, however, that the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Port Sa'id was established in 1922 between the months of June and July. In his memoirs, Muḥammad Mušṭafá relates: "...I was in Europe and on my return I found I was elected secretary to the first Local Assembly".

In Bahá'í Library.com/Hassall-notes-Egypt we find the following:
Mustapha Suliman, of Port Sa'id, travelled in Europe 25 April - 27 July 1922, visiting the Bahá'ís in Paris, London, Berlin, Stuttgart.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Port Sa'id may have been the first Assembly of Egypt to receive a communication from the Guardian.

We know that on the 5th of April 1922, Shoghi Effendi left the Holy Land and explained his decision to absent himself from the Holy Land in a Message which the Most Exalted Holy Leaf sent to the Star of the West for the American believers to read.¹²⁵

Star of the West records the return of Shoghi Effendi to Haifa on Friday afternoon December 15, 1922 and Rúḥíyyih Khanum explains in "The Priceless Pearl" that the next day after his arrival he sent cabled Messages to eight centres worldwide and wrote to America. She also mentioned that between December 15, 1922 and February 23, 1923, Shoghi Effendi records 132 places he wrote to.¹²⁶

The website Bahá'í Reference Library and the record of the Tawqui'át – توقیعات – Messages of the Guardian in Persian and Arabic-- show that from the date of his return from London following the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and prior to leaving Haifa for Switzerland in April 1922 there were 6 Messages numbered 1 to 6, from Shoghi Effendi to the believers in Iran. Then on the following day of his return from Switzerland, that is on December 16, 1922, Shoghi Effendi sent his Message N° 7 to the Bahá'ís in Tihran.

¹²⁵ The Priceless Pearl p.57

¹²⁶ The Priceless Pearl p. 64-65

The 8th Message, however, dated December 23, 1922 is addressed:

Through the intermediary of the members of the
Spiritual Assembly.¹²⁷
the beloved of God and maidservants of the Merciful
in the town of Port Sa'id,
upon them be Bahá'u'lláh.

As far as I can tell, this is the first Message from the Guardian in Arabic and the first to Egypt.

Included hereunder is that Message in Arabic written by Shoghi Effendi:

٣١
محسن رابطة روحية بين الأخيار ووقعوا نطفته في طهارة مقالاتها
دارسوا لكل منها ما عندكم من البشارات الأملية لتتبع العقوب وتتقش
الأرواح بالاطلاع على نفوذ الأمر وعلامة في هذه الديار .
والتي اشتاق للأطلاع على أسرار الانجباء ، وعدد هم من
المؤمنين والمؤمنات بغير علم في مدينة بورسعيد والسعيدة ابائمين
من الواعد والعشرين وصاعدا .
ولازال نطفته اخباركم الأملية وبشارتكم الرحمانية من تلك الجهات
وعليكم في كل الشؤون والأحوال مراعاة الكلمة المسطورة في الكتاب
شوقي حيفا
٢٣ ديسمبر ١٩٢٢

٣٠
٨- بواسطة حضرات محضاء ومخلص الروحاني
احباء الله واما الرحمن في مدينة بورسعيد عليهم بها
هو الله
ايها العالمون على شرفها الله لقد اتهمتم في طرأ بشارتكم بغير علم
والله على شرفكم الوتيرة المشاق في الأفاق واستحقاكم للأساس الأملية
فكنت الأنحاء والأقطار ولقد سرتي بشارتكم تأسيس المحفل الروحاني في دياركم
وقيامه ببيتنا لئلا تضيعوا روحانياتكم بين الأجيال في شوق
الأرض ومغاربها .
والتي في جوار هذه البقاع المقدسة التمس لكم التوفيق من الرب المجيد حتى
تتبع دائرة هذا العلم الأملية وترفعوا وتأسوا في مستقبل الأيام في تلك المدينة
التي كانت موطن أقدام مولانا حضرة عبدالبهاء بانيان مشرق الأفكار و
بذلك تعوزوا بغير علمكم الروحانية وتخدموا خدمة عبودية للعبادة المقدسة
وقد اطلع بعضكم خطاكم الاجباء من المسافرين والمجاورين في اتبعوا لئلا
واشروا صدر القياكم واهتمامكم وعيكم الموفور في هذا التيسر وعليكم
بالاشتراك بالجهات الأملية بنجم باختر والبشارة ونور شيد غادر لانت
من

١٢٧ بواسطة أعضاء المحفل الروحاني أحياء الله وإماء الرحمن في مدينة بورسعيد

A tentative translation is as follows:

*Through the intermediary of the members of the Spiritual Assembly.
To the beloved of God and maidservants of the Merciful in the town of Port Sa'id,
Upon them be Bahá'u'lláh*

He is God

O ye who are engaged in the propagation of the sweet-smelling odours of God,

My heart was moved with joy on seeing your beautiful letter indicating that you raise the banners of the Covenant in the horizons of those lands and consolidate the foundation of the Faith therein. I was pleased with the glad tidings of the establishment of your Spiritual Assembly in that area and its efforts to propagate the Teachings of God and to reinforce the spiritual bonds among the beloved friends in the East and in the West.

In the vicinity of these sacred precincts I pray to the Glorious Lord for your success, that the scope of your services to the Cause may expand and that you may raise in the future days in that town blessed by the tread of the feet of our Master 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the edifice of Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and thus attain your utmost spiritual hopes and render a glorious service unto the Holy Threshold.

The friends and visitors in this illuminated Spot were informed of the contents of your letter and your efforts, your zeal and multiple endeavours, have brought happiness to their hearts. You are enjoined to subscribe to such magazines as the Star of the West, and The Glad Tidings and Khorshid Khawar, because that is conducive to the best bond among the friends. You should read their articles and send to them such spiritual glad tidings as you may have, for that will be the cause of their inspiration and happiness.

I desire to know the names of the believers and maidservants who are of 21 years and over of age in Port Sa'id and in Ismailia.

I continue to wait for your news and your glad tidings of the Cause. In all your affairs and under all conditions bear in mind the wisdom that is written in The Book.

*Shoghi Haifa
December 23, 1922*

Though incompetent to translate Shoghi Effendi, yet I thought that it is important to render the contents of this message in English, it being one of the early Messages of the beloved Guardian, in his own handwriting, in Arabic and the first to the Bahá'is in Egypt as far as I can tell.

The Message includes guidelines that may have been new to the young Assembly in Port Sa'id. The establishment of an Assembly is a "glad tidings". Its efforts "to propagate the Teachings of God and reinforce the spiritual bonds among the beloved friends in the East and in the west" is a source of pleasure to Shoghi Effendi and the caution "In all your affairs and under all conditions bear in mind the wisdom that is written in The Book."

The National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt was established towards the end of the year 1924, and Muḥammad Muṣṭafā was elected to it from the start. He continued to be a member until 1953, when he went pioneering, that is for 29 years. During a number of years, he was the secretary.

By the time he went to Haifa for the first time towards the end of 1923, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā had been a Telegraph Operator and advanced in positions in the Telegraph Office for 9 years dealing with cables and telegrams mainly in English or maybe exclusively in Latin alphabet. This must have enriched his knowledge of the language.

In Port Sa'íd, it was Muḥammad Muṣṭafā who, in the Telegraph Office, first became aware of the arrival and departure of many of the western pilgrims to and from the Holy Land through the tele-messages the pilgrims sent. He, therefore, in many cases, went to meet those pilgrims on their arrival, help them in many ways, speak with them and associate with them in English. That also must have helped him very much to immerse himself in the language.

However, I feel that it was Shoghi Effendi who made Muḥammad Muṣṭafā progress in his knowledge of the English language, by assigning to him the translation of documents. Assignments from the Head of the Faith carry transferable capabilities for the execution of the work requested.

An addition of great importance to Muḥammad Muṣṭafā's knowledge of English came with Shoghi Effendi's Messages to America and other countries which were in English and some of which Muḥammad Muṣṭafā had to translate for the National Assembly and friends of Egypt.

Other Egyptian Bahá'ís of the generation of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā knew English well. 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad was certainly one of them. He translated «The Dawn Breakers» to Arabic. So were 'Abdel-Raḥman Rushdy and his brother 'Abdel-Fattah Sabri. Their English was very good, yet there is no record of any work that they did in English.

More reflections on the Bahá'í Administration in Egypt

In the year 1944, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā decided to take advantage of an offer by the Egyptian Government for premature retirement in order to consecrate all his time to the service of the Cause. Although not having reached ordinary retirement age, he had served for the 30 years necessary for full retirement benefits.

Another prominent Bahá'í, Muḥammad Sa'íd Adham, who had simply followed 'Abdu'l-Bahá while walking in a public garden in Alexandria in the year 1910 and never stopped since, and who was chairman of the National Assembly in 1944, did the same thing and with the same intention: he went on premature retirement to consecrate to the service of the Faith. Unfortunately, he passed away prematurely on September 5, 1945.

A scenario of dying chairpersons took place in the National Spiritual Assembly when 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad was chairman and passed away on May 25, 1942, Dr Muḥammad Šaleḥ was elected chairman, but he passed away towards the end of the year after November 12, 1943. Then Muḥammad Sa'íd Adham was elected chairman of the National Assembly and he passed away on the 5th of September 1945. All three were not old when they passed away.

The Centenary Celebration of the Declaration of the Báb

The celebration of the Centenary of the Declaration of the Báb was a very important event for the National Assembly in Egypt. It was the first such celebration and undertaking and was not only a source of joy to the Egyptian Bahá'í community, but also a reason for raising the standing of this community and the Bahá'í Faith within the Arab countries. Shoghi Effendi was intent on the success of the celebration.

The National Assembly started its preparations for the celebration one year ahead. The Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds was being built but not completed. The upper floor remained to be built as well as the archive room and the dome. Supplies were difficult because of the war. By a special donation from Shoghi Effendi the upper floor was completed in the early months of 1944, but the dome, still on blueprint seemed doomed to wait for after the celebrations.

The finishing and furniture operations were undertaken in a most stirring manner. Communities were allotted different finishing tasks.

From the report¹²⁸ of the National Assembly of Egypt we read:

By the end of 1943, our hopes for the completion of the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds were renewed by the gracious contributions which continued to flow from the beloved Guardian. Although materials were difficult to procure, the work was carried on without cessation until the third floor was completed. The carpentry was entrusted to three committees in Cairo, Beni-Suef and Port Sa'id. The friends of Beni-Suef contributed the electrical installations. The friends of Port Sa'id contributed the plaster.

As for the dome, there seemed no prospect whatever of being able to construct it in time. Funds were lacking, materials were lacking and difficult to obtain; and the celebrations were swiftly approaching; only twenty days remained. But the irresistible power of Bahá'u'lláh made all things possible beyond our wildest expectations. The following cable dated April 21 was received from the beloved Guardian:

Wiring through Anglo-Palestine Bank five hundred pounds for (the) dome (of) Ḥaẓíra. Proceed immediately with construction.'

Upon receipt of that cable, materials were miraculously found and procured, work was carried on even by night by special permission – and the dome was completely finished just two hours before the programs were scheduled to commence!

A friend who was one of the youth of Cairo recalls:

I am urged to mention that the youth in the Cairo area were so involved in the efforts to complete the work in the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds. We would finish school every day and go to the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds and do all the sort of “labour” work that we were capable of. However, the youth did not look like labourers, and this attracted the attention of the neighbours. When they were told these were all from simple and middleclass families doing this work for the Bahá'í Faith, they were amazed and impressed. It was quite unusual within Egyptian society.

¹²⁸ The Baha'i World vol. x, p. 209.

The celebration was programmed for the 22nd and 23rd days of May 1944 and “*a large number of participants was expected and many non-Bahá'is expressed their desire to attend. According to the lists, no less than 500 seats were to be provided inside the building, and almost the same number outside in tents for refreshment and meals.*”¹²⁹

The beloved Guardian cabled a further “*... contribution for centenary celebration and banquets (on) my behalf for delegates (and) friends gathered (in) Házira (to) commemorate (that) historic occasion.*”¹³⁰

I clearly remember that great occasion. Young Bahá'is including myself were given the responsibility to meet the friends coming from centres outside Cairo upon their arrival at the Cairo central train station and conduct them safely to the home of the family in Cairo that will accommodate them. The Cairo families welcomed those from outside Cairo in their homes.

I remember our home, like so many other homes in Cairo, was simply full of friends most of whom we had met for the first time. Beds were given to the elderly and the others slept on sofas, chairs or mattresses on the ground. We were all euphoria and happiness.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Warning Declaration from the Azhar Supreme Council

In 1948, The Azhar Supreme Council composed of the 40 top Muslim Sunni Shaykhs issued a declaration warning the Muslims against the Faith. It was in the form of a printed booklet and contained the usual arguments against the Faith. In truth, they were not arguments. The booklet contained a series of false definitions for the Faith, baseless and in many cases contradicting.

The Ulumá explained in the booklet that the booklet was prepared rapidly in order to attract the attention of the Muslims against the Faith and that soon a “*more detailed and comprehensive declaration*” presently under preparation, will be issued.

The National Spiritual Assembly decided that an answer was necessary and confided the task of preparing it to a committee. A booklet was rapidly prepared refuting the accusations in the warning of the Azhar Supreme Council's declaration in a most respectable language and convincing argument. The “answer” concluded with the hope for the expected more detailed and comprehensive declaration of the Council to be realised. The Bahá'í answer was put in a booklet form, with the original warning of the Ulamá and was sent to each and every one of the 40 Ulumá of the Council.

The “*more detailed and comprehensive declaration*” has not come from the Azhar since.

Observing the Centenary of the Martyrdom of Báb¹³¹

Towards the end of February 1950, the mail to the National Assembly contained a copy of a letter of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States dated February 12, 1950 that says that the Guardian had approved their program for the Observance of the Centenary of the Martyrdom of The Báb on the 9th of July 1950 ...

¹²⁹ From the report published in The Bahá'í World vol. x, p. 212.

¹³⁰ Idem.

¹³¹ The information under this heading is gleaned from the report of the National Assembly.

This was the first knowledge that the Assembly of Egypt and Súdán had that the Bahá'í world was to Observe this Centenary. Communication with the Guardian was almost impossible because of the Palestine war that was going on.

The National Assembly decided to go ahead with the Observance of the Centenary on the 9th of July 1950 with two programs: the morning program for the Bahá'ís and the afternoon or evening program for the invited people.

The National Assembly asked Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to prepare a commemoration booklet for that important sacred occasion. This he prepared and it was reviewed and approved by the National Assembly. It was quickly printed in a presentable pamphlet of 87 pages A5 size that was ready for the Day of the ceremony. It contained an eloquent preamble, a section of proofs, history and principles. The chosen title of the pamphlet being “Ṣafḥat'ul Núr” – “صفحة النور”. To ensure readiness of the pamphlet in time, members of the Committee worked with the printers.

The report includes mention, with appreciation the efforts that have rendered the ceremony successful. *“Cannot be forgotten in this context the effort of Shawki 'Alí Riḍa in treating the furniture and wood in the building, rendering it brilliant and looking new ... the rapidity and efficiency of the work of Maḥmud Muṣṭafá Kamal in replacing the lighting in the Ḥazíra with modern fluorescent light and installing a sound system in the main hall of the Ḥazíra.”*¹³²

The Committee had prepared to invite certain personalities and had asked the well-known writer and philosopher Salama Mussa to give a lecture on the occasion and he suggested the subject of “Roots of World Crisis.” However, he cabled the Assembly before the date of the ceremony excusing himself for unforeseen reasons.

Hussein Ámin Bicar chanted the opening prayer with his melodious and inspiring voice. Then Muḥammad Muṣṭafá welcomed the visitors to the occasion, made a presentation of the life history of The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, painted a vocal picture of the condition of the world before the coming of The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and concluded that their manifestation was an inevitable necessity.

'Abdel-Fattaḥ Sabry then gave a talk presenting the Teachings and Principles and their conformity with the exigencies of the age. When 'Abdel-Fattaḥ Sabry had finished his talk, one of the visitors by the name of Shaykh Bashlawi, went up to the platform and Sa'id: “I am one of the Ulumá of Al Azhar, and I noted that 'Abdel-Fattaḥ Effendi Sabry Sa'id that the Bahá'ís do not interfere in politics, but how can we separate politics from religion? Religion does not approve colonization while we are here colonized and we have to struggle to chase the coloniser away. We are for peace but we should be practical. I suggest that we form a committee from those present here with the aim of stopping war.”

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá then spoke and thanked the Shaykh for his suggestion and explained that the light Bahá'u'lláh has spread in the world rendered the earth one country and the human world one family. We should believe in God and that belief should be all encompassing. God is merciful and just. How can the human jewel be cleaned of earthly elements that cover it? Humanity that sways away from the Divine Teachings must be punished. Peace is God's Message to humanity. Everyone has the possibility of accepting this Message. In our country we can serve the cause of peace by eliminating prejudice of all sort.

The comments of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá created an applause of clapping, which was gently stopped with the explanation that no clapping is allowed in the Hazirat'ul-Quds.

¹³² Translated from the report in Arabic.

The ceremony terminated around 1am, with the visitors' expressing their appreciation for the spirit of love and harmony that prevailed during the meeting. Local papers were very interested in the event and gave summaries of the program, pictures and the talks that were made. The papers that covered the event favourably were: Al-Assas, Al-Ahrám, Al-Yomiyya, Misr over three days, Le Progrès, Al-Balagh, Akher Saa. Only one insignificant paper called Menbar Al Sharq published an article of reproach to the papers that sympathised with the Bahá'ís.

Mrs. Amelia Collins in Cairo

The Guardian sent Mrs Amelia Collins to Cairo on a special visit. She arrived in April 1951. That was during the time when communication with the Guardian was very difficult. She inspired the youth, the writer being one at the time. It was a historic visit.

A Hazirat'ul-Quds in Tunis, Tunisia

Tunisia was one of the consolidation countries for which the Egyptian National Assembly was responsible. In accordance with the Plan of the Guardian, the Egyptian National Assembly was responsible for the establishment of a Regional Spiritual Assembly of Northwest Africa with its seat in Tunis during Riḍván of the year 1956.

An urgent matter the Guardian wanted finalised was the purchase of the Haziratu'l-Quds in Tunis. Rafii Rafsanjani, Persian pioneer and Knight of Baha'u'llah to Morocco International Zone¹³³ had offered to purchase a Haziratu'l-Quds for Tangiers. The Guardian counselled him to buy one for Tunis instead, destined to be the seat for the Regional Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa in Riḍván of 1956. The Local Assembly of Tunis located a suitable villa in one of the best quarters of Tunis. Rafii and his son Abbas visited Tunis in October 1954 and gave his approval for the purchase and all that remained for the conclusion of the goal was the approval of the Egyptian National Assembly responsible for the work in Tunis and eventually for the inauguration of the Regional Assembly there.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá had known Rafii on his return trip from the Spanish Sahara. Rafii decided to go to Egypt, meet with the Assembly and obtain their approval for the purchase of the Ḥazira in Tunis. Hand of the Cause Musa Banani asked Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to take special care of Rafii while the later was in Cairo. Everything went smoothly and the Haziratu'l-Quds of Tunis was purchased. The Guardian was happy – one more goal of the Ten Year Plan achieved.

A Ten Month Plan

From the papers of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá I was able to glean that the National Assembly of Egypt adopted a plan for the period of July 1955 to Riḍván 1956. Here is a summary of the objectives to be attained:

Interior, that is in Egypt, goals:

¹³³ Morocco International Zone is the term the Guardian used in the Ten Year Plan for Tangiers.

- Raise number of Local Assemblies to 25 through the increase of 13 new Assemblies.
- Raise number of centres to 72 from the present 24.
- Continue efforts to register the Local Assemblies, legalisation of Bahá'í Marriage Certificates, the establishment of a Bahá'í Publishing Trust, establishing a Bahá'í Court and finalising the acquisition of the Temple land.

Exterior goals:

- Establishing a 2nd local Assembly in Súdán
- Raising the number of centres from the present 4 to 8 in Súdán
- Reopening Spanish Sahara and Rio de Oro
- Opening British Somaliland
- Registration of Local Assemblies in Tunisia and in Ethiopia
- Acquisition of Ḥaẓiratu'l Quds in Tunis, Tunisia.
- Establishing a Bahá'í Endowment in Tunisia.
- Transforming centres to Local Assemblies in Dakar or Abidjan in French West Africa,
 - In Tetuan in Spanish Morocco,
 - In Sfax in Tunisia,
 - In Benghazi in Libya,
 - In Rabat in French Morocco,
 - Consolidate the Local Assembly of Brazzaville in French Equatorial Africa.

Let the Egyptian Bahá'ís know that they were not forgotten

Towards the end of October beginning of November 1956, the Suez Canal war started, known also by the Triple Aggression. Communication with the National Assembly from outside Egypt became difficult and in certain conditions impossible. Seven months after the aggression began, the young Bahá'í and Knight of Bahá'u'lláh to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) 'Ezzat'u'lláh Zahra'í was on pilgrimage in the Holy Land. One day, Shoghi Effendi told him that since the beginning of the Suez Canal conflict, he was unable to communicate with the Community in Egypt and asked him to go to Egypt after his pilgrimage in order to “*Let the Egyptian Bahá'ís know that they were not forgotten and to remind them of their pioneering goals.*” I asked 'Ezzat'u'lláh to send to me his memory of this moment and what ensued. Here is what he wrote:

I was in the presence of the Beloved Guardian in May 1957, just a few months before he passed away. For some reason, I was alone with him a few days. One day, Shoghi Effendi told me that since the Suez war he had been unable to communicate with the community of believers in Egypt. He asked me to go there after my pilgrimage. “Let the Egyptian Bahá'ís know that they were not forgotten and to remind them of their pioneering goals”. He wanted them to know of the progress being made in Africa and to encourage them to persevere despite their present difficulties. He also asked me to provide a report of my visit together with some statistics. I sent the report when I left Egypt.

With great administrative difficulties, I managed to get a new passport which did not show that I have been in Israel. I met the NSA of Egypt. They appointed someone to accompany me visiting friends in Alexandria, Suez. I think I was two weeks in Egypt. In Cairo Dr Al 'Azzawi was translating my presentation to a large group of Bahá'í friends.

Chapter Nine

The Years 1960 to 1970

Now for the year 1960

A Presidential Decree N° 263 of the year 1960 was announced. This decree disbanded the assemblies and confiscated all Bahá'í property in Egypt. The Regional Assembly of North-East Africa was consequently transferred from Cairo, Egypt, to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, and the Administration in Egypt stood still. All happened so quickly and suddenly. The friends were bewildered. Connection with the World Centre was at a standstill.

Ámin Battah, Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, who amongst his many merits had a prodigious memory and capacity to write had prepared memoirs for that period from which I will fill in my history for that decade. He explains here how the Presidential decree 263 of 1960 came to be developed.

In 1959, the Government Department for Employment and Statistics that is attached to the Presidency of the Egyptian Republic, issued a researcher's guide of the various work power sectors of society including the categorising of the services that exist state-wise socially, economically, culture-wise and religious. Included also was a section dealing with places of worship such as mosques, churches, Jewish temples and others such as the Bahá'ís for example.

The booklet was distributed during 1960/1961 to be a guide for researchers in the spurious categories of the population. That guide booklet showed clearly that the Bahá'í Faith and the Bahá'ís are there in Egypt and existing even though not recognised legally and has its followers and places of worship.

Through their legal counsel, Lawyer Sa'id Fishawi, the Bahá'ís tried to register once again the Local Spiritual Assembly of Cairo with the Ministry of Social Affairs. A researcher in legal matters made a study to prove that the request of the Bahá'ís had no legal base and the subject was sent to the Council of State for assessment. The Minister of Interior, 'Abdel-'Azeem Fahmy asked for a memo on the activity of the Bahá'ís while the tendency of the Government Departments concerned was to find a way to put the Bahá'ís in oblivion. One way was to pressure the Bahá'ís in their livelihood, but found such a conduct contrary to the Constitution.

The other or second solution was to disband the Bahá'í Assemblies and stop their activity. The fact that Al-Azhar¹³⁴ does not recognise the Bahá'í Faith and in view of a recent court ruling that refused recognition of the Bahá'í marriage of Muṣṭafá Kamel 'Abdallah, were enough reasons in favour of that solution.

A memorandum was prepared presenting the second solution to be applied in both Egypt and Syria, which formed the United Arab Republic at the time, and the project of Decree 263 of the year 1960 was set to disband all Bahá'í Assemblies and confiscate all property and funds belonging to these Assemblies in the two countries Egypt and Syria. Some officials commented that the Assemblies are a government

¹³⁴ Foremost Islamic Súnni Institution.

within the Government in view of the fact that the Assemblies solve all the problems of the Bahá'ís with tact and harmony and take care of their internally welfare.

The preparation of the project of the Decree took a few months to be ready. Neither the National Assembly nor the Assembly in Cairo nor any of the believers knew about what was being prepared against them.

On February 5, 1960 corresponding to Shaaban 28, 1379 of the Hegír, there was a meeting in the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds to commemorate the Martyrdom of the Báb. A representative from the Police Station of El-Wailly district came and ordered that any meeting or activity in the Ḥazíra without prior permission from the Police district was not allowed. The meeting was ended and all meetings and activity, thereafter, stopped.

Announcement of Decree 263 of 1960

Ámin Battah continues in his memoirs the situation of that fate laden Presidential Decree:

Anwar Nagmed-Din, a Bahá'í of Cairo who worked in the Ministry of Interior unintentionally got wind of the forthcoming announcement of the Decree 263 of 1960 disbanding the Assemblies and confiscating their belongings. He immediately advised the National Assembly. This early warning allowed the Assembly to save the sacred relics that were in the museum room under the dome of Ḥazíratu'l-Quds.

In July 1960, President Nasser signed the Decree following the announcement of a state of emergency state-wise but it was only published in the Official Gazette of the State in August 1960 when all had been prepared for simultaneous raiding of the Bahá'í centres across the country. The first raid took place at midnight while the old Bahá'í keeper of the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, Garabid Karmelian was asleep. As usual, a police force came over and harshly asked Garabid to tell them where the treasury, the treasures, the money...is? Garabid retorted, "If we had money, everybody, you included would have been Bahá'ís! This place is the place of God." One of the police tried to bring down the picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that was hanging in the hall, Garabid screamed at him, "What are you doing here? This man is similar to Muḥammad the Prophet of God!" He was told to leave and go away.

The operation of confiscating the Bahá'í property was organized and carried out under the direction of Major General Muḥammad Áḥmad El-Masry, a general director of one of the important departments of the Ministry of Interior.

The Ḥazíra was given to the Association for Memorizing the Qurán. The Ḥazíra of Alexandria was also confiscated. The other centres suffered confiscation of anything belonging or in the name of the Faith. The 17,000 m² plot of the Temple was confiscated and auctioned to a certain Mazhar 'Achour for some 6,000 LE as well as the donation of 4,000m² that was given by Sharúbím 'Ubayd and registered in the name of the National Assembly in the province of Beni Sweif.

Shaykh Maḥmúd Shaltút, the Shaykh of Al-Azhar, came in person for the handing over of the Ḥazíra in the name of the Qurán Association and was heard through the

loud speakers expressing his surprise saying, “Where did they get this expensive furniture from? Where from all this luxury?”

Throughout these difficult times, when police raids went to the local Assemblies which were located in the homes of friends of the locality, the Bahá'ís of Egypt throughout demonstrated a nobility of attitude that was exemplary. I remember some 15 or 16 years later I was visiting Muḥammad Yaqút whose home was the centre of the local Assembly. He had bought with his personal funds, 19 chairs to serve the meetings of the friends in his home. When the Police turned up to confiscate the goods of the Assembly, the 19 chairs were taken out of the house to be transported away. Muḥammad Yaqút asked the officer in charge if he could buy the 19 chairs back, because he felt greatly attached to these chairs in view of their spiritual history. The officer agreed and an estimated price was agreed upon and the chairs went back into the house to the joy of the family.

Gamal Ḥasan recalls another story:

Sobḥi Elias was the national treasurer at the time of the application of that Decree of President Nasser. In a voice recording he had made telling how he submitted the Assembly funds in his custody to the Committee of the Ministry of Interior assigned for the liquidation of the Assembly's property. When the Assembly knew of the forthcoming Decree beforehand, it asked the friends to stop contributing. This left the treasury without income. There were also some debts from the purchase of the Ḥazíra of Alexandria that the Assembly wanted covered as much as possible. By the time the Decree became applicable all that remained in the funds were LE 34 – Egyptian pounds.

“I was sick in bed at home in Alexandria,” Sobḥi Elias recorded, “and I received a telegram from the Committee of the Ministry of Interior requesting me to come to Cairo to submit the custody of the Assembly's treasury.” In spite of his sickness Sobḥi Elias went on the 15th of August 1960 to Cairo, but first to Attorney Moḥsen Enayat's office. Moḥsen accompanied Sobḥi to the Ḥazíra in ‘Abbassia where they met with the Government Commissioner Major General Muḥammad El-Masry who was sitting in an office in the ground floor of the Ḥazíra. They all then, went up to the upper floor where one officer with two others were busy looking into the minutes of the Assembly tearing out every sheet where funds was mentioned and putting them into a file with the intention, of course, of knowing how much exactly was the amount of money available.

When they saw Sobḥi and Moḥsen, those in the upper floor swarmed around them expecting to receive the amounts of money. Sobḥi sat down and sorted out an envelope containing LE 17 of sale of some of the library books, as well as 3 pieces of encrusted jewellery offered by Mrs. Esmat wife of deceased ‘Alí Saaded-Din that had not been disposed of by sale for the National Fund. Sobḥi told the Police and Committee members present that they will not find this jewellery in the minutes. He further explained that he brought them because Bahá'ís are straightforward.

One of the officers turned towards the Major General El-Masry and Sa'id, “When we went to catch the Muslim Brothers and search them and their quarters we found them hiding scorpions to sting us. Here the Bahá'ís give us jewellery!”

Sobhi was asked to return the next day. This time he was met by another officer who greeted Sobhi with fervour and lauded immensely the Teachings and deep appreciation of what he read in the Bahá'í books that were in the Ḥazíra, specially the Writings of Shoghi Effendi. Sobhi submitted the remainder of money to the Officer in charge and left.

The Activity of the Friends under the Decree 263 of 1960

Return to the memoirs of Ámin Battah:

The application of the Decree 263 of 1960 took the Bahá'ís in Egypt unaware: their Administration had suddenly closed down.

What next? Was in everyone's mind.

What becomes of their families? The friends questioned but had no answer.

The elder Bahá'ís in the Community immediately took upon their shoulders the responsibility of visiting the Bahá'ís whether families or individuals. The two Board Members, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi led a number of others namely Sobhi Elias/ Husayn Bicar/ Iskandar Hanna/ Tewfik Muḥammad 'Alí/ Badii Bushrui/ Dr Rowshan Yazdi/ Muḥammad Al-'Azzawi all these and probably others and took to the road, each with his own way, visiting the friends and encouraging them. As a result, the friends became re-assured. During the operation of raiding the Ḥazíra and the centres, the friends were told that the closing down of the Assemblies and the confiscation of their property is an action taken with all other similar organisations in the country and not against the individuals. This understanding was a further cause of assurance of the friends.

The return of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá¹³⁵ to Egypt had its great positive effect upon all the Bahá'ís in Egypt. All visitors and friends coming to Cairo from within or from outside the country who normally went upon arrival to the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, now directed their steps to the home of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá in the suburb of Zaytún. In that home, which was a good size villa with a big garden, the friends, young and old, were received with open arms, deep love, gentleness and courtesy – both by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and his wife, the kind and generous Farida who was instrumental in creating that atmosphere of welcome to their home that became a refuge to all.

It was normal for a believer visiting Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to meet other believers also visiting who came from towns from the various provinces of Egypt, Upper Egypt or the north. All met and saw each other in that home where, in spite of limited resources, were generously welcomed. With Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi – the two Board Members, the friends were continuously assured, specially so also with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Farida his wife who indeed was a sister or mother for everyone.

¹³⁵ In his capacity of Board member, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was in constant travelling since his appointment in 1954. During 1960, he was for some months in Súdán and in the early months of 1961 also.

Some friends saw in Muḥammad Muṣṭafá's unchecked openness towards the visiting of the friends in number and frequency to his home an unnecessary danger to the Community in general. The suggestion was that we had to calm down and wait for what destiny has prepared for the friends. Such considerations did not impress Mohammad Muṣṭafá, in fact certain Bahá'ís who came from abroad would go directly to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá's home. Friends like Mehdi Samandari or Gila Mikhail Bahta, chairman of the Regional Assembly of North-East Africa which included Egypt within its jurisdiction, would go from the Airport directly to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá's home and meet with him before going anywhere else.

The Year 1962

Acceptance of the situation

Return to our story of Egypt:

Before going back to the memoirs of Ámin Battah, it is worthwhile to mention the transfer of Sobhi Daniel from Alexandria to Cairo because of exigencies of his work and refer to his extraordinary efforts in the field of teaching the Cause. These efforts began in 1962 and bore their fruit during the following two years when a number of persons accepted the Faith.

The memoirs of Ámin continued:

During one of the days of Ayyam-í-Há of 1962, the friends went to the home of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and I counted how many they were. They were 26 men, women and young ones, and Mrs. Farida seemed to have been ready and hosted them all. It was as if the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds was transferred to that home and a festival was on. We were all happy and joyous and forgot for a moment the pain of the closing down of the Ḥazíra.

One of the most interesting initiatives was that of Bad'í Bushru'í of Alexandria who visited the friends in Cairo and elsewhere and told them stories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi that he experienced during the years he spent in the Holy Land. Such stories enflamed the friends and uplifted their sad hearts.

Sobhi Elias of Alexandria went around like a young man full of energy and zeal encouraging the friends with his experience of the early days of the Faith.

Such activity kept the Community alive with enthusiasm in the absence of the Administration.

A Tendentious Information: Bahá'ís in Kampala burnt the Qurán?

During the month of October 1962, Muḥammad Al-'Azzawi who was an official attached to the office of the Vice President of the Republic, was informed of a cable from Kampala, Uganda, stating that the Bahá'ís of Uganda have burnt the Qurán, an information that could cause terrible harm to both the Bahá'ís of Uganda and the Faith there. When Ámin Battah heard of this, he thought that the Hand of the Cause Músá Banání must know this. Any communication, letter or cable, is liable to be interrupted by the secret services and the sender would get in trouble. That bad were the conditions in Egypt.

Fortunately 'Abdalláh Ruḥi of 'Amman, Jordan, went to Ámin for a private service. Ámin explained to 'Abdalláh the case of the tendentious information and that it was important that Músá Banání be informed of it and since he will be going to 'Amman soon, he may inform his father 'Alí Ruḥi to cable Uganda the information. Ámin insisted on the importance of keeping this information secret until he arrives in 'Amman.

However, 'Abdalláh consulted with his uncle Ḥassan Ruḥi who advised him to keep quiet, went, and complained Ámin's action to Board Member Yazdi who found out the information was correct, but 'Abdalláh had already left. The request of Ámin was therefore,

dropped. Ámin was considered a young Bahá'í who could be over zealous at times. However, Ámin refused to give up and looked for another means. In his memoirs, he says:

We (meaning Al Al-'Azzawi and himself) became very worried. Time was an important element. Such an accusation could be harmful for the Bahá'ís in Egypt and Uganda, even worldwide.

The Hand of Providence intervened and the following day Amal, wife of Chowghi¹³⁶ Rouhani who are pioneers in Somalia at the time, with her two children arrived from 'Amman on her way to Somalia. Amal was a Jordanian national.

Ámin gave Amal a letter for the Hand Músá Banání which Amal would post from Aden during her stop-over. The letter would then be with Músá Banání within a couple of days.

Soon a telegram was received by Badi'i Bushrui from Músá Banání asking for immediate expedition of a Qurán. I sent one immediately and I understood that it was exhibited in the Temple library in Kampala.

Some twenty days later, a telegram arrived to the office of the Vice President saying that the information previously sent regarding the burning of the Qurán by the Bahá'ís was not true.

¹³⁶ That is how he liked to spell his name: Chowghi.

The Year 1963

Establishment of the Universal House of Justice

With the advent of Naw-Rúz of year 120BE corresponding to the year 1963, expectations were high among the friends in Egypt looking forward to the establishment of the Universal House of Justice. They usually celebrated Naw-Rúz with outings to the public gardens, but under the prevailing conditions they preferred to avoid outward manifestations.

Some of the Egyptian Bahá'ís wished to attend the Jubilee Celebrations in London, but were unable because of travel restrictions out of Egypt imposed at the time. I know that Ḥussein Bicar and Mrs. Bicar were able to attend, but the other Egyptians who attended were mostly those living outside Egypt. Ámin Battaḥ says that he tried to obtain the permission to travel but was not allowed.

On the 9th of Riḍván, however, The Yazdis invited a number of Bahá'ís for dinner, including Badi'i Bushrui, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, 'Abdelfattah Sabri and Ámin Battaḥ and many others. Ámin relates that at 8.30 pm on that day a cable came to 'Abdul-Raḥim Yazdi sent by Ḥassan Sabri announcing the establishment of the Universal House of Justice. This brought great happiness to the friends in that meeting and they decided to write to the Universal House of Justice declaring their joy and promising their loyalty.

Ámin further mentions that generally during that year there was a quiet activity by the friends. Visits by Gila Bahta, chairman of the Regional Assembly of North-East Africa which was then seated in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia brought great happiness to the friends as well as those of Blata Worko, Board Member, who worked with the Ethiopian Airlines.

The Year 1964

Teaching Activity

Gamal Hassan gave me some wonderful details of a surge in the teaching activity that took place in Cairo and spread into Upper Egypt due to the efforts of Sobhi Daniel who, although of Christian origin, was well versed in the proofs of the Qurán that foretold the advent of the Báb and of Bahá'u'lláh. His success began in Cairo. A few of his work colleagues accepted the Faith. Some of them were from Upper Egypt, and they taught the Faith there.

The Year 1965

The Authorities Take the Bahá'ís on

The year 1965 witnessed the beginning of violence and persecution of the Egyptian Bahá'ís by the Government. This comes as an addition to what the clergy have been doing to the Bahá'ís and continue to do. The Muslim clerics taught and continued to teach their followers, and that covers the greater part of the population, that every Muslim has the obligation to defend Islám against its enemies and among such dangerous enemies, are the Bahá'ís. The ordinary citizen believed in this and so did the government employees and officials who did not hesitate to use their official powers to render the life of the Bahá'ís difficult. Now, however, the Security Services have taken up the task of harassment of the Bahá'ís as though what the Bahá'ís withstand from the population is not sufficient. The addition of the Security Services harassment meant arrests from homes at midnight, casting in prison without warrant, torture, and delayed action by the court. This was an uneven struggle the Bahá'ís had to go through totally powerless and facing the onslaught of the people and the leaders. They would have been totally vanquished were it not for the protection of Bahá'u'lláh.

For the next twenty five years this was to be the lot of the Bahá'ís of Egypt in general, but those of Suháj, south of the country, had to face further ordeals culminating in a terrible crisis in the year 2001.

This sorrowfull saga started with a court case known under the name of the Zaytún Case, Zaytún being a Cairo suburb, blessed by a short residence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His visit to Egypt, and at the time of the "case", it was where Muḥammad Muṣṭafá had been living since the thirties.

In preparation for this fierce attack on the Bahá'ís of Egypt, certain Security Agencies planted some of its members as undercover agents into the Bahá'í Community, one of its officers even started courting a Bahá'í girl belonging to a family that had recently accepted the Faith. Noticing Šobḥi Daniel's success in teaching the Faith, these agents befriended him and faked interest in the Faith, participated in meetings and even spent a Naw-Rúz outing in a public garden with the Bahá'ís in 1965. The intruders were noted later in pictures taken of those who were picnicking then. One of them with typing capability, offered to help Šobḥi Daniel in preparing teaching materiel. These were later confiscated and used in the court hearings against the Bahá'ís.

Aziz Yazdi's visit

Early in 1965, the Universal House of Justice sent Aziz Yazdi to Egypt in order to discuss the possibility of the resumption of the Administration, now that the state of emergency which was declared in 1956 following the tripartite campaign against Egypt,¹³⁷ had ended in 1964. Aziz Yazdi was at the time a pioneer in Kenya as well as a Board Member for Africa. He is originally from Egypt but had pursued a life elsewhere, while his brothers and sister remained as residents in Egypt, in between Port Sa'id and Cairo.

¹³⁷ In 1956 British and French troops landed in Port Said with the intention of invading Egypt, while the Israelis simultaneously advanced across the Egyptian borders in the north of Sinai, eventually reaching the eastern banks of the Suez Canal thus formed a tripartite aggression.

Aziz Yazdi's visit was very welcome and the Bahá'ís were optimistically hoping in the resumption of the Administration after being denied that privilege for four years. A plan was set for consolidation and teaching and a committee of five members was appointed to act as an Executive Committee to take on some preliminary functions of the National Assembly and work with the two Board Members in Egypt, 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, to keep the Community united and active as much as wisdom permits...

A meeting of unprecedented importance since the dissolution of the Assemblies was held in 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi's home, and Gamal Ḥassan remembers that meeting vividly and gave the following recollections of it:

Šobḥi Daniel and some of the new Bahá'ís were present, together with three people who, it was later discovered, were security men. Present also, at this meeting were a number of the elder Bahá'ís whom I was delighted to see.

The meeting started with an address by Aziz Yazdi expressing his happiness to be in Egypt with all those friends and giving exciting news of the spread of the Faith in Africa. He did not speak of the plan for Egypt and the formation of an Executive Committee.

Spirits were high and it was almost midnight when the meeting ended on that exceptionally cold night. It reminded me of the joyous meetings we had in the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds. So many were there that 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi sat cross-legged on the carpeted floor.

Gamal Ḥassan further relates part of a recording Šobḥi Elias had made of his memoir:

Four years had elapsed since the disbanding of the Assemblies and sincerely I felt I was a dead person without spirit. Then Muḥammad Muṣṭafá came with the suggestion of forming a committee. When I asked for what aim, he answered: in order to be able, once the State of Emergency is terminated and the new Constitution is approved, to contact the responsible Authorities and ask them whether we are still under prohibition of the Bahá'í Faith or are we now able to return to our activity and live our lives.

The Committee was formed, and we had met about ten times in Cairo and in Alexandria until one day when Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was visiting me in Alexandria and was invited for lunch somewhere else, a telephone from Cairo asked for him to return immediately because 'Alí El-Kosheiri had been arrested as well as others...

Thus, a few months only had passed since the formation of the Committee that was to find means and ways to obtain through contact with the responsible Government Authorities, the possibility for the Bahá'ís to regain their freedom, when the first of a series of fabricated court cases surprised the Community and its Committee. This first case became known by the Zaytún Case of the year 1965.

The Zaytún Case of 1965

The following is an extract from Ámin Battah's memoir about this case:

Major Áḥmad Zaki Rassekh of the State Security Department,¹³⁸ came to know the young Najwa Tantawi, sister of two staunch Bahá'í women, Somaya (wife of Fethi Hindawi) and Nawal Tantawi (wife of Shawki Mari'í), in the planned undercover operation, as mentioned above, with the objective of getting to infiltrate the Bahá'í community, especially the families. He went as far as to present her with an engagement piece of jewellery. Without entertaining any doubts, Najwa who was in contact with her sisters all the time and thus with the Bahá'ís, became Áḥmad's link with the community. Áḥmad was head of what is known as the Department for Organised Communities and the Bahá'ís were considered as such, an organised community. The plan was to arrest the Bahá'ís at 4 o'clock early morning of June 5, 1965.

The memo for the operation of June 5, 1965 stated that Major Áḥmad Zaki Rassekh had asked permission to arrest a number of Bahá'ís and search their homes under an allegation that states:

“Investigations and surveillance have indicated that some Bahá'ís in the United Arab Republic (name of Egypt at the time) have persisted lately in reviving their efforts to resume the activity of the Assemblies, hold meetings amongst believers in the Bahá'í Faith and invite new individuals to join them. They also have publications and newsletters and special printers for this activity in their homes, which is contrary to the law 163 of the year 1960 concerning the Bahá'í Assemblies and centres, banning any activity that was being undertaken by these Assemblies and centres.”

Najwa was in the habit of going to see her fiancé at the National Security Department and overheard once the discussions over the case of the Bahá'ís. But did not speak about it. Very few believers heard of this until after the first arrests took place when Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was arrested. The operation began by raiding the home of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, during his absence, early June 5, 1965. The search was very thorough and meticulous. Even the refrigerator and washing machine were scrupulously searched. No corner was left unsearched, while every paper, book or magazine was carried away. A message from the Universal House of Justice that was by chance lying very obvious on the dining table was left untouched – Bahá'u'lláh opens the eyes as well as blinds them when He wishes!

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was in Alexandria, so that there was only my mother and my youngest brother Momtaz¹³⁹ at home when the raiders arrived. Two young Bahá'ís were also there overnight: Abbas Šobḥi Elias and Boshra Ibrahim Stephanos. They were arrested and carried away. Police officers were left in front of the house and when Muḥammad Muṣṭafá arrived from Alexandria in the morning, he was not allowed into his home, but was taken away to where those arrested were retained and being interrogated.

Šobḥi Daniel was also arrested together with his daughter Somaya and son Sameer. It was Major Áḥmad Rassekh himself who arrested Šobḥi Daniel and his daughter and son. Somaya, around 21 years old at the time, was to become a sort of common factor in the following arrests and imprisonments of the Bahá'ís.

More arrests continued to be undertaken and many new Bahá'ís were among them.

One day after, Najwa Tantawi informed Ámin that she saw a list of names on her fiancé's desk including those of Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi, Ámin Battah, Al-Sayed Al-'Azzawi and others, Ámin saw that the situation is becoming very bad and that the House must be informed. As he was thinking about this he met an old friend, Tewfik Ḥassan Ḥaqaq, originally from Haifa

¹³⁸ The dreaded “Mukhabarat”.

¹³⁹ His physical condition saved him from being arrested.

and who had just heard of what was happening to the Bahá'ís. He asked if he could help, as he has the possibility of communicating with outside the country. A letter was immediately prepared for Ḥaqaq to send to the Bahá'í Centre in London. Nabíl Muṣṭafá who lived in London at the time, recalls having received a letter. It was sent from the Heathrow airport and was signed by Al-'Azzawí. The letter described briefly the arrests and the difficulties and asked him to contact the World Centre. Nabíl immediately took the letter to Betty Reed, secretary of the NSA of the UK at the time, and she promised to forward it to the World Centre.

The second wave of arrests included Feridoun Zein, Kamal Noseir, Isma'íl 'Abdel-Khaliq, Ḥasan Muḥammad Ḥasan, and others whom 'Ámin could not remember.¹⁴⁰ From Alexandria there was Badi'i Bushru'í, Šobḥi Elias, Fouad Tewfik, and from Port Sa'id, 'Abbas Músá, Taleb Kamal, and from Ismá'ílíyyih, Khalil 'Ayyád, 'Abdel-Aziz Shalabi, and from Suez, 'Alí Isma'íl, Fethi Tadros and others... All these and others met at the Al-Qal'á prison where each of the prisoners was asked to write down his title in the organization and whether he is Bahá'í...? The fact that there is no such thing as an organisation the friends belonged to was explained to the officer in charge.

Then Feridoun Zein was released, and so was Kamal Noşeir and Shawki Mari'í and his wife Nawal Tantawi as well as Somaya Tantawi known by the name of Nany. Nany refused to leave saying: "We came here together we shall leave together..." Nevertheless, she was convinced to leave.

The situation of Somaya Daniel

There was no reason to arrest Somaya. She had not participated in any activity except serving the friends and seekers when they came to their home. Yet, it was a heaven sent event to empower her, she thought later. The incident told here was the beginning. Further along this narrative or what remains of it, other incidents will show how she was blessed with other difficult experiences. Somaya's case is probably not the only one, for I do not have details of the experience of other young girls of her age who were carried away in the dragnet of arrests such as the two daughters of Kosheiri for example.

The sad story of Al-Sayed Ḥasan,¹⁴¹ his baby daughter and his wife

Al-Sayed Ḥasan was one of the believers who accepted the Faith during, what I would call, the teaching campaign of Šobḥi Daniel. He comes from the village of Needah near Suháj in Upper Egypt. He accepted the Faith in 1964 and shared the Message with his young wife who quickly embraced it.

In 1965, Ḥasan, his wife and daughter of six months were among those arrested and put in prison in the Zaytún Case. During the investigation, Al-Sayed Ḥasan was asked to write a report on how he became Bahá'í. Fearlessly he wrote "Álláh-u-Abhá" in broad script at the top of the report and when searched and a small prayer book was taken from his pocket as evidence and questioned about it he unflinchingly answered that the prayer was engraved on his heart and could not be effaced.

¹⁴⁰ 'Ámin wrote his memoir a bit short of 30 years after the recorded events had taken place.

¹⁴¹ The Bahá'í World Vol XIV p. 346. This story is taken from the Baha'i World "In Memoriam" of Al-Sayed Ḥasan with some additions from memoir of friends.

The interrogation continued over four days, during which Hasan's child fell sick and the necessary medical attention was denied. Sleeping on the floor without mattress or cover made the condition of the child worse. The attempts of the mother to beg the kindness of the chief officer to assist her ailing child were met with brutal unkindness. On the fourth day the wife and baby were released. In that night the child died.

When Al-Sayed was released on bail one day later, he found his home desolate of both his wife and child as well as all the furniture and belongings. His wife's brother, a cousin of Hasan, carried everything away to their village. Hasan followed his wife to the village where he found that she had been retained by the family and he was denied access to see her.

His family and villagers alike met Hasan with terrible brutality. In an effort to get him recant his faith, the villagers set upon him beating and torturing him. He was spat upon, scoffed at, wounded in the head with a knife, throttled by his family members until he almost died and when he was able to breathe again he would say as loud as he was able to "Yá Bahá'u'lláh", and at other times "Yá Bahá'u'lláh deliver me from these people".

Not a single word of complaint was uttered by Hasan and he endured the indignity and excruciating pain with the divinely intoxicating tranquillity that characterises the martyr who esteems suffering in the path of Bahá'u'lláh; a demonstration of fidelity. Joyfully, triumphantly, his voice rang out above the noise of the crowd "Yá Bahá-u-l Abhá!"

Failing in their attempt to force Hasan to recant his faith, the authorities contrived a forced divorce between the couple, and the wife was retained in the village.

Hasan returned to the desolating loneliness life in Cairo. Grieved by the death of his child, deprived of the solace of his wife's companionship, ejected by his kin and townspeople, fired from his work and living in a danger-fraught situation in which the Bahá'is were forbidden to associate with each other, the 28 year old Hasan surrendered to the irresistible impulse to seek release of his spirit into the next world, and died by his own hand on July 16, 1965.

Hasan's close friend who accepted the Faith at the same time, saw him a couple of hours before his death. He could see that he was mentally troubled and persuaded him to stay with him for a while. Hasan refused. That friend who lived not far away from Hasan's home, transferred his residence to a far off suburb of Cairo further away from the home where his dear friend died.

Despite the blighting difficulties that beset her, his wife remained firm and steadfast, accepting persecution and loss of her husband and child with deep spiritual content. She continues to live at her home village, virtually a semi-prisoner and refusing all offers of remarriage.

The writer remembers that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá narrated more than once, the memory of Al-Sayed Hasan with heart-breaking sadness.

The Zaytún Case of 1965 – contd.

Drawing further on Ámin Battah's memoir and what the imprisoned friends endured, the following is noted:

We stayed three hours in the General Security building after which we were transferred to the 'Abdin Police building in a room where pickpockets and those with previous convictions are retained. The occupants of that room were surprised to see us being retained with them and some left their seats for us to sit on while they squatted on the floor. A kind gesture from people who are considered of no value.

The next morning we were presented to the Investigating Judge who ordered that we should be taken to the Qora Medan prison. On our way to the prison we stopped with our guards at the Shalaby restaurant for “foul and ta’imia” (Egyptian beans and falafel) sandwiches. While these were being prepared, a Qurán recital was on the radio and we listened to verses 173 and 174 of the Surat of ‘Omrán reading:

Men said to them, “a great army is gathering against you” and frightened them. But it only increased their faith and they said: “For us God sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs.” And they returned with grace and bounty from God; no harm ever touched them. For they followed the good pleasure of God; and God is the Lord of bounties untouched.

It was as though God sent us a Message that we should remain steadfast and we all felt reassured and serene in spirit, even joyful.

However, the condition of the arrested prisoners was not good at all. The list of charges, though incoherent and certainly a big lie, was very dangerous. The accusations formulated by the Investigation were:

1. Conspiracy against the State
2. Contact with Israel and West Germany
3. Instigating corruption and plotting divisiveness between the armed forces and the public
4. Falsification of religions
5. Encouraging debauchery and immorality
6. Reinforcing ties with Israel
7. Fomenting discord among the public and in the Middle East thus reinforcing the cause of Israeli among the Arab Nation.

In his memoir, Ámin writes, And Divine Bounty intervened, for the case of the imprisoned believers was transferred to the State Security Prosecutor for investigation and was taken up by First Deputy Prosecutor Hussein Labib. Prosecutor Labib is of renowned integrity. He investigated with each of the prisoners with precision and neutrality. His report said that the Supreme State Security Prosecution took knowledge of , and read, all the documents and books that were seized under the proceedings of the case of the Bahá’ís and concluded:

The main basics of this religion as is evident from the Bahá’í books are that the Bahá’í Faith recognises the Oneness of God and all His Prophets, that the Laws of the one religion may be applicable to an era but not to another, that Muḥammad – Peace be upon Him, is not the last Messenger, for God will send his Messengers whenever there is need for a new religious law.

The report concludes:

The Bahá’í Faith considers the Báb as the manifestation of the expected Mahdi and Bahá’u’lláh as that of the Christ. The Bahá’í books, further present proofs from the Holy Books – The Torah, the Bible and the Qurán as further confirmation of what the Faith teaches. These books further demonstrate that Bahá’u’lláh came to unite the world in one Faith since all religions have the same basic principles, that there should be a universal language, an International Court of Justice and a world parliament. That Bahá’u’lláh has come to establish equality between men and women and eliminate prejudice; encourage the followers to work and requires them

to be obedient to the government of the country where they reside. He forbade them to carry arms without permission of the rulers as well as any action on their part that may disturb public order. It advocates education and especially for girls.

The prosecutor's report further explained the function of the Assemblies, the committees and the various activities of the Administration. It concluded that the accusation that the Bahá'ís have relations with other countries is unfounded and finally the case may be no more than a contravention to the Decree 163 of the year 1960 banning the activity of the Assemblies in Egypt and Syria.

Amin cites the verse of Quran, Sura viii verse 30 that reads:

And they were devising and God was devising and God is the best of devisers¹⁴²

Further events in the “Prison Qora Medan”, situated within the Cairo Citadel

While the investigation was proceeding, the friends were taken from the prison to the court twice, and each time the court ruling was that the prisoners should remain in custody until the investigation is completed.

Naturally, the friends were expecting the worse to happen. This was the first time they are subjected to a group ordeal of that sort. Feridoun Zein went to a school colleague of his who became a successful lawyer, Áḥmad Talaat, who enthusiastically consented to defend the prisoners. He knew that defending the Bahá'ís could affect his reputation with some clients, but he still accepted and visited the friends in prison and encouraged them. A highly reputable lawyer by the name of Istéphan Bassili was not enthusiastic and actually refrained from sustaining his help to the Bahá'ís.

During the transfers of the Bahá'ís from the prison to and from the court they were chained each two together and were under armed escort. The prison system had separate rooms provided against payments for those who wished to be relieved of being with bigger crowds in large communal halls

This allowed the friends to take rooms with two or three together and Ámin boasts about his luck in occupying a room with three vertically laid beds in the company of Muḥammad Al-Azzawi and Badi'i Bushrui both very interesting companions specially Badi'i Bushrui with his experience of years in Haifa with the Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The prison regulations allowed the prisoners to receive food and other commodities like medicine and toiletries delivered to them from outside. So the families arranged to bring lunches to their loved ones in prison every day while breakfast and evening could be purchased from the prison canteen. A prison library provided reading and borrowing of books.

“While in prison some friends blamed Muḥammad Muṣṭafá for having been too frank during the investigation and interrogation by the prosecutor”, says Ámin. “They blamed him in an exaggerated manner. To this, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá answered that he had said the truth and that which his conscience dictated. The prosecutor had all the papers available to him and in the end forming the committee is not wrong, there is nothing wrong in what we have done!”

¹⁴² Qurán 3, 54 - Arthur John Arberry translation.

In fact, confirms Ámin, the wise frankness of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the members of the Committee convinced the prosecutor that the members of the Committee as well as the friends say the same thing and what they say is the truth. This made the prosecutor's report so correct and in favour of the Bahá'ís.

The court

After 36 days in the Citadel prison under investigation, the defendants were brought to court dealing with State Security cases. The lawyers included Áḥmad Talaat and Labib Mu'awwad as the main defence team, Al-Sayed Salim on behalf of the family of Al- Azzawi and Mrs. Mufeeda 'Abdel-Raḥman on behalf of the female defendants.

The pleading of all the lawyers refuted the outrageous accusations presented to the court. Mufeeda, who was invited and attended the 1953 Centenary in the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds was very explicit saying that she knows the Bahá'ís and that she visited the Bahá'í Centre in 'Abbasia.

Finally, the court ruled the release of the defendants against LE20 bail for each, except for 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi, who was taken from the court directly to the airport and was deported forthwith. An order had been issued to sequester his residence and that of the members of his family as well as putting all his property under guard. Dear 'Abdel-Raḥim went to Beirut in Lebanon, and then flew to London, where he was attended to by Dr Nabíl and Laila Mustapha for a few days, prior to flying out to Montreal in Canada. Later his family followed, again through London. A terrible calamity for the Yazdi family and a great loss for the Community.

With the friends freed, there was a feeling that this liberty may be only temporary. The case which was under consideration by the State Security had now been transferred to the civil court of Zaytún.

Ámin explained that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá asked the friends to remain calm and ensconce themselves until the storm passes away. The Committee continued to meet sporadically through individual or two member visits to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá.

Kamal Noseir, one of the defendants was able to obtain copies of the reports that brought the friends to the Security investigation and those that reduced the level of importance of the case to the civil level. These documents enlightened the friends to a lot of information but their knowledge of the information did not change their precarious condition. One thing was clear now to the government that there is absolutely no relation of the Bahá'ís with politics, Zionism or the State of Israel.

Gila Bahta visiting Cairo and Alexandria

While the friends were being released from the Cairo Citadel prison, Gila Bahta of Ethiopia came to Cairo to visit the friends. Being a lawyer himself and President of the Bar in Ethiopia as well as Chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of North-East Africa that includes Egypt, his visit was important both to the prestige of the Faith in Egypt as well as to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the friends in general. Mrs. Gila is Ne'imat, daughter of Maḥmúd Núshúgátí of Port Sa'id, and thus his visits to Egypt are considered normal family visits.

This time, however, he decided to take a step of importance. Ámin says he accompanied Gila to the Presidential Palace of Qubba where Gila recorded his visit in the Protocol register, presenting his greetings to the President Gamal 'Abdel-Nasser in his capacity as

Chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of North-East Africa and President of the Bar in Ethiopia.

Gila's name and titles appeared the following day in the Protocol Records published in the newspapers including the prestigious Al-Ahrám daily. In subsequent visits of Gila to the Palace his name only was published in the papers, but not his titles.

Gila decided to visit the Department for Organised Communities and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Ámin Battah accompanied him. Gila was effective in presenting the Faith and its aims to the Head of the Department and there was a useful exchange of views between them. My knowledge of Gila is that he gets to his target with the personality and ability of a capable lawyer.

Gila's visit was also useful in Alexandria as Šobḥi Elias recorded in his memoir:

When I returned to my home in Alexandria after being released from the Citadel prison, I found Gila Bahta with my brother Sabri (Elias)¹⁴³ who lives on the ground level apartment of the same building where I live. There we met and Gila spent the night with us in my apartment. I said to Gila that I want to inform the Security authorities of Alexandria of his visit. Gila being an important person and brought to our home with the Ethiopian Ambassador's car could not have gone unnoticed. I phoned the General Security Department and I was connected to the head of the department 'Abdel-Aziz El-Šawabi. I explained that I have an important visitor with me and I want to report this. His answer was:

- ✓ Have we ordered you to report on any visitor who comes to you?
- ✓ No, but this visitor is very important. He is the chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of North-East Africa that had its seat in Cairo but was transferred to Addis Ababa. He is an important lawyer and the President of the Bar of Ethiopia. I cannot possibly not tell you about him.
- ✓ Does he hear you as you speak with me?
- ✓ Yes!
- ✓ Does he speak Arabic?
- ✓ Yes he does, in fact he graduated in Gordon College of Khartoum.
- ✓ O Hell!
- ✓ Hell or no hell, would you mind if I brought him to see you tomorrow?

He accepted and we went the next day to see him. He welcomed us most kindly, in fact his expression was almost tearful as he regretted the manner with which the Baha'is were treated explaining that the security apparatus is faced with a situation where it can have confidence in no one. The meeting concluded on an agreeable note.

In the Zaytún Court

In November 1965, some 4 months after the release of the wrongly accused friends from the Cairo Citadel prison following the transfer of their case to the civil courts, the following Bahá'ís were called to the Zaytún Court:

From Cairo

From Giza

¹⁴³ Sabri Elias is the spiritual father of Gila.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Súlaymán | 25. Hamed Maḥmúd Salama |
| 2. ‘Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi | 26. Samir Şobḥi Daniel |
| 3. Muḥammad Al-Azzawi | <u>From Alexandria</u> |
| 4. Ámin Battah | 27. Şobḥi Elias |
| 5. ‘Abdel-Rashid ‘Othman | 28. Fouad Tewfik |
| 6. Şobḥi Daniel | 29. Badi’i Bushrui |
| 7. Zaher ‘Alí Kosheiri | <u>From Tanta</u> |
| 8. Ḥasan El-Saied (the martyr) | 30. Sayed Fahmi Mustafa |
| 9. Isma’íl ‘Issa | 31. Moḥyid-Din Sayed Fahmi |
| 10. Fethi Hindawi | <u>From Wad El Jadid</u> |
| 11. ‘Abdallah Ibrahim ‘Alí | 32. Shawki Marei |
| 12. Feridoun Zein | 33. Miss Nawal Tantawi |
| 13. Kamal Noşeir | <u>From Port Sa’id</u> |
| 14. Fawzi Mari’i | 34. Abbas Musa |
| 15. ‘Alí Kosheiri | 35. Taleb Kamal |
| 16. Abbas Elias | 36. Dr Rowshan Yazdi |
| 17. Boshra Stephanos | <u>From Ismailia</u> |
| 18. Miss Somaya Daniel | 37. ‘Abdel-Aziz Shalabi |
| 19. Safwat ‘Alí Kosheiri | 38. Khalil ‘Ayyád |
| 20. Miss Nawal ‘Alí Kosheiri | <u>From Suez</u> |
| 21. Tewfik Muḥammad ‘Alí | 39. ‘Alí Ismail |
| 22. Ḥasan Muḥammad Ḥasan | 40. Fethi Tedros |
| 23. Moḥyid-Din Mari’i | 41. Miss Mufida ‘Afifi (One night |
| 24. Abdallah Ruḥi | in prison and was discharged) |

The court session opened with the Bahá’í defendants present and five lawyers for defence, one of whom was the President of the Bar of Egypt, Maḥmúd Shorbagui. The other four were Talaat ‘Abdel-Azeem, Labib Mu’awwaḍ, Dr Maḥmúd Fahmi and Ḥabib Lawindi

The hall, however, was full with the Bahá’í family and non-family members, to the extent that many were standing.

The pleading of the lawyers was considered highly successful. Finally, the court decided to postpone the session. Suddenly the hall became empty, to the surprise of the Judges and justice panel.

Şobḥi Elias points out in his memoir that the whole Zaytún case was a unique occasion for the Bahá’ís to meet and see each other whether in the Citadel prison or at the court sessions or outside the court. “We gained much from this case because the lawyers, the judges and court employees, the members of the police and neighbours and others have come to know the Bahá’í Faith and the Bahá’ís. True we lost a staunch member and a baby daughter, spent 36 days in prison, and made payments to the lawyers. All this was worth the gains obtained for the fairname of the Faith,” he writes.

The primary Judgement in the Zaytún Case

It was only in June 1968 that I (the writer) received news of the decision of the Zaytún primary instance court (equivalent to “Magistrates Court”) regarding case “N° 4086 of the year 1965.” In a letter dated 13th June 1968, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá advised:

The Judgement of the court was as follows:

- 1) Muḥammad Muṣṭafā: 1 year prison w/labour and LE 50 bail to suspend prison.
- 2) Muḥammad Al-'Azzawi, Ámin Battah, Şobḥi Elias, Fouad Tewfik, Şobḥi Daniel:
6 months prison w/labour and LE 20 bail to suspend prison
- 3) Sayed Fahmi Salah, 'Abdel-Rasheed Nassar, 'Abdel-Aziz Shalaby, Khalil Ayyad,
Alí Ismail, Fethi Tadros, Abbas Musa and Taleb Kamal: LE 50, fine.
- 4) Ḥamid Salama, Ismail Issa, Fethi Hindawi, 'Abdallah Ibraḥim 'Alí, Kamal Noseir,
Moḥyid-Din Al-Sayed Fahmi and Rowshan Yazdi: LE 20, fine.
- 6) All the others Baha'is were discharged innocent of the charges against them.

It will be noted that the name of 'Abdel-Rahim Yazdi was dropped out. He had been deported.

The friends lodged an appeal against the Zaytún case and the appeal was registered under ref 1063-C-East-1966 Misdemeanours and Irregularities. The hope was that the appeal will go through quickly allowing them to reconsider how to contact the Authorities to regain their liberty and their Assemblies. All the friends were sorry for what happened to the beloved 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi and family and lamented the tragedy of Ḥasan Al-Sayed and his daughter, while praying for Ḥasan's wife.

The imprisonment and what it entailed in absence from work for some of the friends who were in prison was the cause of some difficulties. These were dealt with tactfully and with perseverance.

The Year 1966

Ámin mentions in his memoir:

Now that the primary court Judgement of the 1965 Zaytún case has been delivered and the case was reduced from that of state security to that of a simple misdemeanour to be dealt with in civil courts, those in charge, who had great hopes of climbing the ladder of fame and promotion on the shoulders of the Bahá'ís, and have found their hopes confounded, have not accepted that outcome. They plotted what they expected to be "le coup de grace" (final solution) for the Bahá'í community through defamation and allegations of treason and waywardness for public opinion to note.

Yet the year 1966 ended with the Bahá'ís in Egypt carefully seeing each other on a family level. They were waiting, anticipating and praying.

The Year 1967

The beginning of the year 1967 gave no indication of the hard time the friends were to suffer during the year:

- 1- A new fabricated court case named The Waily Case – the second case with State Security Services, was mounted. (The first being the early stages of what we called above the Zaytún Case.)
- 2- Some 25 Bahá'ís were incarcerated in a detention Camp.

From the memoir of Ámin Battah and the input of Gamal Hasan the situation presents as follows:

The first 6 months of the year 1967 were calm and showed no signs of the forthcoming storm. The Executive Committee that had emerged following the visit of Aziz Yazdi to Cairo in 1964, continued to meet and prepared a memo that included a request for fair treatment of the Bahá'ís. The memo presented the Faith and its Teachings, stressing the attachment of the Bahá'ís to the principle of loyalty to government and abstention from all forms of political involvement, respect of and belief in all the previous religions and other principles. There was a hope that a quiet communication with the National Security Department could help re-arrange the relations with the Bahá'ís.

No one had any idea of the earnest plans that were being prepared against the Bahá'ís.

As a bad omen towards the persecution of the Bahá'ís, war unexpectedly broke out that was known by its duration, the 6-Day war between Egypt and Israel, an event that started on the 5th of June 1967. This event gave those in pursuit of the Bahá'ís this time a freehand to act with impunity.

The two pursuits, 1- and 2- above, took place at the same time and were partially interconnected.

The Ábu-Zaabal Detention Camp

Major Mansúr Helmi Áhmad recently appointed to the Department for Organised Communities of the General Security Services decided that he had to justify the spending of secret funds for the act of close surveillance of the Bahá'ís. This fact was confirmed to Gamal Hasan by more than one source, one of which was Al-Sayed Al-'Azzawi himself.

While he was preparing the second round of arrests under a new National Security case that became known as the Waily Case, the 6-Day war broke out.

With the start of the 6-Day war, Mansúr saw in it an unexpected opportunity and quickly and haphazardly formed a list of Bahá'ís from records he had in his administration and added three of the five members of the Executive Committee: Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Ámin Battah and Šobḥi Elias plus Šobḥi Danial and others. The proof that his list was without proper planning is that it included a person from the South of Egypt whose name appeared in the minutes when he asked to be registered thinking the “Spiritual” Assembly is a “Spiritual Media” group.

Ámin records how the Detention camp operation began:

That officer, Mansúr, issued the order of arrest on the 8th of June 1967. The date of the order was written 08/ 06/ 1967 where in Hindi figures the “0” becomes a point “.”. On the

8th the first arrests of the Bahá'ís were operated and a sudden presidential amnesty was published whereby all arrests and incarcerations in the detention camps before the 10th of June were to be freed. That is how Al-'Azzawi who was retained in the Waily prison awaiting transfer to Ábu-Zaabal was released before Mansúr had given the order not to release the Baha'ís. Mansúr, however, immediately transformed the dot of “·8” to “18”, an easy operation using the same pen of the written order and gave personal orders not to release the Bahá'ís already in the detention camp while he proceeded with the arrests of those listed in the Waily case.

Ḥasan Ismail was brought over to the detention camp from Port Sa'id where he lived. He had the British Nationality from his father who had served many years in the British Diplomatic Mission in Saudi Arabia. Before the concentration camp authority realised he has the British Nationality he suffered the severe humiliating treatment of all newcomers to the detention camp. Now that he had to set free because of his nationality, the detention camp officers had to make sure he will not report his suffering and cause a diplomatic crisis. He was subjected to a most disturbing oral humiliation and warned not to mention anything about this detention camp and his experience in it.

‘Alí Ismail, a Bahá'í of Suez was brought over by train and detained in the concentration camp with Ḥasan Ismail. There was no relation between the two except that they happened to have the same family name. ‘Alí was released with Ḥasan but not before a night and following morning of terrible suffering. A friend who met ‘Alí by chance at the Cairo to Suez railway station after he left the camp, felt really sorry for him as he seemed both physically and psychologically harmed.

Stories of arrests and transfers to the detention camp

Ṣobḥi Elias tells us:

Khalil ‘Ayyád and I were arrested on the 8th of June, taken from our homes and put up for the night in a small room in the police station of Camp Caesar (a suburb of Alexandria) that did not allow any possibility for sleep. Fortunately, the officer in charge was kind. He brought us food and allowed us to use the toilet. The next day we were taken in chains to the transit prison near the Alexandria to Cairo railway station. The vehicle transporting us stopped and we found a large number of people under arrest. We were tied to a long chain with a policeman at each end and taken on foot like “fish hanging from a long net”. The country was seething with discontent, badly hurt by the military defeat,¹⁴⁴ and the enraged people crowded around us screaming at us: criminals, sons of dogs... spitting on us threatening to beat us saying “leave these criminals to us, we shall kill them...”.

Under these terrible conditions we arrived after an arduous journey to the railway station and were put in a third class carriage. Carpenters were called in to block the entry doors of the carriage. The guard inside the carriage was a Christian corporal, abnormally proud to lead “spies” to an unknown destination and every time the train stopped at a station, he would inform the curious onlookers on the platform that we are spies, which excited them to spit on us and insult us. Finally, we arrived at Cairo station. There were air raids and lights were off. A gloom prevailed. People asked

¹⁴⁴ The 6-day war was a sounding defeat of the Egyptian armed forces by a comparatively much younger and smaller Israeli forces.

the officers and soldiers who guarded us to give way and allow them to shoot us all so that there will be no need to take us anywhere. However, the commanding officer ordered them to keep away, put the soldiers around us to protect us as we were taken to the custody room of the station. There we waited for the vehicles that took us to Ábu-Zaabal detention camp.

Ámin Battaḥ recounts:

The Bahá'ís of Cairo were retained in the Zaytún police station. We were four: Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Şobḥi Daniel, Zaher Kosheiri and Ámin Battaḥ. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was suffering from an exceptionally high temperature while we were in a room without even a seat. We resorted to dissolving aspirin tablets in water and pouring it little by little on his brow and waiting for it to evaporate. For four hours, we continued this treatment until the temperature went down. In the meantime, we heard the noise of demonstrations outside in a frenzied request for Gamal 'Abdel-Nasser¹⁴⁵ to withdraw the resignation of his position as president of Egypt. .

At around noon of the following day, we were driven to Ábu-Zaabal detention camp. We were very tired and exhausted. As soon as we arrived, every two persons tied together, insults and humiliation were levelled at us again. An officer came up to me (that is to Ámin) and slapped me heavily on my face and hit me on the back of my neck. There was no apparent reason for this *special* reception!

We were then called for each to shout his name, age and employment. And when they found that I was a director of a department in the government, a torrent of insults and swearing broke out and I was beaten and punched all over by a couple of guards – again a *special* treatment.

We were then taken to the open ground with all the flies and insects swarming, and were ordered to kneel on the ground and lay our foreheads to the ground. I was next to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá in the line. He whispered: “Never mind, my son, all this is in the path of Bahá'u'lláh.” We remained in this position for at least an hour.

Then we were conducted to the bastinado where the beatings included beatings on our backs. Fortunately the soldier responsible for this operation turned out to be rather merciful, may God recompense him with plenty of bounty. He said in a quiet voice, “Forgive me, but you will have to scream and cry out loudly” while he beat us lightly. Then he said, “A few strong strokes are necessary in order that blood be seen, otherwise I will be punished.”

We remained in much similar treatment for the first 3 to 4 weeks of detention.

We were taken to hall N° 18 on the third floor, some 6 x 12 metres size with a bathroom. We were locked there, but on our way we saw 'Alí Ismail followed by Ḥasan Ismail leave the detention camp.

The Bahá'ís who arrived to the detention camp before us were troubled and expecting the worst. I simply went down on my knees, put my forehead to the ground

¹⁴⁵ Gamal 'Abdel-Nasser, President of Egypt had declared his resignation following the defeat of the Egyptian Forces in what has become known as the 6-Day War that started on the 5th of June 1967. The Egyptian population rose in demonstrations requesting Nasser to withdraw his decision.

and kissed the ground in gratitude to Bahá'u'lláh for having allowed us to be partners to what the early believers were subjected to.

The country was feverish and the feelings nationwide were in rage against any divisive cause and in expectation of great events. The President had ordered and closed the Strait of 'Aqaba. The worst was expected.

Ámin lists the friends whom he found on arrival as well as those who came later:

Al-Sayed Fahmi Muşţafá, 'Abdel-Rashid Othman, Dr Rowshan Yazdi, 'Abdel-Aziz Shalaby, Helmi 'Abdel-Aziz Shalabi, Abbas 'Abdel-Aziz Shalabi, Fethi Tadros, Wasfi Ghali, Şobhi Elias, Fawzi Mari'i, Shawki Ghazi, Áhmad El-Masri, Zaher Kosheiri, Abbas Ghoneim, Naguib Mlika, Ibrahim El-Gondi, Naguib Tawadros not Bahá'í and he said he was Copt Orthodox, but he was retained. Then came Fouad Tewfik, Gamal Hasan, Fawzi Mari'i, Shawki Ghazi. These four were taken from their homes to the Waily investigation before being conducted to the camp.

I shall now break in with the Waily case and come back later to the detention camp event.

Preparing a new Case for the Bahá'ís – The Waily Court

Gamal Hasan considers the Waily case as being the golden occasion for Major Mansúr Helmi Áhmad to justify the arrest of Bahá'ís and the special funding required for their surveillance. What follows is a summary of what Gamal wrote.

After sending his order to Ábu-Zaabal Detention Camp not to release the Bahá'ís in spite of the presidential amnesty that allowed them to be released and after having falsified the date of his order of arrest of the Bahá'ís (with the approval of his chief Lieutenant Colonel Moḥyid-Din Shafik), Major Mansúr justified his action by creating a new case related to state security against a number of Bahá'ís.

Within the service of Mansúr's department, there was an instructor who was an uncle to a certain Nefissa, wife of Shawki Ghazi, a Bahá'í. Nefissa accepted the Faith. However, with time and two children, misunderstandings between Shawki and Nefissa took place and Muḥammad Muşţafá streamlined every now and then.

Mansúr used the instructor to obtain information from his niece Nefissa about the Bahá'ís, their feasts, their celebrations, their names and other details. Mansúr further told his instructor that Nefissa should be warned that if she became Bahá'í she would suffer the same fate that is in preparation for the Bahá'ís. This happened when the relation between Nefissa and Shawki were not good and with the participation of the uncle, Nefissa separated from her husband taking the two children with her, and became the prime witness for the prosecution of the Bahá'ís.

Thus the first defendant was 'Abdel-Salam Ghazi and the second was Shawki 'Abdel-Salam Ghazi. These two names were not mentioned in the Zaytún case. Hasan Muḥammad Hasan was next on the list, as was his son Gamal Hasan. Then there were the two brothers Fawzi and Mohyi Mari'i. A further thirteen defendant Bahá'ís were simply added to give further importance to the case. It was not difficult for Mansúr to slip in five names of Baha'is, four of whom were already held in the detention camp. These were Muḥammad Muşţafá, Şobhi Elias, Ámin Battah, Şobhi Daniel. The fifth, Fouad Tewfik was still at large.

The State Security Prosecutor this time was Súlaymán 'Abdel-Majid, a person of integrity and fair mindedness, similar to his predecessor Hussein Labib who handled the Zaytún Case of 1965. Súlaymán took the same attitude when it became immediately evident to him that

the people he is investigating could not possibly be perpetrators of any of the crimes of which they were accused. A number of books, picked up when Fouad Tewfik was arrested in Alexandria were brought over to Cairo and handed to Prosecutor Súlaymán. Fouad Tewfik became one of the defendants in the Waily case. He was not arrested in the Abu-Zaabal detention camp case, but now that he was brought over for the Waily case, Mansúr took him into Abu Zaabal detention camp. The books, however, helped Súlaymán to write an unbiased report on the Faith and its Teachings. He was meticulous to the extent of asking ‘Abdel-Salam Ghazi for the name of the father of the Báb. ‘Abdel-Salam answered “Muḥammad Riḍa” and this was recorded in the report.

The Waily witness hearings

The first witness Nefissa: The hearing of the witnesses started with the prime witness Nefissa, wife of Shawki Ghazi. Mansúr had instructed her what to say, but during the hearing she was hesitant. Gamal explains that her conscience seemed to take over her fear to disobey Mansúr’s lesson sometimes and her testimony failed to render what Mansúr had hoped for.

Her first testimony was that her father in law, ‘Abdel-Salam Ghazi, had tried to force her to become Bahá’í. When asked by the (fair) prosecutor how was that, she said that he once gave her Bahá’í books to read, but continued with revived conscience, that in truth he presented to her Bahá’í books only once and when she refused he did not offer her books any more.

The second statement Nefissa was told to lay before the prosecutor was indeed bizarre! She said that four Bahá’ís, all from the Zaytún area (Muḥammad Muşţafá, Ámin Battaḥ, Şobhi Daniel and Al-Sayed Al-Azzawi) held a meeting in her home before the start of the 6-Day war on June 5, 1967, to discuss how to avoid the entry of Egypt in such a war! When she was asked if there was any one else in this highly important meeting she said that Momtaz Muḥammad Muşţafá¹⁴⁶ was present also.

Nefissa’s third statement involved her husband Shawki Ghazi. She accused him of intentionally absenting himself from his work so as not to participate in the preparation of the aircrafts of the Egyptian Airforce that were to take part in the war. It was, however, proven that Shawki not only was at work all the time, but effectively helped put out a fire that was caused by an enemy air raid in the works where he is employed.

Finding the name of Fouad Tewfik on the list of the accused, the prosecutor asked whether Nefissa knew him. She said that she had never heard of him nor met him. But she mentioned the name of Sami Raḍwan who came at times to the home of her father in law. Sami was called to be questioned.

The second and third witnesses were: Lieutenant Colonel Moḥyid-Din Shafik and Major Mansúr Ḥelmi Áḥmad: Moḥyid-Din was the Director of the Department of Organised Communities which included the Bahá’ís. The prosecutor asked him if it was he who surveyed the activity of the Bahá’ís. He answered that his subordinate Mansúr Ḥelmi Áḥmad was responsible for that work. When Mansúr was called to witness and asked the

¹⁴⁶ Momtaz, youngest of Muḥammad Muşţafá’s children, was a young man with special needs. He carried a card issued by the Social Affairs Ministry to facilitate his use of public transport and other facilities. Mansúr probably had no idea who Momtaz was when he asked Nefissa to include Momtaz in the charges.

same question, he answered that he did not personally survey the Bahá'ís but he had his sources for that undertaking.

But Mansúr Helmi presented a document which he pretended was proof of the accusations against the Bahá'ís. That document was the memo that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and a group of friends had prepared to present to the Government to justify their rights as a Bahá'í Community. It simply cannot be a document of accusation, but that was all Mansúr had. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Ámin Battah, Şobḥi Elias and Fouad Tewfik were the signatories of that memo.

Investigating the accused: The first batch of accused Bahá'ís in the Waily case, were six in number and these were taken to the main Prosecution Department building and put into custody for further investigation in context of the 20th of June 1967 case. Four days later, Fouad Tewfik was brought over from Alexandria to that same custody and they were held for fifteen days, extended further for another 15 days and then a further 21 days as more accused are arrested and added to the custody. It was only on the 22nd of July that the last of the imprisoned under investigation left the custody within the main Prosecution Department, but not all of those released before that date and on that day went home. Mansúr lodged many of them in the detention camp as will be shown later in this chapter.

In a handwritten letter from Muḥammad Muṣṭafá in Arabic dated 13 June 1958, the Waily case is summarised as follows:

A new set of accusations was levelled at 12 believers in that they held meetings, issued publications, and secret circulars using a printing machine that is in the home of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá. This happened in the month of June (1967) – a most difficult and oppressive moment.

These twelve persons were: ‘Abdel-Salam Ghazi, Shawki Ghazi, Ḥasan Muḥammad Ḥasan, Gamal Ḥasan, Fawzi Mari’í, Mohyi Mari’í, Fouad Tewfik, Al-Sayed Muḥammad Al-Azzawi, Şobḥi Daniel, Ámin Battah and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá.

The Authorities searched our homes and found nothing, because effectively there was nothing there. These were false accusations void and calumnious.

The accused were interrogated and investigated by the Supreme State Security Prosecution. Four of the accused, Şobḥi Daniel, Şobḥi Elias, Ámin Battah and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá were in the detention camp already. The charges were found to be baseless; but notwithstanding, a civil court case was formed in order to incriminate the friends. The case was raised in the Waily district with the accusation of practice of activity of the banned assemblies. The same accusations of the Zaytún case. All were discharged with a LE 5- bail each while Mohyi Mari’í was declared innocent.

After spending one month in prison under the interrogation and investigation, Shawki Ghazi, Fouad Tewfik, Gamal Ḥasan, Fawzi Mari’í and Mohyi Mari’í (who was declared innocent) were further arrested and sent to the detention camp. This is how we now have the Waily case.

We are most grateful to the Almighty that in both the Zaytún and Waily cases, the decision of the Supreme State Security Prosecution adamantly dropped all charges against us of political activity.

Experiences worth relating

Ámin Battah: Amin Battah, Şobhi Daniel and Muḥammad Mustafa were already in the detention camp when the famous Major Mansúr launched the Waily case. They were called from the camp towards the end of June 1967 during the severe period of treatment of new comers to the camp. During two consecutive days they were taken to the Supreme State Security Prosecution to be questioned and investigated on the Waily case. Here is what Ámin recorded:

Our questioning on the Waily case was conducted in the building previously occupied by the Revolutionary Leadership Council – a small building on the Nile bank. The first day, Muḥammad Muşţafá, Şobhi Daniel and I (Ámin Battah) were called over, handcuffed and under strong guard. By the time we got up to the Leadership locality, complete fatigue was evident together with worn and dirty clothes, and shaved heads...

I was called to the interrogation first, and I was happily surprised that the officer who was to question me was a young man of around 35 years of age who resembled in looks very much Fouad Rushdy¹⁴⁷ in his youth. I thought that was an omen and I felt happy and serene. He welcomed me and politely said: I am sorry, brother, it is not in my power to get you out of the detention camp, but you will see that we are not in dispute, so please be at ease; all I want is that you tell me the truth, all the truth.

I answered: Gratitude to the Almighty, I feel reassured and comforted by your kindness. Please be sure that I will say the truth, as we always have. May God's curse be upon him who lies to you or cheats you with any word. Know that it is not you who is questioning in this case, God is the questioner!

The pencil fell from his fingers. He smiled and said, You are welcome.

This noble individual was Súlaymán Abdel-Majid. In the same office in front of Súlaymán there was another officer investigating another case. That officer said, "It is astonishing, Súlaymán, to see such clear and honest manners. I wish those whom we will have for investigation will always be like the ones you have now."

Súlaymán ordered tea and sandwiches for me and said, "Certainly you have not had breakfast this morning."

His generosity and kindness encouraged me to ask him to order tea for Muḥammad Muşţafá and Şobhi Daniel who were relatively advanced in age, especially Muḥammad Muşţafá. He ordered tea and sandwiches for them. He offered me an especially comfortable seat that belonged to the royal palaces saying, "I see you are very tired, if you wish you may take your shoes off and extend your legs for some comfort." I was really tired and my health was not that good due to the daily demonstrating and cheering at the top of our voices for hours on end we are obliged to do: "Long live Gamal 'Abdel-Nasser," "Long live Arab Nationalism" dozens of times followed by beatings and humiliation.

¹⁴⁷ Fouad Rushdy is one of 'Abdel-Rahman Rushdy's sons who pioneered to the desolate Fezzan Governorate in Libya in 1954. Like all the Rushdy family, Fouad, a staunch Bahá'í, was a most agreeable person to know and associate with – an advantage that was my bounty to intermittently experience from youth until he passed away in 1996.

I answered his questions clearly, disclaiming totally any relation or connection of the Bahá'ís or the Faith with any foreign entity or any secret, partisan, or ethnic activity. I said, the Kaaba is in Arabia, could the praying of the Muslims with their faces towards the Kaaba be considered treason? Could the fidelity of the Catholics towards the Vatican be considered a blemish to their loyalty to the country? Why then are we being judged if our Qibleh is in occupied Palestine or Israel? Bahá'u'lláh was forcibly exiled from Iran to Iraq to Istanbul to Edirne and finally to Akka where he lived the rest of His life and passed away and entered in Akka more than sixty years before the idea of an Israel existed. What responsibility could there be for the Bahá'ís in all this?

He then asked about our relation with the Universal House of Justice. I explained that our relation is spiritual, that the House is the world centre for the Bahá'í Administration, that the Bahá'í Faith and the Universal House of Justice instructions are loyalty to government even should there be certain constraints to the Bahá'ís other than revoking our Faith or participating in partisan politics or similar effects. Why are we accused of insolence and betrayal? Do we not serve in the armed forces and are in the wars like any other citizen?

The real situation, frankly, is that the General State Investigation Department is furious for having had their plans for the 1965 Zaytún case thwarted and it seeks to find a new accusation against us.

Muhammad Muṣṭafá: The interrogation took some two hours. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was called in and Súlaymán welcomed him like a son welcome his father, He allowed him to sit in that comfortable seat I sat in. Súlaymán is an ideal example for how the officials in the government should be.

The questions asked of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá were similar to those of Ámin with the exception that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá explained that he was a Board Member whose responsibility is to take care of all the Bahá'ís in Egypt morally and spiritually as a head of a family. His relation with the Hand of the Cause Músá Banání is like that of a head of the family with the oldest of the family. He further explained that this relation is for the protection of the Bahá'ís against any action that could cause harm to the Faith and that we have nothing to do with any of the accusations that the General Security has accused us of.

It was 3 pm when we finished. The next day, Şobhi Elias and Şobhi Daniel were taken from the camp to Súlaymán for the same questioning.

Sobhi Elias and Şobhi Daniel: The questions asked of both Şobhi Elias and Şobhi Daniel were very much the same. However, during the questioning of Şobhi Elias, Major Mansúr, the instigator of the Waily case, came in to the office of Súlaymán Abdel-Majid and a discussion took place between the two officers regarding the Bahá'ís and the present Waily case. At some point in their discussion, Şobhi Elias records, Mansúr said something to the effect: "We know that the Bahá'ís never lie!" Then the discussion heated up to the point where Súlaymán took a strong position against Mansúr and prevented him from interfering in his work. Mansúr left the office.

This incident was recorded by Şobhi Elias.

Al-Sayed Al-Azzawi: Gamal Ḥasan reports that Ṣobḥi Elias, in his memoir, refers to these two subsequent days when the four of them were taken out from the camp to the Revolutionary Leadership Council building. They were able to meet with some friends when they brought food, medicine and sundries to their loved ones incarcerated in the Appeal prison under the Waily case. In this manner those of the detention camp received news of what was going on outside the camp among the friends and vice versa.

The story of Al-'Azzawi with Mansúr is worth recording here. As far as Mansúr was concerned Al-'Azzawi, for short, should have been in the detention camp. He was the last person on the list for the prosecutor to question in the Waily case. When he was arrested on the 8th of June he explained to the prosecutor that he had been investigated already on the same accusations when with the members of the Executive Committee they were Judged and found innocent, and thus he cannot be Judged for the same accusation twice. The prosecutor then released him immediately without bail.

But Mansúr was shocked to find Al-'Azzawi free out of the camp and asked to see him. Al-'Azzawi told the story of this meeting to Gamal, and here is Gamal's recording of what Al-'Azzawi told him: *In the beginning of my discussion with Mansúr, I informed him that I was aware of his falsification of the official papers by changing the date of the arrest order from the 8th to the 18th of June. This information shocked him and he said, "Are you spying on the Security Investigation (Department)?" I said, sternly addressing him in his first name without any title: Look here, Mansúr, everything you do, and will do, will not remain secret! Al-'Azzawi strongly reproached him for presenting the memo that the Bahá'ís had prepared in order to present to the Authorities for talks to resume their freedom – use such an innocent memo in raising false accusations against the Bahá'ís.*

Mansúr could have ordered the detention of Al-'Azzawi immediately, but somehow he did not have the courage to do so, or hopefully, his conscience came to sudden life for a moment!

Al-'Azzawi went to the prison where the Bahá'ís of the Waily case were being held and from the iron barred windows assured the friends inside that the case for which they are in prison is void.

Further notes on the Ábu Zaabal Detention Camp

The list of Bahá'ís who went to that camp was as follows:

1. Shawki Ghazi
2. Mohyi Marei
3. Ámin Battah
4. Fawzi Marei
5. 'Abdel-Rashid Othman
6. Ṣobḥi Daniel
7. Zaher Kosheiri
8. Gamal Ḥasan
9. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá
10. Ṣobḥi Elias

11. Fouad Tewfik
12. El-Sayed Fahmi
13. Áḥmad El-Masry
14. Muḥammad El-Gindi
15. Naguib Mlika
16. Khalil ‘Ayyad
17. ‘Abdel-Aziz Shalaby
18. Ḥelmi ‘Abdel-Aziz Shalaby
19. Abbas ‘Abdel-Aziz Shalaby
20. Naguib Tawadros
21. Matta Barzi
22. ‘Abdel-Men’im Ḥasan
23. Abbas Ghoneim
24. Wasfi Mikhail
25. Áḥmad Ghanem
26. Rowshan Yazdi (Dr)
27. Fethi Tadros

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá sent me a handwritten letter dated 13th June 1968, that gives an overall view of the experience of the detention camp to which he was among the first to be sent:

The early days in the camp were very critical and arduous, but God’s care did not abandon us even for a moment. Prayers were chanted all the time inside the camp and outside the camp. After some ten days, things started to become slowly better and the Directory of the camp eventually allowed us to correspond with our families outside and responded favourably to some of our requests for which we were grateful. There were good reasons for us to feel some satisfaction.

The presence of Dr. Rowshan Yazdi was of great effect among the non-Bahá’í prisoners specially, the Muslim brothers, who were aware of his noble character, impeccable services to the public and generosity with the poor. All this contributed to the painting of the good picture about the Faith and the Bahá’ís which began to develop

Another reason was the courage and heroism of Šobḥi Daniel¹⁴⁸ as well as his commanding knowledge of the Holy Books. Yet a further reason was the positive relations developed between the Bahá’ís and the officers of the camp who began to take an interest in the discourse with the friends. Over a period of three months, the officers organised evening seminars to discuss the Faith. Between five and seven Bahá’ís attended these seminars with between 15 and 20 members of the Muslim Brotherhood led by a well versed cleric called Shaykh ‘Abdel-Hamid Keshk.¹⁴⁹ This Shaykh was an eloquent speaker, rich in ideas and can speak for two hours without hesitation. The seminars were held every two days starting at 10 pm and usually continued until dawn. The officers on duty chaired the seminars.

¹⁴⁸ Šobḥi Daniel passed away a few months after the discharge of the friends from the detention camp.

¹⁴⁹ After his release, this Shaykh ‘Abdel-Hamid Keshk wrote against the Faith in many papers.

During those seminars, the friends explained most freely giving quotes and references from the Qurán that prove the truth and veracity of the Faith. The difference between “Messenger” and “Prophet” was elucidated most convincingly. The significance of “conspicuous” verses (in the Qurán) was clarified and the indication as to who will bring forth the “interpretation thereof” was explained. Finally the proof that Bahá’u’lláh is the Promised One in all the Holy Books of God was proclaimed.

The recitation from the Sacred Tablets that Ámin Battah, whom God endowed with the bounty of memorising by heart, was of great effect in punctuating the discussions. These recitations alone were proof beyond which no proof is valid.

Dr Rowshan Yazdi, Şobhi Daniel, Ámin Battah, Zaher Kosheiri and Gamal Hasan were the permanent participants on behalf of the Bahá’is to the seminars, while Muḥammad Muşţafá was able to attend 3 seminars only – his health did not allow him to participate in any others. Intermittently, other Bahá’is joined these seminars also.

The letter then expanded on the subjects that were discussed in the seminars and the manner with which these subjects were explained...

The letter of Muḥammad Muşţafá continues:

The friends in the detention camp were high in spirit and full of hope in spite of their agonies, demonstrating unstinted courage and acceptance of the Will of God, continually praying and reading the Tablets from memory. They even held the commemoration of the anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb.

Outside the camp, the friends and specially the maidservants (womenfolk) were a flame of faith, courage and steadfastness. They approached the authorities and people of importance, presenting petitions and requests for justice. The efforts of Al-’Azzawi, that dear believer, are worthy of special mention. His indefatigable efforts in the name of all the imprisoned Bahá’is could have landed him in the detention camp himself.

The 14th of November 1967 was the day when the order for the release of the Baha’is reached the camp. Normally in such cases the Directory of the camp would ask one of the employees to inform the inmates of the released order, but in the case of the Bahá’is one of the officers joyfully informed the friends the good news and personally supervised the speed of the release operation. The second in command himself supervised the handing over of the properties of each Bahá’í that had been retained on admission. When I (Muḥammad Muşţafá) went to him, he stood up and shook hands warmly, and said that he did not know that I was sick, otherwise he would have visited me in the ward. I then went to thank the commander. He welcomed me with sympathy and respect saying, “I hope you (in plural) are satisfied with us.” Then, together with Dr Rowshan and Ámin Battah we took permission to say goodbye to Shaykh Keshk and, in the same occasion, to visit all the wards to say goodbye and wish them quick release. It is beyond me to express in words the generous sentiments we met with. The joy of the inmates over our release was so great that it seemed to us as though they were the released ones. Effectively our release was glad tidings to all, because after us, the whole camp emptied rapidly.

This, my son, is briefly what I wish to mention to you from what my memory has retained so that all may rejoice and thank God for His bounty.

(End of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā's letter.)

The Year 1968

Conditions in Egypt: narrating the out folding developments

According to Gamal Hassan, the Egyptian Bahá'í Community was able to regain its cohesion

after a tumultuous 1967 and was now pursuing the objective of including “Bahá'í” as a religion accepted for registering on documents of identity.

Following the release of the Bahá'ís from their custodial detention camp towards the end of the year 1967, however, the Community was shocked with the sudden death of Šobhí Daniel on 4th. January 1968. Amidst the sadness and bereavement of his immediate family, they were thrust into another difficulty. This arose because the extended family of Šobhí, were Christian, and they gathered around the bereaved wife and children requesting the burial of Šobhí to be according to Christian rites. The wife and children categorically refused saying that Šobhí lived his life as a Bahá'í and died as a Bahá'í and we are Bahá'ís also. As a result, only one brother and his son attended the burial ceremony, while many Bahá'ís showed their respect for that loved man, by filling the ceremony's attendance.

During that same year, El-Sayed Fahmy of Tanta also passed away, as well as Naguib Mlika who was the most aged among the Bahá'ís in the detention camp.

Each one of these beloved deceased friends has a history of service to the Cause.

The Waily Court

1968 did not prove any easier for the Bahá'ís. While coming to terms with the wounds inflicted on them during 1967 and trying to heal them, they were faced with the Waily case.

It will be recalled that the friends implicated in the Waily case had their judicial reprieve when the Supreme State Security Prosecutor, Súlaymán 'Abdel-Majid had emphatically dropped all charges of political activity the friends were allegedly accused of.

The Waily Misdemeanour (mild crime) Court convened presided upon by Judge Mamdouh 'Abdel-'Aleem to consider the case of the Bahá'í defendants who were under arrest. The four Bahá'ís who were in the detention camp were not included.

During the proceedings of the court hearing, the Judge Mamdouh 'Abdel-'Aleem said to the Lawyer: “I went to the Centre of Public Investigation and knew everything about the Bahá'ís” and with an air of disregard for the defendants, he advised that the verdict will be announced immediately after the end of the pleading.

Following the pleading, the Judge called on the defendants and announced the verdict: Six month imprisonment and LE¹⁵⁰100 fine.

The Waily case looked so sham. Even the irrational verdict was not more than a sentence saying: “The pleading of the defendants did not satisfy the conscience of the Court”.

The Judge had also committed a grave error in having gone to the Centre of Public Security to inquire about the defendants, the Public Security being a party in the case.

The Lawyers appealed the case on the spot.

¹⁵⁰ Egyptian pound.

Murmur of dissension

Ámin Battah reported in his memoir, of a tentative move by a prominent and active member of the Community to convince a couple of young Bahá'ís that he was more capable than Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to lead the friends in these difficult times. Ámin continued to record, however, that he, together with Šobḥi Elias and Foad Tewfik faced him with their disapproval, and counselled him not to pursue such action. This incident took place within the detention camp, and naturally, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá got to know of it but showed no reaction. That person, however, passed away soon after the release of the friends, and the movement he had started fell apart leaving no trace nor effect.

The Friends remain steadfast in spite of harassments

An appreciation is recorded in Ámin Battah's memoir concerning the Community in Egypt. Here is what he wrote:

In spite of all these harassments, the friends in Egypt have remained steadfast, cooperative and cohesive. Their loving spirit eliminated all possibility of creating a hiatus or a split in the Community. At times, some friends felt themselves weak and wished for calm and rest, but such feelings disappeared in the crucible of love of all the friends and their rallying around the elder brother and father, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá. That spirit of unity dissipated weakness and promoted courage.

The media also took to attacking the Bahá'ís and the Faith. One of the leading papers "Al Gomhuria" published defamatory articles in a few of its editions, signed by the famous journalist and writer Šaleḥ Gawdat. The Bahá'ís raised a court injunction request for defamation against the paper and the writer, engaging their Lawyer Talaat Áḥmad 'Abdel-Azeem but, of course, the court found it easy to dismiss the case on the basis that the plaintiff had no official identity to represent the Bahá'í Faith.

The Year 1969

Everything seemed calm during the year 1969. The two court cases of Zaytún and Waily were followed in anticipation of a just ruling of nonsuit.

The friends who had accepted the Faith during the recent years, most of whom came from the southern town of Súháj, continued to teach the Faith.

However, there was a lurking suspicion among the friends that the certain persons of authority are not yet happy to let them off, and further difficulties are likely.

Súháj the next battle ground of the Bahá'ís of Egypt

Súháj the capital town of the Governorate of same name, some 500 kms south of Cairo, became the scene of the next confrontation for the Bahá'ís of Egypt. Although involving a short list of Bahá'ís, it was nonetheless a serious situation. The instigator of the conflict this time was a certain Lieutenant Colonel Muḥammad Ḥassan Tantawi, Head of the Security Services of the town of Súháj – a man deeply inimical to the Faith and to the Bahá'ís. He ordered the issue of warrants by the Department to arrest ten believers as follows:

Five from Suháj

Abbas Maḥmúd
Muḥammad El-Deeb
Áḥmad Ḥaggu
Muḥammad Ḥaggu
Áḥmad 'Abdel-Fattah

Three from Cairo

Miss Somaya Daniel
Ḥamed Salama
'Abdel-Wahab 'Abdel-Fattah

One from Qena

'Íssam Muḥammad Isma'il

One from Asswan

Zaher 'Alí El-Kosheiri

Some background information about **Lt. Col. Muḥammad Ḥasan Tantawi** is worth noting.

Ḡamal Ḥassan notes some facts about his career as follows:

Muḥammad Ḥasan Tantawi began his career as a police officer in the Security Investigation Department of the town of Zeqaziq, about 100 kms. North-East of Cairo on the Cairo-Ismailia road. His duties included the surveillance of the Bahá'ís and their activities. He presented himself to Muḥammad Yaqút and his wife Latifa,

both Bahá'ís, who had a tailor's business in town, as a customer wishing to have suits tailored for himself. He showed interest in the Faith and Yaqut and Latifa answered his questions and explained to him the Faith with the love and kindness of which they were both well known. They had known before him the uncle of Tantawi, a certain Raouf Ḥamdi – a high-grade officer in the same department, a man of noble character. Tantawi showed great respect and attachment towards the Yaquts to the extent of kissing Latifa's hand every time he came to see them. Gamal Ḥassan is astonished how that meek lamb turned into a viscous wolf, or was he a viscous wolf in the skin of a meek lamb. Later in his career, Muḥammad Ḥasan Tantawi was transferred to Súháj, where he revealed what a most redoubtable enemy of the Faith he really was. Along with his promotions in the Police service, he created an increasing amount of suffering and trials in the Community in Egypt: first in Súháj in the year 1970, then in Tanta in the year 1972, in Cairo in 1985 and finally in the year 2000 in Súháj once again.

In fact what Tantawi did to the Bahá'ís renders Mansúr, the torturer of the Bahá'ís in the Zaytún and the Waily cases as well as the Detention Camp, an angel by comparison...

It would be of great interest to follow the subsequent crises the Bahá'ís of Egypt faced in 1985 and the year 2000, but as this narrative covers the period relating to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, it has regrettably to end here with the passing of this prominent figure in 1981.

No doubt there will be someone who will record that unfolding phase at some stage and it is my hope that Gamal Ḥassan will be privileged with this achievement.¹⁵¹

Early warnings

During the year 1969 and earlier, certain signs appeared that foreshadowed a severe attack on the Faith, albeit that these signs were not in Cairo but in a town inland, the town of Súháj. There the group of Bahá'ís who had accepted the Faith a few years ago were successful in promoting and teaching the Faith in their town and in other cities and villages within the Governorate. Following the passing of their spiritual teacher Šobḥi Daniel, they found succour and spiritual help in Muḥammad Muṣṭafá who embraced them with his love and wise counsel on their affairs. They further presented to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá their readiness for any service that may be required of them. One of their elders, 'Abdel-Wahab 'Abdel-Fattaḥ, who lived in Cairo acted as liaison between Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the friends of Súháj.

Here are some of the memories of 'Abdel-Wahab 'Abdel-Fattaḥ:

I used to travel to Súháj at the request of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and there my brother Áḥmad would be impatiently waiting for me and had arranged for a meeting with some people. Some meetings would include 30 seekers, during the meeting the Faith

¹⁵¹ The National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt, re-instituted in 2014 after being disbanded in 1960, has actually asked Gamal Ḥassan to record the history of the Faith in Egypt.

was introduced, proofs were discussed and some of the seekers would accept the Faith.

During one of my visits I was called by the head of State Security Department of the Governorate of Súháj who asked me about the Bahá'í Faith. I explained to him that the Faith is a Divine Message that has its Laws and Ordinances and a mission to unite the world and establish peace and harmony among nations, forbids war and the holding of unnecessary armament, eliminate prejudice... and asked: What wrong is there in this? He said: I heard you are perverted...

Upon hearing this I stood up and shouted at him: You are the perverted. Go to Cairo and you will find the Muslim men and women in the Casinos ... and you know this more than we do...

He said with a calm voice: Sit down and be calm. Drink your coffee.

This man could have, with all impunity, made up a false accusation and put me in prison. However, Bahá'u'lláh protected me, and I left peacefully.

I was also invited in Súháj by Muṣṭafá Derwish who at one time was head of the “Ansar Al-Sunna Al-Muḥammadia” – (a Muslim group conservative in their beliefs and rituals), and presently Head of the Land and Property Registry Office. He also happens to be the husband of one of my nieces.

Darwish received me in his office, extremely upset and in a loud voice that gathered the employees outside his office to see why their chief was so excited, he shouted questions to which I answered steadily and calmly. It quickly became clear that he was embarrassed before the subordinates of the Office and he finally stated: “Had you not been a member of the family I would have immediately denounced and reported you to the Authorities!” The meeting ended peacefully, praise be to God.

When I returned to Cairo from that visit and informed the close friends about what happened, they rebuked my action and recommended that I calm down. However, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá expressed his satisfaction and commended me.

The Year 1970

The Journey of suffering of the Súháj believers

Muḥammad Áḥmad El-Dhab'á described the journey of suffering of those friends who were arrested in their hometown of Súháj on the 24th of February 1970 until their release on April 7, 1970. Here is what he recorded:

I understood that Maḥmúd Muḥammad Ḥussein was arrested. The next day, I was arrested. Effectively Muḥammad Áḥmad Khalaf Ḥaggú, Áḥmad 'Abdel-Fattah Hasanein and 'Abbas Ḥussein were arrested the first day, while I - Muḥammad Áḥmad El-Dhab'á was arrested the second day. On the fifth day, Áḥmad Muḥammad Ḥaggú was arrested.

We were all taken to the Public Prosecution Office and when I was asked if I am Bahá'í?

I answered: Yes!

Do you know any other Bahá'í, your brother for example?

I said I do not know!

They fetched my brother 'Omar El-Dheeb from Shandaweel Island where he lived. As he came in, the officers greeted him with "Állah'u'Ábhá", hoping to trick him into acknowledging his Faith. Omar was a very new Bahá'í and, therefore, did not answer the greeting, he had not known it yet. One of the officers said that Omar was not a Bahá'í and he was sent away.

All the five of us were taken to the Súháj prison. A concerted effort of intimidation began. The officers would visit us every now then and say: You will be hanged... You will be executed... But the most annoying action was the false information the Police propagated in the towns and villages, our neighbourhoods and families and especially to our wives who were not Bahá'ís.

The situation became most dangerous when the public were told that the Bahá'ís are in contact with Israel and that spying apparatus and instruments were found in our homes.

We were transferred to Cairo to the "Appeal" prison of Báḅ El-Khalq and put in the 4th floor which was the worst place in the prison as the inmates were murderers, highwaymen and those condemned to 25 years of imprisonment. We were further spread over 5 different prison wards, all tightly packed. Some inmates died after being there for only two days. It is a place where "big fish eat the small fish"...

Every ward has its "head" who organises the way inmates sleep and move. But the congestion is so bad that at night inmates urinate anywhere even on sleeping inmates, or simply take another person's cover. One's clothes may simply disappear and be used to burn to make tea

The ward "head" asked me: why I was brought here. I answered: Because I believe in a new religion. He could not believe that, given that the ward was for murderers

only. He could not accept that and said: “Come off it !!! why do you not frankly say that you have killed 3 persons at least? Is there anyone who enters this prison because of belief in a new religion? He insulted me and my religion and left me.

Our clothes quickly became torn and inadequate for the February cold. Fortunately one of the inmates was from Súháj who recognised me although I did not recognise him, probably because he had changed. He was condemned to 25 years of prison. He welcomed me and asked for the reason I was there. I explained that the reason was my belief in a new religion.

This man from Súháj was of great help to me. He provided me with food and a reasonable cover and gave me a more appropriate place to occupy. I explained to him my worry for the other four friends. He promised to try to help gather us all five in one ward.

The following day, all five of us were taken down to the 2nd floor and put in a cell together. The guard was a kind man. He left the door open and we were able to pray and discuss our situation. At one time, Āḥmad Ḥaggú asked his son Muḥammad: Why did you not deny you were Bahá’í when they asked you? Why should I deny... Why haven’t you denied...?

Our next move was at the Highest State Security Tribunal where we were to be investigated by the Prosecutor. When this investigation phase ended, we were presented to the Judge of the Cairo Tribunal which was next to the prison. The Judge ruled a further 15 day pre-trial detention.

At the close of the 15 days, we were taken to the Cairo Tribunal, but were returned without meeting the Judge. In spite of the request of the Prosecution for a further detention of 15 days, we were released from the Báḅ El-Khalq Tribunal and imprisoned in the Administrative Prison in the basement of the Governorate at Báḅ El-Khalq for our transfer to Súháj. However, whoever was responsible for our transfer, purposely delayed our departure in order that we miss the train. This meant spending a further week in the Dispatch Prison in the Khelifa district.

On the 6th of April we were packed into the prison wagon of the goods train that took 10 hours to take us from Cairo station to Súháj. There, some members of our families who were waiting for us at the train station met us. But we were taken to the local prison of Súháj for four hours, then to the Criminal Investigation Branch, then to the State Public Investigation Department that had initially arrested us in February 24, 1970, and it was not before 7.30 in the evening that we were finally released to go home.

This is the story of the five Bahá’ís of Súháj who were drawn into prison and court for no other reason than they were Bahá’ís, yet officially accused of crimes against the security of the State.

The “torturer” Captain Ḥassan Tantawi arranged to hit the Bahá’ís where he thought would be most painful: arrest and put them in custody during Áyyam-i- Há.

Six other believers join the now trodden trail of trial and suffering

Once the five Súháj believers were in custody at Báb El-Khalq prison, Ḥasan Tantawi called upon his colleague Mansúr Ḥelmi of the Cairo Principle Centre of Investigation to arrest the other five believers whose names were either mentioned by the believers of Súháj or found in correspondence with them.

One of those five believers was Somaya Daniel, eldest daughter of Sobhi Daniel who was the spiritual father of the Súháj Bahá'ís. Her name was noted because of her letters to some of those friends, thanking them for their messages of condolence at the passing away of her father. To further exaggerate the seeming importance of the operation, Mansúr Ḥelmi went in person to Somaya's home and took her into custody.

This was a big shock for her, more so because the wicked Mansúr terrified her with descriptions of what she was to expect.

Another member of this second batch of falsely accused (five) believers, was 'Íssam Muḥammad Isma'íl. He was a teacher in Qena, a distant town from his home in Cairo. The loss of his job would jeopardise his future significantly. He would lose his credential as a bona fide teacher.

Divine Protection

Once more, Divine Protection was vouchsafed upon the oppressed "Loved Ones". The charges brought up against the Bahá'ís of Súháj were deemed serious enough as to be of national security gravity, and the case, therefore, had to be investigated by the State Security Prosecution. The Prosecutor in that case was the same one who investigated the Waily case three years earlier. He was that same fair and equitable Súlaymán 'Abdel-Majeed who concluded that all the state security crimes that were attributed to the Bahá'ís had no basis of truth in this case of Súháj also.

In order to ensure full and unassailable coverage of his investigation he had requested an extension of a further 15 day retention in custody – a request that was denied. Yet he took his time to look carefully into the numerous letters that were seized from the homes of the prisoners.

The Prosecutor Súlaymán, having scrutinised the evidence at his disposal, concluded that the grave charges attributed to the accused Bahá'ís cannot be considered more than undertaking activity within the framework of the suspension of the Bahá'í Assemblies imposed by the Presidential Decree 263 of the year 1960. The case was then transferred from the criminal court to the court of misdemeanour (Minor Crime) in Súháj itself.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá requested 'Abdel-Wahab 'Abdel-Fattaḥ, who is originally from Súháj but lived in Cairo, and as can be recalled, is himself one of the defendants, to attend to and be of assistance to the lawyers from Cairo when they go to Súháj for the court sessions.

Súháj and the painful story of 'Omar El-Dheeb

Gamal Ḥassan continues in his chronicle explaining that what was described above regarding the Súháj Case does not end with the arrest of five Bahá'ís of Súháj and five from other towns and their referral to the Court of First Instance (similar to a Magistrates' Court) of Súháj. In fact it had consequences that caught up with the young Bahá'í Maḥmúd Muḥammad Áḥmad, better known by the name 'Omar El-Dheeb, who had only recently

known the Faith at the time of the arrest of the friends in February 27, 1970. He escaped arrest at the time when he did not answer the Bahá'í greeting of “Állah'u'Ábhá” that the investigation officer tried to trick him with to prove that he was Bahá'í and arrest him.

Omar was a driver with the different Police services in Súháj. His reputation of integrity and uprightness was exemplary – not a common feature in many police departments. His straightforwardness actually put him in conflict with some of his colleagues. Upon accepting the Faith, he did not cease speaking about the Faith with everyone he knew or met. When his superiors knew about his activity, two separate debates were arranged for ‘Omar with one of the prominent Shaykhs of Súháj. Although he was of limited education, it was clear that the Shaykh was not anywhere equal to him. The Shaykh was not accepting his defeat and arranged to have ‘Omar put on trial for leaving Islám and becoming a Bahá'í.

‘Omar made a voice recording of his trials and travails that ended with the longest imprisonment of any Bahá'í in Egypt. Here is what he recorded:

The 17th of July 1970... (6 months after the first arrest of the Bahá'ís in the Súháj case) a plot was prepared for me. One of my colleagues, Muḥammadein Khalaf-Allah was instructed to watch over my actions. He pretended to be interested in the Faith and I naturally presented the Faith to him. I did not know that he had a recorder on and had registered all our conversations – which were all about the Faith and nothing else.

The second in command of the (Police) Department where I work, called me and when I got there, he informed me that I will be arrested.

- Why are you arresting me?
- *You have ruined all religions, Maḥmúd!*

Two days later they advised me to take a lawyer for my defence. But I had no lawyer. A court hearing was set for the 25th of July 1970. I went on that date to the Security Directorate where I was informed that the commander of one of the Departments was a nice man whose father was in a high position in one of the ministries – he will be my lawyer. That commander came to the Tribunal, but he excused himself from defending, saying to me it is impossible for me to defend you in your case. A lieutenant acted as my lawyer.

In my mind and thought, I did not see any reason for all this behaviour when it is clear that freedom of belief that is said to exists...

(The case was set up for Judgement and witnesses were brought in. The whole operation had no legal basis at all. My (the author of this book) understanding is that because the case of the ten Bahá'ís of Súháj that began in February was degraded from criminal to misdemeanour, the enemies of the Bahá'ís insisted on creating a criminal case to save face with the public. It was ‘Omar’s destiny to satisfy their cruelty.)

‘Omar El-Dheeb continues in his recorded memoirs:

They (The perpetrators of the plot) had two colleague group chiefs Muḥammadein Khalaf-Álláh (a Muslim) and Nassif ‘Abdel-Massiḥ (a Christian) as witnesses against me. It seems that they had said, or maybe, told to say: That I propagate a new religion called Bahá'í and that I deny God and deny Muḥammad the Prophet of God... There were other witnesses also.

At the court session, one of the witnesses, who had taken oath, was asked: what he understood from what ‘Omar told him. He said:

- I did not understand anything (of what ‘Omar said) because what he said was not clear to me.

When Nassif ‘Abdel-Massih, the Christian witness, was questioned:

- What do you know about ‘Omar?

- *He is an excellent in his work in the police and a capable driver!*

- We are not asking you about his work and his capabilities, do you not know that he was arrested in February (but was released when he did not answer the greeting of “Állah’u’Ábhá”) with Bahá’is?

- *Yes I know that...*

- Then speak as we told you (to say)...

- *I have children and I am afraid of this man because he is Muslim and can kill me and I cannot testify against him...*

The court immediately conspired a felony of cover-up against Nassif ‘Abdel-Massih.

- But ‘Omar is not Muslim, if he were Muslim, why would we be judging him?

He is propagating a new religion and denies Christ...

Then the recorder was brought and was put on, but no voice was heard. In other words the recorder simply did not work and therefore the treachery of the other witness, Muḥammadein Khalaf-Álláh, did not work. In spite of this failure the prosecutor said:

- The charge is proven, your words are clear in the recorder...

- *Where are my words that are clear? I said. I heard nothing... Please let me hear what I said in the recorder and judge me accordingly. Please note that some of the witnesses hate me. One of them asked me to give him petrol from the car I drive and I refused to give him. He hates me for this. The other witness is upset with me and wants very much to get me in trouble. The recorder is here before you. When you hear what is recorded, Judge me with what I said.*

Then the Judge said:

- Anyway, you have aroused the witnesses against you, while the recorder did not show anything to charge you with, but I shall Judge you by your own words.

Then the prosecutor went into a long speech relating different laws and regulations and finally asked for: Life imprisonment or death penalty! He sweated and gasped with fatigue. In my mind I thought that all this show will end up nowhere and the case will end up with total loss. I was completely relaxed.

Then came the time for the defence and the lawyer to state his plead. He said:

- The accused is guilty. I request his acquittal!
- You say guilty and request acquittal? You should request a commute Judgement... said the Judge.
- Your honour may write what you would like to write... said the lawyer and relaxed in his seat.

Then the Judge asked me: - Are you Muslim or Bahá'í?

- *What purpose was there for a recorder and witnesses when you ask me now what my religion is?* Was my answer.

- What shall we do with this man, he must be mad... said the Judge looking towards the officers who were there. Five years in prison is enough for him. Then he pronounced the Judgement:

- The court ruled for five years in prison with immediate effect for Maḥmúd Muḥammad Áḥmad (known by the name 'Omar El-Dheeb).

- *Is that all – five years?* I took my beret off and said: *Five years will not be enough to wear away this beret. I hoped for something really big!* I said.

- What was your hope? Asked the Judge.

- *My hope was crucifixion or hanging!*

- You want to imitate Christ? Retorted the Judge.

- *O! How I wish I would be a grain of dust under the feet of Christ...*

Nassif 'Abdel-Massih, the Christian witness, was there weeping...

'Omar El-Dheeb was condemned to five year in prison without the slightest reason. The police, like the army have their own tribunals. The Bahá'ís were not able to do much for 'Omar.

Following the court, 'Omar was taken to prison. His brother, Muḥammad Áḥmad El-Dhab'á, unfortunately, suggested to him to pretend madness which may either diminish the duration of prison or simply get him discharged. His trial backlashed terribly. He was handcuffed behind his back for a whole twenty four hours, which caused extreme pain and swollen hands. He said that at that time he preferred death to the pain he was in. He was fed by the guard who also helped him to the toilet.

The following day, the notification of the 5 – year prison verdict was brought to him to sign in acknowledgement of receipt.

He was transferred to the general prison of Súháj and then to the general prison of Assiout where he met with the officer who hates him. The officer insulted him calling him the rotten soldier... Finally he was assigned to the prison hospital.

"I found the prisoners in the hospital in a very bad condition, totally non-attended lacking food, cleanliness and care..." explained 'Omar.

'Omar immediately set to attend to the patients: he started by washing their clothes and washing the patients or showering them, cleaning the beds and changing the sheets and

finally cleaning the floor of the ward. The doctor was very impressed by the efforts of ‘Omar and offered him some money. But ‘Omar thanked him and said: “Money is not allowed in prison!” His relation with everyone in the prison was very good to the extent that he was responsible for the distribution of food and the necessities of the patients.

The Chief Warden of the prison was a graduate of the Azhar – the foremost Islāmic Sunni religious institution, and rather kind. He would mock ‘Omar who answered him always saying: “Do not joke and mock my thoughts, discuss them with me”, but the Chief Warden would always answer: “To you be your religion; and to me my religion”¹⁵²

For some time ‘Omar’s condition was reasonably well. With the doctor satisfied with him, the other employees including the Chief Warden, treated him reasonably well. That condition changed when the Chief Warden was replaced by another by the name of ‘Abdel-‘Azeem Aridy. The Shaykhs of the prison were irritated by ‘Omar, and with the new Chief Warden all expressed their religious feelings against ‘Omar: “Taking his life was allowed, and his blood was permissible... He who kills him will go to paradise...” was their decree. The new Chief Warden must have conceded to the opinion of the prison Shaykhs.

One day, one of the hospital (male) nurses complained of me to the new Chief Warden. That complaint was the cause of a misunderstanding between the doctor and the Chief Warden, who in retaliation began a series of torturing of ‘Omar: plucking of hair from his head and elsewhere, electrical shocks until complete fainting... Blood was taken from him during his prison time 64 times: “The blood of the kafir (unbeliever) is ḥalal (permissible) for the soldiers on the warfront... You are not important – you can die...”

In his recording, ‘Omar El-Dheeb said: I spent two years in prison and was discharged on an amnesty on the 25th of July 1973 and I am still walking with the friends on the trail of the Faith whatever the circumstances may be. I am ready for any trials...

Gamal Ḥassan concludes this episode:

I had the honour of meeting ‘Omar El-Dheeb for the first time at the home of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá – that home which is the rallying place of all the friends. There I heard from him more about the difficulties he met with and the sufferings he endured all alone, with patience and courage reminiscent of the martyrs of Iran of the Heroic Age. He sustained torture that brought him to the brink of dying. So terrible was his trials that he ceased to eat or drink. It was the doctor of the prison who alone came to his rescue at times preparing fresh tomato juice and slowly feeding him with it by forcibly opening ‘Omar’s mouth and pouring the juice slowly. Otherwise, he would have surely died.

¹⁵² Qurán 109 v 6.

1970 Egypt - Further Considerations

Since the Decree of President Gamal ‘Abdel-Nasser in the year 1960 banning the activity of the Assemblies, the Community in Egypt has resiliently coped with the combined challenges of loss of its Administration, three trumped-up court cases and groups periodically held in detention pending court hearings or otherwise. In the same time, certain zealots in the Government of Egypt who are in quest of personal fame and material profit, extended the scope of the decree to mean banning the individual Bahá’í from being Bahá’í.

There was little communication or knowledge of news of the Bahá’ís outside Egypt during that period. Egyptian Bahá’ís outside Egypt like myself abstained from asking questions that, if intercepted, may cause problems for their loved ones at home, while those in Egypt knew quite well that wide-open eyed surveillance and censors could intercept their communications and lead the Community to more imprisonment, investigation and courts appearances.

The population of the country as a whole had not fared better either during that period, though in a different manner. Following the euphoria of the 1952 revolution, led by Nasser, and the reforms and the achievements of his Government during the following decade, including a war and preparation for more war, all added up to a strained and frustrated populace blunting the initial euphoria felt in the earlier period following the coup. The manner in which our dear ‘Omar El-Dheeb was treated, as was related above, is a clear indication of the desire for vengeance that characterised the people of Egypt and especially those responsible amongst them.

On the 28th of September 1970, President Gamal ‘Abdel-Nasser died. For the people of Egypt, the world around them seemed to have crumbled. Anwar Sádát, who became president the following month, tried hard to bring some hope to the population, but did not have a magic wand for that. It took him three years to achieve that notable performance in what was known as the 1973 War with Israel, when the Egyptian Armed Forces restored some feeling of “dignity” for the nation.

In the following chapters we shall see how things got to almost a rock bottom situation with the Bahá’í Community of Egypt and how things slowly got better by the time Muḥammad Muṣṭafá left this world and this book comes to a close.

Beyond the range of this history, the Bahá’í Community in Egypt went through further crisis, details of which will hopefully appear in the expected work of our friend and collaborator Gamal Hassan.

Chapter Ten

The Period 1971 to 1981

Visiting Egypt after 19 Years

Towards the end of the year 1970, Ulfet and I decided, after I had left Egypt for almost 19 years since my initial pioneering in Libya in 1952, that we could consider a visit to Egypt. Why was it that visiting Egypt was postponed for such a long time? Mainly because there was cause to believe that, once there, I may be disallowed to leave the country for one reason or another.

The Year 1971

First visit to Egypt

Our first visit to Egypt started with the end of 1970 school holidays. My parents and some friends were at the airport.

We were deeply touched by what we saw and felt about the friends in Egypt. The spirit of love and hope was so obvious among young and old. Women vied with men in speaking about their experiences and the children were eager to see new faces in us. Every friend we met had a story to tell and we encouraged him or her to record his or her stories. When we returned to Tunis, we sent a report to the Universal House of Justice. Here is what the House said:

January 5, 1971

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice was so pleased that you and Ulfet were able to visit your father and the other friends in Egypt, and asks us to thank you for your report...

.....

The House of Justice is deeply touched by the spirit of dedication which motivates the Egyptian friends at this time and is convinced that this healthy attitude on the part of the believers is largely due to the example of self-abnegation and nobility set by your distinguished father.

We were deeply impressed by the appreciation of the House of Justice for the Egyptian friends: *deeply touched by the spirit of dedication which motivates them.*

The appreciation the beloved House had so generously attributed to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was most heart-warming: *the example of self-abnegation and nobility set by your distinguished father.*

Indeed, while we were there, friends came every day to our home. The men may have some business with Muḥammad Muṣṭafā and the women and children would normally be with mother Farida who would make them happy with stories or jokes and if required, help them if they had a problem. The children liked very much the way my mother received them and they would flock around her and then go and play or remain quiet. The friends did not feel they were visitors. Girls or young women would go to the kitchen to prepare tea or whatever is necessary for all who were there. They all felt at home. All were happy and enjoyed being in company with other friends in the home of Farida and Muḥammad Muṣṭafā.

Important Work Ulfet and I can do

That first visit to Egypt and what we witnessed there and the encouragement we felt from the message of the Universal House of Justice, all combined to convince Ulfet and me, that there may be some work we could do for the friends in Egypt.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafā was appointed as the “reference point” for the believers in Egypt. He needed to communicate with the Universal House of Justice and receive its guidance and instructions. Under the prevailing conditions that was practically very difficult and at times impossible. Direct communication with the World Centre was impossible – Egypt was at war with Israel. Indirect communication through the help of travellers was difficult and dangerous for the travellers who are subject to inspection during departure and arrival at the airports.

Our situation, Ulfet’s and mine combined, was different from that of all other friends. It was quite normal for me, or for Ulfet, or both of us, to travel to Egypt to see my parents. With this reasoning, we presented our readiness to help by being a conduit between Muḥammad Muṣṭafā and the House of Justice. This meant frequent visits to Egypt and when I was unable to leave my work, Ulfet went on her own. These visits, which in one of the years, amounted to four times continued during the following ten years when my father passed away in 1981, and then beyond that period for a further 3 years, that is till towards the end of 1984.

Some News for the period 1970 and 1971

I was not yet in a position to ask for news of Egypt to report to the House from our first visit, yet I understood that the Minister of Justice was approached regarding the legalisation of Bahá’í marriages. I understood that the Minister promised to look into the matter. Any arrangement, he said, would be limited to marriage between Bahá’ís and not if one party is not Bahá’í.

The Minister of Justice took no action because there was no apparent result. Personally, I think the Minister simply was not able to take any action in favour of a “Bahá’í problem” which could damage his reputation and jeopardise his political standing.

Our second visit to Egypt - end 1971.

On the 21st of November 1971, I wrote to the Universal House of Justice of our intended visit to Egypt and that we would be glad if there is anything the House would want us to do.

The answer of the House arrived after we had left, but it did assure Ulfet and me that our visits to Egypt may be useful for the friends there. The answer of the House was as follows:

December 8, 1971

Dearly beloved friend,

Your letter of November 21st, 1971 was received.

It is highly gratifying that you are able to visit your family and particularly your dear father. Please convey to him and through him the other beloved friends that our thoughts are constantly with them and our prayers are offered frequently for their protection and safety.

You will of course share with them all the information you have about the progress of the Faith everywhere.

You are also requested to obtain from your father the latest developments in respect of the court cases, the cemetery and the Hazíratu'l-Quds and any other matter which has recently transpired and would be of interest.

We took our two boys with us, Olinga 13 and Balsam 7. This second visit was incredibly illuminating. All my generation had grown two decades and there were so many young boys and girls who were a joy to see and listen to some of them telling their stories. It seemed to me that persecution brings the friends nearer to each other. Bahá'ís seem to close ranks to cope with the challenges of persecution.

We found a healthy atmosphere in these communities and a consensus among the friends in looking to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá for advice and help in all that concerns the affairs of the Faith and even their personal affairs on occasions.

We visited the friends in quite a number of centres, and in the meetings that were held we told them the news we had. Noting the joy and happiness our simple visit brought to the friends convinced us that we must come more often, and be better equipped with news and possibly with literature.

All we witnessed and felt was relayed to the Universal House of Justice.

Challenging the Constitutionality of the Decree 263 of 1960

As explained earlier under the heading The Year 1960, the Bahá'ís of Egypt rallied to keep the spirit up and encourage the teaching activity following the declaration of the Decree 263 of the year 1960. There seemed to be little that could be done legally against that Decree in view of the fact that the country was under "A state of Emergency".

This state of Emergence ended in 1964

However, the Zaytún Court case which, according to Gamal Ḥassan, was relatively very rapidly judged in June 1966 when the Bahá'ís should have tried with all possible means to delay the judgement in the hope for better conditions, was appealed within the legally allowed period for appeal, and so the court sessions of appeal started again. It was certain that the outcome of the case would have been very bad for the friends involved, and so every effort was made to delay the final ruling of the Appeal.

The friends had, before the end of the state of emergency, intended to prepare to challenge the constitutionality of the Decree 263 with the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal and with this action block, and eventually overturn, the dangerous situation created by the Zaytún case.

Following persistent and urgent efforts, the Zaytún Court finally agreed to suspend ruling on the appeal, pending the decision of the Supreme Constitutional Court regarding whether

the Decree 263 was constitutionally correct or not. This decision of the Zaytún Court was taken in its September 22, 1971 session and the Supreme Court was approached officially sometime towards the end of 1971.

A memorandum was prepared with the help of Lawyer Labib Mu'awwad and Talaat 'Abdel-Azeem. The memo was presented by the 39 Bahá'ís implicated in the Zaytún Case. It enunciated clearly the claim:

Each and every one herein mentioned ... (the list of names and addresses) have the honour of presenting the following:

The above named are Bahá'ís - in so being, they make use of the unconditional license provided by the legislator of the Constitution in stipulating freedom of belief. The legislator further abstained from limiting this freedom with any restrictions.

It seems that there is a misunderstanding of the Bahá'í religion and of its believers, evidenced by their being constantly pursued in such matters as the registration of marriages, in their meetings, their sources of livelihood, in the registration and inherent relation of their new-borns and in allowing them to perform freely their religious rites.

We further explain, that the impression formed regarding this religion and its followers - a widespread religion and followers recognised throughout the world and by International Institutions and Organisations - has no basis with, nor any relation to, the reality of this belief and its principles or to the practice and tendencies of its followers, in as much as the Bahá'í Faith exhorts unto all good and teaches obedience to government and acceptance of its rules and judgement.

Amongst the actions taken by the government (in response to a request by one of the State Security Departments) based on an opinion full of false accusations and doubts, was the issue of Decree 263 of the year 1960... (Included here is the full text of the Decree).

The memorandum then discusses the reason why the Decree is non-constitutional with a short but thorough treatise on the meaning of "Freedom of belief" as stipulated in art. 12 of the country's constitution and finally concludes with the request:

It follows from what has been exposed, that Decree 263 of the year 1960 is certainly and truly no other than one of the temporary procedures undertaken by the President of the Republic in his extraordinary powers during the period of Emergency. Such a device becomes, therefore, non-effective with the termination of the Emergency condition that took place on the 24th of March 1964.

As such the Decree ceases to be constitutional after 24/03/1964 since it loses its legislative support after termination.

The Year 1972

Our third Visit to Egypt

Ulfet and I flew to Cairo towards the end of December 1972 and spent 18 days in Egypt. Upon our return to Tunis, I sent a report to the Universal House of Justice. It may be best to present certain paragraphs of that report that will give the reader a vision of what we, Ulfet and I, found and experienced:

6th February 1972

Universal House of Justice,

Dearly beloved Friends

Visit to Egypt

... During the memorable three weeks we stayed there, we were able to meet many of the friends and we left with them the last World Centre Newsletters (October through December). While visiting we told them some of the wonderful world news and they were so eager and thirsty to hear of the victories all over the world. However, we felt they would have more time going through the newsletters we left with them. I was doubtful as to the treatment I shall get through customs and police authorities, and for this reason we took very few Bahá'í material. Fortunately, we were very well treated and I am now so sorry I did not take more, or rather many things in the way of prayer books, audio-visual material and the like. Now, however, I have arranged for all the necessary papers that allow me to go in and out of Egypt as I wish and it is our hope to visit the friends there at least once a year, always around the end of the year when my work allows.

All the friends in Egypt are in the highest of spirit. They have had a most difficult time, and in another sense, are still enduring many difficulties. Yet they have the firm conviction that they are making history, and there is reason to believe that wonderful results will be obtained through the legal channels. The present President Sádát is different to the previous President Gamal 'Abdel-Nasser. The notorious Secret Investigation Service (Al-Mokhabarat) with its top brass has been completely modified, and the minister of interior and his top aides – enemies of the Bahá'ís, were put in prison. While on trial, these very enemies of the Bahá'ís who had persistently maltreated them in prisons and concentration camp, found themselves in the same prison with Bahá'ís from Súháj...

It would be too long to dwell over the wonderful stories that each and every one of these wonderful Bahá'ís – husbands, wives, youth and even children – have to tell of the wonders of Bahá'u'lláh's Hand they saw in action, of the courage and bravery with which they endured the menaces and hardships, and over their happiness and joy over the steadfastness of all of them without exception.

We were able to visit the friends in Tanta, Kafr El-Zayat and Alexandria, besides Cairo...

We were very happy with our visit. We felt that things would slowly become normal again for the loved Ones in Egypt. Ulfet and I decided that we should dedicate as much as we possibly can to help the friends there. Our visits to Egypt and whatever help we would be able to provide had to remain unknown to the friends in Tunisia or elsewhere.

Little did we know while we dreamed happily of the forthcoming detente that a major covert plan was underway by the notorious Muḥammad Ḥasan Tantawi, he who had already rendered the life of the Súháj believers untenable. It is as though Bahá'u'lláh chose the Bahá'ís of Egypt for a mission they alone can accomplish and they have accepted to do so with all the suffering and challenges it entails.

The Monumental Tanta Incident

“Remember this day, Somaya, it is the beginning of a new victory in history”

Muḥammad Muṣṭafā to Miss Somaya Daniel under arrest – February 1972.

A few weeks after our return in early January 1972 from our third visit to Egypt, we heard of a spate of arrests, imprisonment and court attendances for 93 believers, men and women amongst whom two with suckling babies and two in their pregnancy (Nawal El-Kosheiri and Malakút Ḥasan). These friends were gathered from different towns across the country, driven as dangerous criminals to the prison in the town of Tanta, midway between Cairo and Alexandria in the north.

These events were utterly surprising, and the bewildering tumult that it created within the Bahá’í community was because they witnessed a strange action as though the authority had discovered and laid hands on a band of citizens who intended to raise a revolution and overturn government and religion at the same time.

Ámin Battah records in his memoirs that an understanding had been agreed upon with the State Security Investigation whereby the Bahá’ís would be in an on-going relationship with periodic communication with them - an understanding that was maintained during the period from the end of 1970 until the beginning of 1972 - a period of relative calm and tranquillity.

Ámin continues in his records:

Col. Muḥammad Ḥasan Tantawi was transferred from Súháj to Tanta as director of the State Security Investigation office of Tanta. It was Tantawi who had aroused the case against the Súháj Bahá’ís in 1970 as well as the painful case of Omar Al-Deeb there too. Tantawi is a fanatic, harbouring serious antagonism to the Bahá’ís. His previous attempts against them have failed to achieve his desires. It was time for him to prepare what he hoped to be the “coup de grace” on the Bahá’ís and their Faith in Egypt by trumped up accusations that will incarcerate a respectable number of Bahá’ís in long duration imprisonment.

Early in January, Tantawi had prepared a memo for the arrest of the Bahá’ís in collaboration with Bahiy’ul-Din Raba’i, chief of the province Prosecution Service. The order was transmitted to the chief of the Tanta Prosecution Service, ‘Abdallah Issa to arrest all those whom they discover to be Bahá’ís and undertake their interrogation and investigation.

The operation began by the arrest of the Bahá’ís of Tanta – men, women and school children starting with the venerable Mrs. Badr El-Ḥamamṣy and her children.

Gamal Ḥasan adds the following information:

Once the substitute prosecutor knew the names of relatives of the initial group of Bahá’ís arrested, warrants for their arrest, wherever they happened to live, and their

transfer under guard to Tanta were issued. From the second wave of arrests more names were mentioned and that, in turn brought into custody a further number of Bahá'ís and so on... Relatives of those in custody who came over to inquire of their welfare were arrested and added to the ones in prison. Such was the meanness of those officials as to arrest all members of a family except the low aged children who were left alone helpless unable to even feed themselves.

Mrs. Rúhiyyih Ḥabib Sheḥata of Alexandria came to Tanta in spite of the danger, to take care of those lone young ones, but finding it dangerous to remain there took the children over to her home in Alexandria and took care of them while their parents were in prison and this lasted for more than 40 days. Some of the young children were taken over by their Muslim relatives who indoctrinated the children against the Faith giving their parents after release a hard time regaining the children's attachment to the Faith. This was the specific case of the children of Ḥabib Áḥmad El-Masry and his wife Fawzia, who were taken by one of their aunts.

In the neighbouring industrial town of Meḥalla El-Kobra where papers and magazines as well as loudspeakers from the mosques incited the population against the Bahá'ís, things were different. Once it was known that Ḡharib Muṣṭafá Ghoneim and his wife 'Afaf were taken into custody leaving their children alone in their apartment, some decided to attack the apartment and kill the children or harm them. It took a kind neighbour who owned a greengrocery nearby to fire a pistol shot in the air and warn the mob that the next shot will be for whoever comes first to undertake such a macabre intention. In this way the young ones were saved.

Each one of the 93 believers had a story to tell. Ms Somaya Daniel and Ms Fawzia El-Masry together recorded their memoir in writing, detailing what they saw and experienced during their incarceration in the women's prison among the 33 women and girls inmates, while Mr. Šobḥi Elias made a voice recording of the 60 male prisoners.

The Tanta operation started in the last days of February and the first few days of March 1972, that is during the period of Ayyam-i-Há which the Authorities knew to be the beginning of the fasting month of the Bahá'ís.

The winter of 1972 was exceptionally cold and, of course, the Bahá'ís were subject to an exceptional treatment. For the night there was just one light and dilapidated covers. For a mattress there was the asphalted floor, which was left undried after cleaning in order to render sleep even more painful.

Miss Somaya Daniel was arrested on the 6th of March 1972. To arrest Somaya, the Authorities figured it was necessary for Major Mansúr Helmy Áḥmad to personally head the security guards over the visit to her home and take her to the Lazoughly¹⁵³ Investigation Services building. Major Mansour knew quite well that Somaya is not that dangerous. The operation just had to be seen as a dramatic one.

At Lazoughly she found that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Kamal Noseir and his nephew, young Nour Ghanem had been arrested and were already there. When Muḥammad Muṣṭafá saw her, signs of resentment and pain showed on his face and he immediately confronted Major Mansúr with the question: "Why do you bring this youth and arrest her? We are capable

¹⁵³ A district in central Cairo.

enough to answer your questions. You know very well that she is the only breadwinner of her family after the death of her father.”

To that Mansúr answered, “This time I am not the responsible person. I received a list of names to be brou

ght over for investigation in Tanta and I am not aware of the reason. We are waiting instructions.”

The four Bahá’ís were taken under heavy guard to the Khelifa¹⁵⁴ despatching centre near the Citadel. The three men were taken to a cell for men, while Somaya was put in another for women.

Somaya’s account of her experience, or rather, ordeal, reads as follows:

Around midnight women and children of all sorts and ages began to arrive for different reasons. Among them were what are known as the (vagrant) street boys or children. Being boys of 6 to 10 years of age they cannot be put with (adult) men. Pity for these children overwhelmed my feelings and I started to speak with them. They said that they regretted very much the day they ran away from home and they do not know what to do now. They are afraid to go back because they will be severely beaten and do not know what their parents will do to them. I encouraged them to go back home, sustain the punishment and begin a new life. My advice gave them hope and they gathered before me in friendship and harmony. Then came a group of women in fancy dress and make up, reeling under the effect of alcohol. They sat on the floor which was already full with women. They looked around and saw me sitting with the children around me. One of them, who looked like their leader called me saying: “Come, we want to speak with you.” I turned my face away and feigned not hearing her and began to pray. But this woman ordered two of her group to get up and bring me over to her. A terrible fear gripped me as the two women got up and started towards me. Suddenly the young boys around got up and stood in the way saying: “Whoever of you come near we shall beat her!” Effectively one of the bigger boys gave a heavy punch to one of the women. At that point, the group of night women started screaming and called the warden saying these children beat us and create havoc in the room. The warden took his belt off and whipped the boys with it so severely that I started to cry with them. Then the warden came towards the head woman of that group who gave him some money and asked about what I am accused of, I heard him reply: “Leave her alone she is accused of some politics.” This answer frightened these women and I was left alone praying that Bahá’u’lláh deliver me out of that pit.

Naturally I was unable to sleep. At 4 in the morning, the guard called my name and I joined the three friends of last evening who, I found, were also handcuffed and chained. It was considered that I need not be handcuffed. We were told that we were to be transferred to Tanta under strict guard on the first train leaving Cairo at dawn, known as the Press train¹⁵⁵. A police vehicle took us to Cairo main railway station and we boarded the train which stops at all stations to deliver the press and for passengers also. I sat next to uncle Muştafá who was chained to a guard who sat beside him. I had no idea where were the other two friends - Kamal Noşeir and Nour

¹⁵⁴ Idem.

Ghanem. The handcuffs and chain were very painful to uncle Muṣṭafā – any movement on his part or trying to get some rest showed agony on his face. I asked the guard to unlock the handcuffs and chain saying: “Do you think this man with his age will run away from you?” The guard, who felt the same discomfort, readily freed him.

In Tanta we went on foot to the police station where we were locked up in wait to be presented in due course for the investigation and prosecution. We were very hungry and extremely tired. We asked the cell guard to buy for us sandwiches and tea. I asked for a cheese sandwich, but when the sandwiches came, they were all bean¹⁵⁶ sandwiches. I wanted to protest – I had asked for cheese sandwich... I remember Uncle Muṣṭafā saying: “Somaya, when we are in a situation like this, we should accept everything that happens to us. We are not in a position to choose what we want!” This advice remained in memory all my life.

We remained in the cell until the evening when we were presented before the Chief of Investigation of Tanta whom we found later to be the mastermind of the Sūhāj suffering of the friends there two years earlier almost day for day. His name was on the desk “Lt. Col. Ḥasan Tantawi”. Tantawi looked us up and down in an attitude of self-possession and pride as he sat on his swivelling seat behind the desk and started talking with us. We found what he said to be curious and had no relation to our detainment. As an example he said to me: “Miss Somaya, you are grown up now and you are not married. Why is that?”

I did not expect such words from him and did not speak in answer to his shocking question. But uncle Muṣṭafā answered him saying: “Somaya is the eldest of the four brother and sisters. Her father passed away suddenly, leaving her as the sole support of the family because her father’s pension is not enough for the family. It is she who takes care of the expenses of the family and the education of the siblings. In the absence of her sacrifice, the family affairs would have been difficult. For this we should commend her, not blame her for not yet being married! So please, would you mind if we talk about our subject, why are we here and what is happening?”

“I am here to receive you only”, was his answer after a moment of hesitation, “This affair is not my business, because the Prosecutor will see you in an investigation that will proceed normally. I speak with you in no official manner.”

However, it did not take long for him to return to criticizing in an effort to humiliate us asserting that we are under accusation and are at his mercy. His target for attack this time was Kamal Noseir to whom he said: “Mr. Kamal, you are of Islāmīc origin, notwithstanding you chose for yourself a Christian wife who is also divorced. Why?”

Kamal became terribly emotional and answered him very sternly saying: “I do not allow you ever such speech. Do not think either that my position here makes me weak. I beg you! I do not want to hear nor allow you say even one word of insult concerning my wife and mother of my children. Do not underestimate me for I am a free man and have status and dignity. I ask you to consider that!”

¹⁵⁶ The traditional stewed broad beans, known as “fool medammés”

The answer of Kamal, and the way he said it, had its sudden effect on the man whose face changed and turned away from us. He thought he could influence us, from his high status, as he wishes, after telling us that we are accused in a court case and are here for investigation – a surprise information that fell on us like a thunderbolt. The answers he obtained from us shook him and rendered him silent.

Now uncle¹⁵⁷ Muṣṭafá took the situation in his hands in his usual wise manner and spoke first to Kamal saying: “I think what you said has been understood by the gentlemen, who appreciate your position now. I ask you to be calm and I do not want any such emotion from you anymore. What you said is enough.”

Then he (uncle Mustafa) turned towards Lt. Col. Tantawi and addressed him with gentleness and calm. “I beg your respected person – and that is a special request from an old and aged man, that this situation terminates and ends in order that our relationship that existed with all the responsible officials we dealt with in our previous court cases continues in mutual respect. I hope my request will be accepted by you.

Tantawi moved his head in a sign of acceptance and uttered no word after that...

That man, Lt. Col. Tantawi, could have quite well got up and gave Kamal a bad time – beating, slapping him or inflicting any form of rough handling. Somehow, this did not happen. Instead he asked an orderly to take the four Bahá’ís away to a nearby building or part of the building ground floor. They were left to sit on chairs in an open courtyard in cold weather until midnight when they were called individually for interrogation in the prosecutor’s office.

Somaya said that the questions were very similar to the ones they had habitually answered in the previous interrogations and investigations. After her interrogation she found that three more Bahá’ís were brought over, amongst whom was Ramzi Gollestaneh from the nearby town of Shebeen El-Qawm. The guards tried to keep those who were interrogated separated from each other and from the newcomers, but Somaya was able to speak with Ramzi and the other newcomers and she continues the narrative in her memoirs saying:

Ramzi said to me:

“We heard all the questions that were asked of you and we also heard your answers. You answered with great courage and in a loud voice. This gave us strength because we came here quite perturbed and anxious. This is our first time we have such an experience, being dragged out of our homes by the Security Investigation people. Previously they came to our workplace to talk with us, quite friendly, and inquired about the Bahá’í Faith.”

- Then Ramzi asked: “*Do you have any idea why this action is being taken?*”

- I answered: “*No I do not. I was brought here with uncle Muṣṭafá and Kamal Noseir and his nephew Nour!*”

- “*Because uncle Muṣṭafá is with us, things will be alright, God Willing. Álláh ’u’ Abhá. We are now ready for all that may come!*” said Ramzi.

¹⁵⁷ Traditionally, young people in Egypt address the elderly as “uncle or Auntie”, regardless of actual blood or family relationship.

At the end of the interrogation or investigation, we were taken to the Police station in the cell we were in yesterday morning. It was cold and there was nowhere to sleep except the bare floor, and so we had no cover above or underneath us.

While we were in this condition, Kamal Noseir asked uncle Muṣṭafá, “Have you understood what is going on? Why are we here, specifically in Tanta?” Uncle Muṣṭafá answered: “When the officer said that we are under investigation I got the impression that there is a case being prepared for us. However, the fact that there are friends from Shebeen El-Qawm and we are from Cairo seems to me that this case is not limited to a group of friends who happen to know each other as in the previous cases. I also feel that the officer of Investigation Authority (meaning Tantawi) was not truthful when he told us that this affair is not his business. This affair is trumped up and not by one party. I do not know to what lengths this case will go from here!”

We tried to sleep, but realised that the guards were looking at us through the bars of the elevated window probably curious to know what we are doing. We ignored them and tried to get some sleep or some rest.

Suddenly we realised that Kamal Noseir had severe pain to the extent of crying aloud from a painful back and leg. He told us that he had suffered from a herniated disc before. All we were able to do to reduce the pain was to massage his back continuously until it warmed somewhat. Each of us brought out heavy clothes and covered him with them. He sweated terribly and was feverish. We prayed and slowly he returned to a somewhat easier condition. Only then were we able to get a few moments of rest.

In the morning we were taken to the Tanta main prison. As we entered we found the officers waiting for us: some taking down our identity and complete information, while the others taking pictures of us, frontal and sideways with us showing a number we were given. I saw that uncle Muṣṭafá was watching me from the side of the door while I was being photographed. I was smiling when being photographed with no signs of anxiety. When I finished uncle Muṣṭafá said to me: “Somaya, while being photographed you were like an angel flying in the spiritual court of the sacred Faith, hopeful and smiling. What is happening now will be for the good of the Faith and the blazoning of the Word to heights above all expectations, God Willing! ***Remember this day, Somaya, it is the beginning of a new victory in history.***”

With these words from uncle Muṣṭafá still in my ear. I was conducted to the prison where the Bahá’í women who had come before me were held. I recognised Fawzia El-Masry and Mrs. Badr El-Ḥamamši who when told that uncle Muṣṭafá was brought to the prison also, expressed the opinion that this affair is much bigger than she thought. I told her that uncle Muṣṭafá came to the same conclusion.

These were difficult times for those in prison and for those of their families who remained outside the prison specially the mothers. Special mention should be made here of the Cairo mothers such as Fatima Hafez whose husband, sons and daughters and in laws – nine in all, were in the Tanta prison. Narguis El-Kosheiri with her husband and two daughters, one of whom was pregnant. Neimat Nashed, who had lost her husband four years earlier, had all her siblings in prison in Tanta. These mothers and many others undertook the task of preparing food and bringing clothing for their family members in prison and made the trip

every day to Tanta and back. Many families suffered financially because salaries of those in prison were suspended.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá fell sick while in prison to the extent that worried the friends. The cold and humid conditions affected his health badly¹⁵⁸. The friends gave some of their clothes to keep him warm and others took turns in preparing hot beverages for him until he regained a reasonable condition. The friends continuously chanted prayers whether in the men's wards or those for the women.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá described how the prisoners celebrated the feast of Naw-Rúz. They had kept aside small portions of the sugar that was given to them every day with the tea and in Naw-Rúz, that sugar was dissolved in some drinking water. The sweetened water was their feast Sherbet drink, but without fruit juice.

Gamal Ḥassan expressed a different view regarding the state of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá under those circumstances, noting:

As for Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, I admired his serenity in this confinement and his jubilation with the debates that were arranged between the believers and the clergy in the prison, debates with the media reporters and cameras. This was the first time in the history of the Faith in Egypt to happen. He was serene in spite of being in a situation where a young and stout person could have become sick in the solitary cell where he was confined. The cell had one high up iron barred window that cannot be shuttered by some cloth or rag. Yet no one of us succumbed to this dreadful condition even uncle Muṣṭafá overcame the situation.

The Rescue – Lawyer Labib Muá'waḍ¹⁵⁹

In the midst of arrests and interrogation of the believers one group after another, there was no attention given to the reason or plan behind such an extensive and multifocal action against the Bahá'ís. The treatment the prisoners were subjected to by the gaolers in the beginning was very bad. They convinced themselves, and often just alleged, that these Bahá'ís were spies for the enemies of Egypt, agents of foreign countries that wished all harm to the Egyptians and, after all, they were damned infidels!

As usual, daily newspapers, weekly magazines and all sorts of fast read publications were quick to seize the opportunity (or jump on the bandwagon) to increase their distribution, enhance their reader appeal, and glamourise its reputation – the more dramatic the lie the better, true or false was not the criterion. There are no media people in the Arab world who could beat the Egyptian media in this field. “Arrest of the Bahá'í Gang” (or Ring) were the titles in large headlines in black or in red on the front pages and inside ones in most papers.

The Good Samaritan

The women prisoners suffered more, and the women staff in the prison were especially cruel towards them. Nevertheless, there was a “good Samaritan”¹⁶⁰ – there must always be one in such circumstances. The prison doctor, who had more occasion to be intimately associated with the prisoners through his medical care for them, realised that these inmates

¹⁵⁸ He suffered from long standing chest problems.

¹⁵⁹ This chapter is gleaned from more than one source who were among the prisoners as well as from the Bahá'ís outside the prison dealing with the defence lawyers.

¹⁶⁰ Alternatively “Good Egyptian”!

did not fit the picture painted of them in what was being published and propagated about them. "Dr Ibrahim 'Awara was a kind man" wrote one of the ladies, "and through his contact with us he realised our grievance". This Doctor's understanding and sympathetic attitude towards the Bahá'ís influenced the prison male and female staff and changed their minds about the Bahá'ís. In turn, the Bahá'ís helped in reinforcing this change in attitude by their gentleness and kindness towards the staff.

Dr Ibrahim alerted the friends to the fact that a grave intention had been prepared for them and advised that every effort be made to contact their relatives outside of the prison and to get the help of lawyers to defend them. He further informed the friends that a sentence was already prepared for the court's first session and thus end the case rapidly sentencing the friends to prison. The court had kept everything around their plan secret, including the date of the first session which Dr Ibrahim informed the women Bahá'ís that it was scheduled for the following day!

How could these women Bahá'ís inform the friends outside the prison of the date of the first session within the hours available to them since Dr Ibrahim advised them of the date?

At this critical juncture, yet another "good Samaritan" appeared to help the friends. This time the "good Samaritan" was a women inmate who was leaving the prison having served her time. One of the Bahá'í women gave her a letter to give to the relatives of the Bahá'í prisoners, some of whom were always around the prison gate daily waiting for news.

This initiative produced the desired effect as the lawyer Labib Mu'awwad was advised just in time of the date of the first session.

Prior to the date for the court sitting, a program of intimidating the prisoners was set in motion. The young female Bahá'ís were especially targeted. During one of the debates undertaken between the Bahá'ís and the clergy when the elder Bahá'í women were not in the ward, the prison workers were told to go and frighten the young Bahá'ís by telling them that they will be hanged if they do not recant their Faith. Somaya Daniel who was there says, "They told the young ones they will be hanged. Spontaneously the young ones hailed the information with the Egyptian wedding type ululation in an expression of joy that perplexed the prison workers, and made them retire in shame."

At another instance, the chief prison warden came to the women's ward and warned them saying, amongst other things, that they will leave that prison either on foot if they recant their Faith, or to the gallows if they persist.

For the men, the strategy was more sophisticated. Rolls of rope that looked like hanging rope, carried by a number of the prison staff were paraded through the corridor of the wards. The prison workers were asked to warn them of a plan to hang them. Some were taken for individual interrogation with their imprisoned wives and warned that their children will be taken away from them and brought up in Muslim orphanages.

That list of intimidations is quite long and many of the imprisoned Bahá'ís have individual stories to tell.

In the court

On the first of April 1972, the prison was put in a state of "emergency". The ward doors were opened and the prisoners were told to get ready to go to court for the first sitting. Within one hour all were marshalled within the courtyard. Officers and armed security forces were ready in the square outside the prison gates and transport trucks were aligned. The women prisoners were the first to be conducted in single file between two lines of armed security guards to the transport vehicles with armed guards. There was a similar arrangement for the

men prisoners. Family and friends collected outside among a crowd of town people who came to see the “enemies of the country” and bad words and insults were loudly shouted at them from the crowd. The prisoners watched through the fenestrations in the transport vans in an effort to identify their relatives who would have mingled with the crowds.

At the assembling area within the court building a further set of officers and armed security were waiting. The prisoners were individually conducted by armed guard, and proceeded in a single file between two rows of armed guards, up to the courtroom on the second floor. In the large courtroom a further detail of armed police headed by no less than the province head of the Police and the chief police officer of the town of Tanta, were lined up at strategic positions.

A dramatic fearful scenario was staged. The State and people were thirsty for drama!

The large courtroom was divided in two, the men prisoners stood on the right as one enters the room, while the women were on the left. In the middle were seated the officials, police, Investigation officers, prosecutor, witnesses, clerks and the rest of the expected helpers in any court as well as some of the public and the press. The prisoners were all in prison clothes.

Fifteen minutes before the entry of the Judge, there was a surprise: Lawyer Labib Mu’awwad came in, to the dismay of the officials in general who pronounced inciting comments against Mu’awwad in order to create an issue. However, Mu’awwad calmly avoided even showing any reaction to what he must have heard.

With the entry of the Judge, the session began, as usual, with the call of each of the 93 defendants. The Judge then read out the role of charges applied to the defendants, and these included the undertaking of activities in variance with the Decree 263 of the year 1960 that prohibits individuals from engaging in any activity related to that of the abolished Bahá’í Assemblies.

This was an accusation very different from what was published in the papers and duly advised by the officials themselves to the Bahá’ís. Condemnation of the Bahá’ís for any reason, however minor, would be enough to prove to the public that the (false) accusations were true. This appeared to be the aim and plan of the authorities.

Every one of the defendants refuted the accusation. Mu’awwad requested the postponement of the case to allow him to study the files of the defendants. “*The Body of Investigators surrounded this case with such secrecy that I was unable to study the file and form an opinion*” declared Mu’awwad. “*Furthermore, I came to know of today’s date for this sitting only yesterday in spite of the fact that I am the lawyer of the Bahá’ís in their case with the Supreme Court.*”

Attempts to pass an immediate judgement failed and to the dismay of those present in court, and those who were to profit from false witnessing and also the clergy – all were in manifest gloom. The judge had to postpone the court for a fortnight.

The defendants were then taken back to their prison wards with the same parade of armed guards that they had experienced on their way to the court.

The friends always found a fine ray of light when all around was gloom. An officer of the Police Force benevolently decided to help them. He ordered that the packages of food and personal matters that their relatives outside the prison brought for them be delivered in person to the prisoners, and he also ordered drinking water to be brought to them. He personally supervised this arrangement. This was a very soothing gesture to their hearts. Especially that they had expected to be released from prison with this first court sitting, instead of, rather disappointedly, being taken back to their wards.

In prison, the other inmates expressed their sincere sorrow. They told them: “Prison is not for people like you.”

A fair press conference

One hour after their return from the court, they were invited to a press conference with a journalist called Ra’fat Botros¹⁶¹ from the “Al-Mussawar” magazine, accompanied by a photographer. Dr Awara came to the conference to be reassured about what happened at the court. The deputy chief warden also attended.

The feelings of the friends towards the media was anger and distrust. Their experience with previous conferences was that the press was dishonest. However, Ra’fat Botros listened to them with understanding and kindness. This journalist understood the truth about the Faith and finally and for the first time his article relating the truth, and a correct record of what took place in court was published. Later the friends got to know that his article was rejected by the magazine editorship twice before it was published.

The days that followed were eventless. A stricter dealing with the Bahá’í prisoners was applied. They were denied the help of the doctor, even for the women Bahá’ís, many of whom suffered from bowel problems and influenza. They were denied bathing facilities, and their authorizations to have their monthly salaries issued to their relatives were not transmitted by the Chief Warden.

“What a strange period we are living now?” wrote Somaya in her memoirs. “All around us is silence – no debates, no discourses, nor even meeting special people interested to know about the Faith... But again, our desire is one thing and the wish of the Almighty is something else. It seems that He is melting us in a special crucible in order that each one of us may gain what is impossible to imagine! We spent our time in prayer and discussing the teachings and exhortations of the Faith... We felt like we have dedicated our life to Bahá’u’lláh.”

Insight in the attitude of the court

The official charge dealt with by the court which was limited to: undertaking various activities in variance with the Decree 263 of the year 1960 that prohibits individuals to undertake any activity related to the Bahá’í Assemblies, is no more than a misdemeanour. However, the papers and the investigation published were grave criminal accusations of “departure from established order, offence to Islám, incitement to peace with a hostile state (meaning Israel) and a series of serious acts and practice of misconduct. This dual discourse: one thing in court and another in public, generated thought and reflection.

Gamal Hassan who was one of nine members of one family of prisoners and who followed the affairs of the Faith in Egypt since then believes that the plan consisted of delaying the criminal accusations and producing them at the right time to be abetted by a number of false witnesses who were actually present and ready in the court. With such a ploy the shock to the Bahá’ís and their lawyer would be devastating and the Judge will have no difficulty in pushing through a criminal case. In the second court sitting the public prosecutor raised these accusations but was unable to prove any of them. Further attempts were made to slip an

¹⁶¹ Ra’fat Botros is a Copt that is Christian. The Egyptian Christians are generally kind in their relation with the Bahá’ís, whether they are government officials or in the press.

incriminating document into the files of the case during the following years, but these attempts also failed.

The master Plot

While writing these pages of the Arabic version of this book in February 2019, that is to say 47 years following the event of Tanta, I contacted Gamal Ḥasan and requested him to tell me what he thought the enemies of the Faith could have been plotting at that time. I received his answer on February 3, 2019 as follows:

My dear Rowshan,

Álláh'u' Abhá

Thank you for raising the question of the intrigues that were being prepared during the time we were in prison in Tanta. One of the intrigues had far reaching sinister intentions that I got to know about from our dear friend Dr Al-Sayed Muḥammad Al-Azzawi¹⁶² after we were released from prison. Here are the details:

When we entered the prison we had no idea what those enemies were plotting for us although we felt that what they called a court case was no more than a means to oblige the Bahá'ís to deny their Faith and announce their return to Islám and so there would be no way for them to leave the prison. The mastermind of this plot was that same Lt. Colonel who was behind the Sújáḡ persecution of the friends there in 1970 as well as the court case he prepared in the year 1985¹⁶³ when he became the Director of State Investigation Department.

The plot that was secretly planned was to eliminate us during the second court session that took place 14 days after the first one while we were still in prison.

Among the various Muslim clergy who were brought to the prison to convince us to recant our Faith was a non-generalised¹⁶⁴ cleric by the name of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥalim. It was that Shaykh who headed the famous debate that took place with us in prison and to which a large number of journalists were invited. As a result of that famous debate, news of it spread widely around the Arab world news agencies, but regrettably they consisted of painting a false and terrible image of the Bahá'ís.

Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥalim had presented himself during the discourse as the “spiritual guide” for “Misr Spinning and Weaving Company,” in Al Mahalla Al Kobra – where tens of thousands of workers and employees work. Among these workers are some real ruffians who are ready to combine their efforts and execute any request from their “spiritual guide”.

It seems that following the failure of the debate, during which the spiritual guide was subjected to the strong arguments from the elder Bahá'í fellow prisoners and as his “emptiness” became evident, he conceived a new tactic whereby dozens of the

¹⁶² As a reminder, Dr Al-Sayed Muḥammad Al-Azzawi was one of the prominent Bahá'ís in Egypt. It was he who translated “God Passes By” to Arabic.

¹⁶³ This case is beyond the scope of this book which covers the period up to the end of 1981.

¹⁶⁴ That is in plain clothes not those of a Shaykh or Lay reader.

company workers armed with clubs would be brought over in lorries to Tanta when the court was scheduled to be held on the 14th of April 1972 and at an agreed signal these thugs would rush into the court and bear down on the Bahá'ís and execute their sinister work. The Shaykh had prepared a speech that was to be delivered by the public prosecutor in court, and when the sentence: "If the responsibility was in my hands, I would have judged that they (meaning the Bahá'ís) be executed more than once," be heard, that would be the signal for the thugs to act. In the meantime the protection of the police in the court would have been reduced to a mere gesture.

Somehow a copy of the document of that plot fell into the hands of a friend of Lawyer Mu'awwad and he sent it to Mu'awwad on the afternoon of April 13th when the court sitting was for the next day. Al-'Azzawi was in Mu'awwad's office to discuss the strategy for the following day's Tanta session. Mu'awwad read the document to Al-'Azzawi who wept in anguish over what could befall the friends in Tanta. Mu'awwad was said to have exclaimed: "Over my dead body..." and immediately phoned the Director of State Security with whom he had work relationship besides social fellowship, and read to him the document over the phone and explained to him the whole situation. The Director seemed surprised and asked Mu'awwad how he obtained such a dangerous document. Mu'awwad answered: "*He who brought it to me is not one of your men. Your men did not betray you. I will send it to you immediately!*" Mu'awwad sent the document with a messenger. A short while later, and while Al-'Azzawi was still in Mu'awwad's office, the Director phoned back to confirm the authenticity of the document and of the plot. He assured Mu'awwad, who (being the lawyer of the Bahá'ís) would have certainly been at the court session and would have been harmed himself were the plot be executed, that he will send his men immediately to Tanta to make sure that such a plot be thrown out and put the

Tanta case under the control of the central authority in Cairo.

Al-'Azzawi further told me that Mu'awwad discussed with him the strategy to be followed in the defense of the following day's court session. Mu'awwad conceived the idea of transferring the whole case to the juvenile courts if he could find amongst the prisoners any juveniles... (Mu'awwad put his hand on his mouth when he said the word juveniles indicating the importance of keeping the idea secret...).

Effectively the first thing Mu'awwad did upon entering the court the following day was to go to the women prisoners and look for the youngest defendant among them.¹⁶⁵ That was Remond Shawki El-Ḥamamsy who when arrested was a few weeks short of her 15th birthday.

Divine Will

The events of that momentous date of the 15th of April 1972 in Tanta were recorded in detail by Somaya Daniel and Fawzia El-Masry who were both among the women prisoners. Here is what they recorded:

¹⁶⁵ 'Afaf Hassan who was 17 and one of the defendants, said that she was standing next to Zeineb El-Ḥamamsy when Mu'awwad entered the court room. Mu'awwad went immediately to them and asked their ages. When he found the two girls were above 15 of age he asked them if they knew any younger defendants. They indicated Remond Shawki El-Ḥamamsy. Remond was to become 15 years of age the following day.

Then came the 15th of April 1975, and we all went to the court for the second session in the same manner and the same procession as we did the first time: the armed guards, transport lorries, and so on.

In the court room, however, there were novelties this time. Besides the witnesses who were summoned by the Investigation officers the first time, we noticed that there were a number of persons who were probably sent from Cairo. Press personnel were present, together with Muslim and Christian clerics. There was also a sizeable public unknown to us and to the case under consideration. One of us recognised the head of her school, while another recognised the head of the legal department of her work establishment.

Six lawyers headed by Lawyer Labib Mu'awwad and including Lawyer Talaat 'Abdel-Azeem were there to defend us. The President of the Bar of Tanta was there.¹⁶⁶ Only very few of our relatives were able to steal themselves into the overcrowded courtroom.

There, we were all had one thought: Praise be unto Thee, O God! We accept Thy Decree, but render Thy Faith victorious.

The Judge entered and Mu'awwad was requested to plead:

After perusal of the documents of this case I have three arguments of defence. The first being: The defendant N° 81 - Raimond Shawki El-Ḥamamşy. is juvenile and she was under 15 years of age when arrested. In view of article 344 the transfer of this case to the juvenile court becomes imperative since this tribunal is not qualified to take it up for consideration.

This bombshell shook the tribunal to its foundation!
The Judge and the judiciary were thunderstruck!

The public prosecutor and the investigators had overlooked that loophole, whether purposely or by mistake. They thought they would never be questioned for their acts, but the Almighty exposed their perversity before friend and foe.

The judge called for Raimond to be present before him and said:

The Tribunal is proceeding and is estimating the age of the defendant as being 16 years of age. We shall continue to hear the case.

I refuse this decision, boldly objected Mu'awwad, neither the judge nor even a doctor have the right to estimate the age of the defendant when she has a birth certificate which is an official document that determines her exact date of birth. If you wish to verify this, the session may be raised for only 15 minutes and order given that her certificate be brought over from her school that is near the building of this tribunal.

Rather Continue to present the remaining defences, said the Judge.

¹⁶⁶ A step that had no precedence in the history of Justice in Egypt according to recommended sources.

*Should this first defence not be accepted from me, said the lawyer with added daring and attachment to his point, I shall be obliged to 'request disqualification of this judiciary'*¹⁶⁷

We were able then to feel and see the change of condition of the judge and the suppressed embarrassment of the prosecutor and the investigation officials, staring at Mu'awwad who was standing upright in apparent defiance. The prisoners were also in silent astonishment.

Our hearts were pounding vigorously as we watched the elevated scale of the balance drop and the low one lifted up and the whole case slipping out of the hands of the plotters.

Is there any expression that explains what is happening? We do not think so. However, we can say that this could be an example of a miracle from Bahá'u'lláh that is an answer to the perpetual demand of the doubtful.

We shall look into this point at the end of the session, go ahead with your defence, said the judge after overcoming his perplexity.

The lawyer continued:

The second point of defence is that we went to the Supreme Constitutional Court with a challenge to the constitutionality of the Presidential Decree 263 of the year 1960 which is the cause of many difficulties for the Bahá'ís...¹⁶⁸ therefore, we ask the court to postpone the case until such time as the Constitutional Court pronounces its ruling.

As for the third point of defence, following the study of the investigation documents and considering the accusations announced the charge is clearly no more than a "misdemeanour", that is void of any charge or crime relating to state security.

For this reason, I request of your honour to order the immediate release of the defendants without any monetary guarantee (bail) in view of the fact that the order for their absolute detention was not consistent with the law.

This is my defence and the other lawyers have theirs to present.

The session continued with the other lawyers pleading for and insisting on the individual right of belief and the innocence of the defenders of any wrongdoing. The declaration of the public prosecutor was, according to the friends, totally irrelevant and devoid of substance.

Finally the judge pronounced the verdict:

The release of the accused with a financial guarantee of twenty (LE20) pounds for each accused and postponing the consideration of the other subjects of the defence

¹⁶⁷ The term in Arabic is "رد هيئة القضاء" and it is a note of discord for the Judge for improper use of the law. Three such notes would trigger off the expulsion of the Judge from the judiciary altogether and send him to premature retirement.

¹⁶⁸ Here Mu'awwad explained the many points regarding the subject of non-constitutionality of the Decree...

to April 29, 1972 for the presentation of the birth certificate of the accused Remond Shawki El-Hamamşy.

While the friends and the lawyers came towards the to-be-released defendants to congratulate them, Mu'awwad asked that every effort be made to pay the guarantee money (bail) immediately in order to leave the prison as quickly as possible. He knew that obstacles will be placed to delay the payments in order that the imprisonment may continue.

Somaya Daniel and Fawzia El-Masry recorded:

We went back to the prison where the other inmates met us with congratulations and joy while our parents and relatives outside went to gather the amounts of money necessary to bail out the 93 prisoners. It was a night of good-bye for every one – a mixture of joy and sorrow together in the heart. Bahá'u'lláh had bountifully allowed us, His small and feeble beings, to participate in some effort for His Faith –indeed, what an honour. Our souls became filled with dreams for the future. We shall go out and proclaim to the people that Bahá'í means pure faith and established belief far from all the accusations that were told about it. For a long time people will talk about our case in different ways and tones!

Yet, separation was difficult. Our spirits were united in our ordeal and in the conditions, we lived. We shared everything and nothing worried us except the protection of the Faith. The night went by with each one of us expressing her feelings, thoughts and experience and we wrote our names and towns on the walls as well as verses of Bahá'u'lláh...

The next day, the 16th of April 1972, the women prisoners began to pack and be ready to leave while the men prisoners and the relatives outside were preparing the money to pay the bail which was not a small sum at the time. Gamal Hassan says the LE 20 bail was more than the monthly salary of a university graduate working in a government administration.

Suddenly, the prison loudspeaker came on for everyone to hear, with the reading of an article published the same day in the Islámic Tribune magazine relating the opinion of the Muslim Ulama' and Shaykhs regarding the Bahá'í Faith. The article was extremely disparaging of the Faith with plenty of lies and false information. Worse still, it called on those who love Islám to take revenge on the Bahá'ís, that their blood is permissible because they are renegades of Islám and Islám has nothing to do with that faith.

Doubt that they will ever leave that prison crept into the minds of the friends. Indeed that was the intention of whoever was behind that campaign against the Bahá'ís.

Analysing the situation as gleaned from insight of Gamal Hassan

The scene on the 15th of April 1972 when the Judge ruled the release of the Bahá'í prisoners against payment of a sum of LE 20 per person as a guarantee, had three players:

- The Authority in Tanta that wanted to keep the Bahá'ís in prison by all means, honest or dishonest, legal or illegal.
- The prisoners who wanted to leave the prison by all means, which could only be legal.
- The higher State Security Authority in Cairo which, with Lawyer Mu'awwad, were monitoring the situation and opening doors that kept closed on purpose.

The Judge knew that the LE 20 was a large sum for most of the prisoners to have and certainly not with them in prison. The friends were taken suddenly from their homes and would not have taken any money with them except some small change, maybe. The Judge knew also that if the guarantee money is not paid within 48 hours from the 15th of April, the prisoners would remain in prison at least for a further 15 days with a possibility of revising the judgement and applying a 3 to 5 years' imprisonments.

The prison Chief Warden advised the women Bahá'í prisoners at 11 am April 15, that the prison cashier window closes at midday and if the bail money was not paid by then he will have to apply the regulation of a further 15 day imprisonment. He did not speak with the men prisoners. It was the kind and God sent prison Doctor who went to the men and advised them of the warning of the Prison Chief.

The Head of the State Security Directory in Cairo ordered that the Cashier window of the prison remain open after regular hours in order to accept the bail money for the 93 Bahá'í prisoners. The Chief Warden was obliged to obey and it was late in the afternoon that the operation of payments ended and for the prison gates to remain open for the friends to go out after 5 pm. This action was never heard of before!

On the 16th of April, many newspapers and magazines that had previously published articles disparaging the Faith and the Bahá'ís, announced the release of the Bahá'ís. There was danger that the public in Tanta would rise and look out for occasion to harm the Bahá'ís as they leave the prison. The court ruling of the previous day had already infuriated those who were around.

By 7 pm the prison vans began the transfer of the women prisoners first, to the Directorate of Security in Tanta, rather than its police station.¹⁶⁹ There, the 93 were released as soon as they showed up at that Directorate hall into the hands of those Cairo officials.

Thus the Bahá'ís went straight to their destinations using their own means of transport, all along surrounded by their loved ones!

In their memoirs, Somaya Daniel and Fawzia El-Masry noted:

Are we in a trance? Are we dreaming? So simple and easy without further procedures? We heard that these were the instructions received from the Public Prosecutor in Cairo.

We waited for the men to arrive and we set ourselves in groups of the same town. We who were arrested in Cairo walked together in the streets of Tanta and met our relatives who were so eager to meet us and who have been waiting for us since yesterday without sleep nor rest. The streets were crowded with Bahá'ís, and with the joy of meeting the friends. Nobody stood in our way as we went to the Railway station and then to home with our loved ones. We prayed in gratitude to Almighty God for the safety of the friends and in hope for His acceptance.

A final word remains to be said, each one of us had a role to play. Serving each other and striving to please the hearts so that our souls were united above all earthly matter or relation. The sacrifice and love we saw and felt was similar to that of a mother for

¹⁶⁹ The Tanta Authorities would have probably applied the regulations in that the prisoners would be returned chained and under guards to the Police Station where they were first arrested, in Cairo, Alexandria, Súháj, Aswan, and other places as the case might have been. There they would not be released until it is proven that they are not wanted for "other crimes", a procedure that might be intentionally made to take a week, or even several weeks in appalling detention circumstances.

her children. Our experience showed us how sweet is the bond that exists between the believers, and the happiness that our belief in our Faith creates.

Ladies to be especially mentioned

Mrs. Fahima (Ra'issa) Elias: was among the women prisoners of Tanta. Her wisdom and eloquence during the conferences or debates that were held in prison with Muslim and Christian clergy were exemplary. An experienced speaker and debater in proofs from the sacred Writings she must have impressed these clerics, Muslims and Christians who intended to convince the Bahá'ís to return to their religion of origin. She occupied herself with enthusiasm in caring for the young ones and the pregnant women amongst the prisoners during the whole period of incarceration. She was a source of encouragement and wise advice.

Mrs. Badr El-Ḥamamṣy, wife of Sayed Fahmy: A courageous and outspoken Bahá'í whose father Hadj Taha El-Ḥamamṣy of Port Sa'id was one of the pillars of the Faith there. Badr's spirit was an encouragement to the women prisoners with her confrontations with the Chief Warden. At one time the Chief Warden warned her saying: "You will enter the prison and will not go out from it unless either you deny your belief in Bahá'u'lláh or I become Bahá'í." To this she answered: "Praise be unto God. I have entered the prison and have not denied my Faith in Bahá'u'lláh." When she came to leave the prison following the release of the Bahá'í prisoners, Badr went to him and said: "Now I am leaving the prison and I have not denied Bahá'u'lláh, It is your turn now to become Bahá'í!"

Names of the 93 believers imprisoned in the Tanta case:

From TANTA

- 1 Mrs. Badr El-Ḥamamṣi
- 2 Mrs. Šafīyya El-Sayyid Fahmy
- 3 Shawky Taha El-Ḥamamṣi
- 4 Mrs. Farida Sa'ád Salem Nossaire
wife of Shawky El-Ḥamamṣi
- 5 Áusama Sa'ád El-Ḥamamṣi
- 6 Múnir El-Sayyid Fahmy
- 7 Maher El-Sayyid Fahmy
- 8 Moḥyí El-Sayyid Fahmy
- 9 Mrs. I'tidal Mubarak Qa'oud
wife of Maher Fahmy
- 10 Nabil 'Alí El-Ḥamamṣi
- 11 Áḥmad El-Šawi
- 12 Mrs Laila Muḥammad Ghanem
wife of Áḥmad El-Šawi accom-
panied with their two children
- 13 Áḥmad El-Masry
- 14 Mrs. Fawziya Šobḥí

- wife of Áḥmad El-Masry
 15 Raimonda Shawky El-Ḥamamši
 16 Mrs. Zeinab ‘Alí El-Ḥamamši
 17 Šidki Maḥmúd El-Neshoquati
 18 Mrs. Múnawwar Áḥmad El-Ḥuseini
 wife of Šidki El-Neshoquati
 19 Taysir Shawki El-Ḥamamši
 20 Shawki ‘Alí El-Ḥamamši
 21 Muḥyi Aly El-Ḥamamši
 22 Wagdy Našif Bebawy

From KAḤR EL-ZAYYÁṬ

- 23 Mrs. Samiḥa Mustafa Baghdady
 Wife of Gamal Músá
 24 ‘Abbás Ghoneim
 25 ‘Abbás Shalaby
 26 Mrs. Sana’ ‘Alí El-Ḥamamši
 wife of ‘Alí El-Ḥamamši
 w/ new born child Walid
 27 ‘Abdel-‘Aziz Ghoneim
 28 Ms. Gamila Ghoneim
 29 Mrs. Nagát Gaafar
 wife of ‘Abbás Ghoneim.
 30 Matta Iskandar Barzi
 31 Maḥmúd Abou Eysh
 32 Ms. Wahiba ‘Abdel-‘Aziz Shalaby
 33 Helmy ‘Abdel-‘Aziz Shalaby
 34 ‘Abdel-‘Aziz Shalaby

From CAIRO

- 35 Muḥammad Mušṭafá Súlaymán
 36 Kamal Sa’ad Salem Noseir
 37 Nour Mušṭafá Ghoneim
 38 Miss Saman Šobḥí Daniel
 (known by Somaya)
 39 ‘Alí El-Kosheiri ‘Alí
 40 Fafwat ‘Alí El-Kosheiri
 41 Ḥosni ‘Alí El-Kosheiri
 42 Adel ‘Alí El-Kosheiri
 43 Miss Ámál ‘Alí El-Kosheiri
 44 Miss Shadya ‘Alí El-Kosheiri
 45 Ḥasan Muḥammad Ḥasan
 46 Gamal Ḥasan Muḥammad
 47 Mrs. Malakout Muḥammad Ḥasan
 wife of Seif Muḥammad.
 48 Mrs. Rúhiyyeh Muḥammad Ḥasan

- wife of Samir Danial
 49 Miss Ánwár Muḥammad Ḥasan
 50 Miss Ázhár Muḥammad Ḥasan
 51 Miss ‘Afáf Muḥammad Ḥasan
 52 Mrs. Shawkiya Şobhí Elias
 wife of Kamal Noşaire
 53 Mrs. Sonya Şobhí Daniel
 wife of Sabry Elias
 54 Sameer Şobhí Daniel
 55 Muḥammad Áḥmad Haggu
 56 ‘Abdel-Wahab Hasanein
 57 Áḥmad Hasanein
 58 ‘Abdel-Rasheed Othmán
 59 Seif Muḥammad Ábou-Seif
 60 ‘Isám Muḥammad Ismail

From ALEXANDRIA

- 61 Şobhí Elias ‘Abdel-Massiḥ
 62 Şabri Elias ‘Abdel-Massiḥ
 63 Mrs. Fahima Yaqút Áḥmad
 wife of Şabri Elias.
 64 Ḥussein Şabri Elias
 65 Safá Şabri Elias
 66 Miss Malakout Şabri Elias
 67 Mrs. Bahiyyeh Şobhí Elias
 wife of Sa’ad Fahmy.
 68 Sa’ad El-Sayyid Fahmy
 69 Mrs Sayyida Fahmy
 70 wife of Shawky El-Ḥamamşi
 71 Badii Yusef Botros

From EL-MEHALLA EL-KOBRA

- 72 Áḥmad Hganem
 73 Muḥammad Hganem
 74 Wasfi Ghaly
 75 El-Ghareeb Muşţafá Ghoneim
 76 Mrs. Afaf ‘Abdel-Rasheed
 wife of El-Ghareeb Muşţafá Ghoneim
 77 ‘Bdel-Raḥmán Nofal.

From SHEBEEN EL-QAWM

- 78 Ramzey Gollestaneh
 79 ‘Abdú Se’úodi El-Deek
 80 Shawki ‘Abdu ‘Abdú Se’úodi
 81 Tahera Ḥasan ‘Abdu

- wife of Shawki ‘Abdú Se’úodi
- 82 Muhammed El-Menúfi
- 83 Muḥammad Shehata
- 84 Foad Muḥammad Isma’íl
- 85 Fawzi Áḥmad Músá
- 86 Kamal Maḥmúd Ga’afar
- 87 Ezzat El-Menúfi

From EDFINA

- 88 Nabíl Shehata
- 89 Mrs. Nawal El-Kosheiri
wife of Nabíl Shehata

From SÚHAJ

- 90 Áḥmad Haggú
- 91 ‘Abbás Muḥammad Ḥasan

From EL-MINYA

- 92 Nasseef Bebawi

From ÁSWAN

- 93 Zaher El-Kosheiri

What after Tanta?

Many of the friends who were in prison were worried about the reaction of their employers to their absence from work and the reason beyond that absence. The public had only the press as their source of information, and the press had been totally biased.

However, the ambiguity that enveloped the whole affair could only increase the perplexity of those who for some reason or other followed the case of the Bahá’ís. The published accusations were enormous, yet these alleged enemies of the nation, these presumed traitors and morally degenerate people were released from prison – all of them, with a simple bail.

That stirred people’s thought, and many changed their minds, while others became more inimical and furious.

Somaya Daniel reported that her chief in the establishment where she worked brought her month of March salary to her home and gave it to her mother with all respect and kindness expressing his conviction that all those troubles were temporary and destined to go away. When she returned to her work after her release from prison her employer did not request any document from the prosecution that she had not been condemned for any crime.

Gamal Ḥassan was not as lucky as Somaya. His employer, a petroleum company, refused to accept him after returning from prison. He had to assign a warning through the Lawyer Labib Mu’awwad before the company finally accepted him back to his post.

Amongst the more severe cases of a difficult return to work is that of Ghareeb Muṣṭafá Ghoneim.¹⁷⁰ Ghareeb was employed as a carpenter in that all important Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in El Mahalla El Kobra - a town close to Tanta. He was well appreciated for his artisanship. It was from that same company and town that Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Ḥalim had presented himself during the symposium as the “spiritual guide” for that company and plotted the gathering of a number of thugs to harm the Bahá’ís in the Tanta court at its second session of April 15. That “spiritual guide” (equivalent to the workplace chaplaincy seen in the West) had furthermore incited the workers in the company to hate the Bahá’ís.

While there were no objections from the company management for Ghareeb to have his job back, some of the workers were trumped up against him. As he entered his workplace he was met by a number of co-workers who, without the slightest decency or sense of responsibility watched in acquiescence as one of them, an apprentice in Ghareeb’s group, came up to him and with anger said: *“Do not think that your release from prison and return to work will save you from our punishment. We shall discipline you!”* At the same time, that apprentice grabbed a pole of timber standing vertically with the intention of beating Ghareeb with it. Unfortunately for the apprentice, he had not noticed that the pole sustained a pile of heavy 6 m long poles laid horizontally overhead. These came down in an avalanche over the apprentice, instantly covering his body. The workers rushed to remove with difficulty the fallen logs only to find the apprentice a dead body.

The news spread like wildfire in the company and the responsible heads of the company rushed to the scene only to find Ghareeb standing and stunned at what happened. After investigating the accident the management issued strict instructions for order in the hangar of carpentry.

Resorting to the Administrative Court

Following the release of the friends from the Tanta prison, it was deemed necessary to initiate action to reset the consequences of the infamous Decree No. 263 of the year 1960. Essentially that Decree only banned the Bahá’í Administration, but was subsequently seized upon by certain authorities who extended it so as to mean banning the Faith itself, and instigating the events in the Tanta case among others.

Lawyer Mu’awwad prepared a memorandum presenting three memos issued by the Council of State in 1950 – 1951 explaining in detail the rights of the Bahá’ís and their relation to Islām. That same document included the refusal of the Council of State the accusation issued by the highest religious authorities defining the Bahá’ís as renegades to Islām and thus should be castigated to the ultimate punishment, that of death according to the prevalent (mis)interpretation of the Shari’a law, especially at that time.

The memo was added to the lawsuit and presented to the Administrative Court and with this operation the Waily Court Case and the Zaytún Court case were both stalled in wait of the decision of the Council of State.

The above was reported to the Universal House of Justice.

¹⁷⁰ Ghareeb and his wife Afef were the couple who had left their children alone at home when they were taken precipitously to prison and the children were saved from the fury of a mob by the opposition of the courageous greengrocer neighbour who threatened the mob with a pistol – as related in previous pages.

The Year 1973

Organising communication with the Universal House of Justice

Ulfet and I had been visiting the friends in Egypt for the last two years, gathering news and a few documents during our visits and taking back with us a report from Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to the Universal House of Justice. The Universal House of Justice expressed its appreciation for our activity specifying that we were the only contact from outside Egypt with the Bahá'ís there. Our correspondence with the House was through friends in Europe.

Early in 1973, I was contacted by Mr. Salim Nounou, a Bahá'í resident in the city of Nice in France, on behalf of the Universal House of Justice. He explained that he had been requested to assure the continued liaison between the Universal House of Justice and us.

Little did we know that we were put in contact with the real treasure of a Bahá'í. Dear Nounou was an Iraqi Persian Bahá'í with a rich track history of service. In 1937, Shoghi Effendi had asked him to go to Egypt and visit the friends there. He visited the friends in Cairo and in Alexandria, and maybe other towns too, and a friendship was created with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá during his visit. Now, and after 35 years the closeness, albeit through correspondence, recreated a joyous atmosphere all around. Mr. Nounou was well equipped with a telex machine, which I also had. That made correspondence very rapid and efficient. Our reports and messages to the House went through him.

Our fourth visit to Egypt

Ulfet and I went to Egypt towards the end of December 1973. This was two months after the well-known War of the 6th of October 1973.

We had expected that the friends would have been rounded up and imprisoned during that war, but we found them all well and going about their lives normally. In Fact, they told us that when the war broke out they sent away any visitors they had in their homes, while those who felt vulnerable to being rounded up and arrested prepared their suitcases and were ready to be taken away.

They were all well when we left them on 4th of January on our return journey that took 4 days by car through Libya onto Tunis.

We returned from our fourth visit to Egypt on the 17th January 1974, and immediately sent a report regarding the various court cases in Egypt as requested by the House.

In summary there were 6 outstanding court cases besides the all-important Case with the Supreme Tribunal that became the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal, challenging the constitutionality of the presidential Decree 236 of the year 1960. The cases were as follows:

1. The Zaytún Court case ref. 4087 of the year 1960.
2. The Waily misdemeanour (or Minor Offences) Court case ref. 11278 of the year 1967.
3. The Súháj Court case of the year 1970.
4. The petition submitted to the Supreme Court.
5. The Tanta Case of the year 1972.
6. The Case that 'Abdel-Salam Ghazi raised against his employer – The State Railways, for having dismissed him from work following his accusation in the Waily Case in the year 1967.

Reflexion on the Community –Absence of Civil Code.

Ulfet and I have been visiting Egypt for three years already with no less than four trips including one with the car which allowed us easy movement to visit the friends in different towns.

So what impression did I develop of the Community?

Ulfet and I were the rare visitors to the friends from outside Egypt, and during all our visits, it was joy and happiness for us and for them, even for those who were too far to meet and see.

The Community in Egypt is what I would like to describe as “A well knit community”. The reason being the absence of a civil code for personal status in Egypt and the only available code is religious. Even as I write these lines in February 2021 there is talk about creating a statutory civil code but no action has been taken. The Bahá’ís, therefore, can only marry from within the Bahá’í community, and so with time, and in some way or another every Bahá’í has become related to the other Bahá’ís within a close or an extended relationship. In such situations friction and disputes can assume easily spread ramifications, but that was not so for the Egyptian Community. In spite of the restriction in marriage and the absence of the Bahá’í Administration since 1960, there was no major issue, and the minor differences that came up were dealt with kindly and lovingly by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá.

Gamal Ḥassan notes:

“Following the different court cases was not the only preoccupation for Muḥammad Muṣṭafá. He felt the responsibility of the whole Community: keeping it united, in harmony. In a sense he was the “reference point”, the helper, the advisor, the consoler and when necessary, the kind arbitrary and perhaps even admonisher.”

The Year 1974

The year 1974 began in earnest with Ulfet and I having visited Egypt by car¹⁷¹ during the period from December 22, 1973 to January 7, 1974.

In my report to the Universal House of Justice, I included the following:

Morale of the friends in Egypt: is as high as we had found them in 1971 and 1972... Upon a suggestion from Hand of the Cause Furutan through a young Egyptian Bahá'í in Europe, the friends hold 19 –Day feasts, each family separately or near-by families together. These meetings are being discretely instituted and began on a restricted scale November/December 1973.

Generally the friends there are suffering all the time from problems arising through the refusal of the Authorities to recognise any paper with the word Bahá'í on it. New-borns are refused birth certificates, marriages are not recognised. Family cards allowing government subsidised staple items, vital for everyday family needs, such as sugar and oil are denied to the Bahá'ís on the grounds that Bahá'í marriages are not recognised. The same difficulties apply to individuals eligible for upgrading in jobs and pay rises, or even their rights to a passport or passport renewals.

These privations create serious difficulties for the young generation that have attained the age of marriage.

Finally we were requested by the friends *“to express to the Universal House of Justice their love and gratitude for your prayers in their behalf.”*

The Universal House of Justice initiates external action

The year 1974 saw a series of efforts to help relieve the Egyptian Bahá'í Community of the many difficulties that resulted from the loss of their civil rights. The court cases were not much of a problem anymore.

Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ was able to adjourn the Zaytún and Wayli court cases pending the decision of the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal regarding the constitutionality of the Presidential Decree 263 of the year 1960 that banned the Bahá'í Administrative activity.

The Súháj Case was adjourned without a date.

The Tanta Case was adjourned to March 5th 1974.

The Supreme Constitutional Tribunal case had been adjourned to February 2nd 1974.

The Universal House of Justice decided to take measures to bring the difficulties of the Egyptian Bahá'í Community to the attention of the relevant Egyptian Government Authorities and call for some reprieve.

The measures planned were, whenever possible, to be presented by Ulfet and myself to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá for his opinion. Therefore, in spite of having just returned from visiting

¹⁷¹ The distance between Tunis and Cairo is 3200 kms or roughly 2000 miles. A tedious journey with two crowded frontier crossings in each direction: Libyan/Tunisian and Libyan/Egyptian. The advantages were multiple: we were able to visit the friends in Libya, have a car in Egypt to go around freely and above all, the possibility of taking books and literature that is liable to be confiscated in Cairo Airport if taken with us by air.

Egypt on January 7, 1974, we had to go back to Egypt in March to coordinate with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and his consultative group, El-Sayed Muḥammad Al-Azzawi, Ámin Bikar, Hussein Ruḥi and Amin Battah.

The first measure – Judge James Nelson at head of delegation to Egypt

Upon our return, we went to France to meet with Mr. Nounou and Judge James Nelson who was, with a French well known lawyer – a certain Maitre Ducraux, as well as Lawyer Gila Behta – the well-known Bahá'í of Ethiopia, to undertake the first of the measures of the Universal House of Justice.

Judge James Nelson was a judge at the Municipal Court of Los Angeles, USA, and the Chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States. A most pleasant and capable person.

The delegation of Judge James Nelson, Maitre Ducraux and Lawyer Gila Behta were in Cairo the last week of April. The following are excerpts from James's report to the Universal House of Justice upon his return to California:

On Wednesday, April 24 (1974), Jim met with the United States Ambassador to Egypt. The Ambassador recommended that the delegation not attempt to see the President (Anwar) Sádát (President of Egypt) as a group... He suggested that it would be preferable for Jim in his professional capacity and as a Bahá'í speaking on behalf of the American Bahá'ís to express their concern at the situation of the Bahá'ís in Egypt regarding their inability to enjoy civil rights. This to be expressed in a letter addressed to President Sádát and sent to the Ambassador who promised to deliver it unofficially but personally to the President. In the letter, Jim would indicate that he had been in Cairo and had attempted to see the President personally about these matters but this was not possible...

On Sunday April 28, Jim himself contacted the office of the Minister of Interior and obtained an appointment that took place some two hours after his attempt. The delegation met with the Minister of Interior for some 35 minutes. In Jim's opinion, the Minister was pleasant, heard their story, and promised that he would do something about the identity cards and the registration of births and deaths.

On the 18th of December 1974, I contacted Mr. Salim Nounou to inform the Universal House of Justice that Lawyer Mu'awwad wants Judge James Nelson to send immediately a letter to the Minister of Justice to remind him of his previous letter of April last. With 48 hours the letter was sent.

Further to the letter to the President Anwar Sádát, the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States sent another letter to the President on the 20th December 1974 on the occasion of the visit of the President to the United States, through the Egyptian Ambassador to the US.

Excerpts of the letter:

Please permit us, Excellency, to seize this opportunity to convey to you the keen sense of our distress over the severe disabilities being suffered by our Bahá'í brothers and sisters in Egypt, where in 1960 a presidential Decree banned their religious activities. Since that time, the Bahá'í community ceased to function, Bahá'í properties have been confiscated, and Egyptian Bahá'ís have been deprived of many of the ordinary rights and privileges of Egyptian citizenship.

.....

To present more amply the unfortunate situation of the Egyptian Bahá'ís as we understand it, we would earnestly appreciate your granting an audience to a small delegation of our representatives any time during your visit to the United States. Our representatives would be: Dr Victor de Araujo, Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations; the Honourable James F. Nelson, Judge of the Los Angeles Municipal Court; Dr Dorothy Nelson, Dean of the Law Center, University of Southern California, and Treasurer of our National Spiritual Assembly; and Mr. Glenford Mitchell, Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.

We beg you to understand, Excellency, that our appeal to you is motivated not only by the gravity of the situation we have described, but also by the confidence we have in the justice and compassion of your Government towards all its citizens regardless of their diversity.

Shirin Fozdar visits Egypt and meets with Jihan Sádát

In a message dated October 28, 1974, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

In the meantime, in the course of her world tour, Mrs. Shirin Fozdar has recently visited Cairo, and without mentioning the Faith, has met with Mrs. Jihan Sádát. An extract of her report dealing with this visit is attached, and you are requested to share it with Mr. Mu'awwad, through your father, who should seek the latter's views as to whether further action on the part of Mrs. Fozdar is appropriate at this time.

Having consulted during our visit by car to Egypt in December 1974, we reported upon our return that Mr. Mu'awwad felt that Mrs. Fozdar could very well meet Mrs. Sádát again specially during the announced tour of Mrs. Sádát in France and the United States.

I feel that the visit of Mrs. Fozdar to Egypt, though had nothing to do with either the difficulties of the Bahá'ís in Egypt or for the propagation of the Faith, is nevertheless important to record here in view of its impact on actions taken by Mrs. Fozdar later. I am therefore including extracts of her report that are relevant to the Egyptian Bahá'ís.

Mrs. Fozdar arrived in Cairo on the 29th September 1974. She had previously written a letter to the Ministry of Social Affairs in Cairo stating that she was writing a book on "Women through the Ages" and would like to meet the women leaders and if possible Mme Sádát as well. She sent a copy of this letter to the Singapore Embassy in Cairo enclosing a copy of the letter from the "Singapore Council of Women".

Through the help of an influential Arab woman who was also a national of Singapore by the name of Khadija Alsagoff,¹⁷² Mrs. Fozdar was able to meet with the Minister of Social Affairs of Egypt, Dr. Aisha Rateb. The meeting was fruitful and when the

¹⁷² Probably Al-Saqaf in Arabic السقاف.

Minister understood that Mrs. Fozdar would like to meet with Mme Sadat, she said “she would try although these were very busy days and she had many engagements.”

From the report of Mrs. Fozdar:

The next day...Khadija informed me that the Ministry of Social Affairs had rung her up and said she should take me to the Presidential Palace at 10.30 am as Mme Sádát would see me then. Khadija and I went to the Palace and as Mme Sádát was being interviewed by the radio, we were entertained by her personal secretary Mrs. Sadok. In a short while Mme Sádát came in. She was very cordial. She shook hands and got seated. Khadija introduced me to her in Arabic and told her about my achievements. Mme Sádát then talked in English with me and told me about their efforts towards women’s emancipation in Egypt. She had arranged for a photographer and had herself photographed with me in several poses. We sat for 45 minutes...

Mme Sádát said I must visit Egypt again and let her know so she can arrange my lectures. We rose to say goodbye and Mme Sádát kissed me and hugged me before departing. She did not ask me my religion and I did not draw her attention. Khadija knew but she told me there was no need to mention.

Mrs. Fozdar did not meet any of the friends in Egypt. She had no address. On her return journey Japan Air Lines lost one of her bags which contained “*an album of all my newspaper cuttings for all these years and also my address book containing the addresses of all my friends all over the world including these new friends in Cairo and several other things.*”

The spontaneous demonstration of affection that Mrs. Sádát showed Mrs. Fozdar is worthy to note, because this was crucial in the following efforts to contact Mrs. Sádát for the cause of the Egyptian Bahá’ís.

The loss of one of Mrs. Fozdar’s bags was a subject of concern that even Mr. Mu’awwad alluded to when consulted about the future possibilities for Mrs. Fozdar to contact Mrs. Sádát.

From our experience, Ulfet and I, we have also had our luggage missing the flight at Cairo Airport on our return journeys. Ulfet and I have always carried the documents or letters pertaining to the Faith in our hand luggage, never in the bags. We understand that the secret services simply retain for inspection such luggage as are suspicious and eventually allows their consignment on subsequent flights to their destination. This happened to us more than once during the 14 years we dealt with the Egyptian Community affairs – the last ten years during my father’s lifetime and four years thereafter with Mr. Hussein Bicar as “Reference Point” for the Bahá’ís.

The Supreme Constitutional Tribunal case

The Universal House of Justice showed special interest in the development of the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal case lodged by the Bahá’ís pleading the unconstitutional validity upon which the Presidential Decree 263 of 1960 which closed down the Bahá’í Administration and confiscated all property belonging to the Faith in Egypt rests at present.

A message from Selim Nounou mid September indicated that the House of Justice was most intent on obtaining a settlement to the case in Egypt in order to forestall a more vicious campaign in Iraq.

The Supreme Tribunal had requested the Government Commissioner to issue an opinion in the petition regarding the non-constitutionality of the Decree 263 of 1960. It was understood that the report of the Commissioner that was presented to the court in its session of February 3, 1973 was favourable to the request of the Bahá'is. The report stipulated that Decree 263 of 1960 is not legal because the Decree was issued during a period when the country was under "Emergency" condition and in absence of the Parliament and therefore should have been presented to the parliament in its following meeting, a procedure that was not done. Furthermore, with the termination of the period of "Emergency" the Decree becomes nullified.

Ulfet undertakes extraordinary visit to Egypt

Ulfet went on the 27th September to Egypt and returned on the 6th October 1974 in order to present to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá various issues on which that the Universal House of Justice wanted his and the lawyers' opinion.

During that visit Ulfet met with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ and Lawyer Talaat Abdel-Azeem. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá asked Muḥammad Al-Azzawi and Ámin Battah to be present at the two meetings.

The following are extracts of her report to the Universal House of Justice following this visit:

1) During the United Nations Seminary on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights for National, Ethnic and other minorities that was held in Yugoslavia, Mr. Fo'ad Katira'i – member of the Bahá'í International Community delegation to the Seminary, was able to speak with Dr Botros Botros Ghaly,¹⁷³ Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, regarding the situation of the Bahá'is in Egypt. Dr Ghaly promised to do something about the subject.

The opinion of both Muḥammad Al-Azzawi, Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was that Mr. Fo'ad Katira'i's presentation of the subject to Dr Ghaly was very good and pertinent. They informed that Dr Ghaly has actually acted on his promise by publishing a series of articles in the Al-Ahrám daily regarding the safeguarding of minority rights, and the non-constitutional laws that govern the affairs of minority groups in various countries and also suggested that a seminar of protection and promotion of human rights of minorities in the Arab world should be held.

As a matter of fact the same subject had been treated publicly prior to this later action by Dr Ghaly and that by Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ himself. Mu'awwaḍ promised to try to contact Dr Ghaly to follow up on the subject.

¹⁷³ Boutros Boutros Ghali was an Egyptian politician and diplomat and was the sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations from January 1992 to December 1996.

However, no reaction seems to have developed through Dr Ghaly's efforts. Nevertheless, Mu'awwad undertook to try to contact Dr Ghaly and also to follow up Mr. Katira'i's impression upon the latter.

2) Visit of Judge Nelson to Egypt: The summary of Judge Nelson's telephoned report to the Universal House of Justice dated May 1, 1974 was read with great care by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Lawyer Mu'awwad and Dr Al-Azzawi.

i- Lawyer Mu'awwad was delighted to know from the report of Judge Nelson that two letters were written by him to President Sádát¹⁷⁴ and the Minister of Interior.

ii- Judge Nelson left a most remarkable effect upon Lawyer Mu'awwad, who thinks that he alone is the type of person who would be instrumental in getting things moving in the right direction, and influence the Egyptian Authorities. When they both were meeting with the Minister of Interior in April, together with Atto¹⁷⁵ Gila and Lawyer Ducreux, the Minister spoke with Mu'awwad aside saying: "How did these gentlemen know of all these things?", to which Mu'awwad answered, "Judge Nelson was sent here by the Bahá'í International Community."

iii- Lawyer Mu'awwad would welcome a further visit any time by Judge Nelson. Mu'awwad thinks though, that the visit of Atto Gila of Ethiopia will not be as effective. As for Lawyer Ducreux, he feels strongly, that not being Bahá'í, Ducreux is unable to grasp the situation in Egypt. Following his return to Paris, Ducreux had tried to telephone to Mu'awwad more than once mentioning the World Centre, Haifa, etc... over the phone when in all probability long distance calls could well be listened in and so be a source of difficulties.

3) The Tanta Court Case: has been postponed to December 3, 1974.

4) The Supreme Tribunal case: was postponed for administrative reasons to a date that will be announced later. Lawyer Mu'awwad intended to postpone it anyway because one of the judges sitting in this case had a pre-declared opinion inimical to the Faith.

5) General assessment of the situation by the friends in Egypt: the friends in Egypt feel that constraint and oppression will continue for the immediate future at least. The clergy and the Azhar Institution are strong and can twist the arm of all and any who try to escape the grip of their interpretation of Muslim jurisprudence and laws. This was evident when Mrs. Jihan Sádát, Egypt's first lady, tried to help a Women Emancipation movement.

Mrs. Fahima (Ra'issa) Elias plea to President Sádát.

In Ulfet's report to the House, she gave some details of Mrs. Fahima Elias's plea to the Egyptian President Sádát. For the benefit of history, I want to mention this event here but with fuller details. I have, therefore, asked Gamal Hassan who had kept up with that period in Egypt and received his answer, which I present to the reader as follows:

¹⁷⁴ Misunderstanding here: the two letters ere to the Ministers of Justice and Interior, not to the President.

¹⁷⁵ Ethiopian title of respect.

This event took place while I was in Alexandria and I heard it related by Mrs. Ra'issa one or two days after the event in the presence of Mr. Sabry Elias and Mr. Şobhi Elias. Here is what she said:

I was walking down Glym Street (in Alexandria) between the sea front and the tramway station when I suddenly met with a large crowd. I asked one of those in the gathering: 'Why is this gathering?' Someone answered me that President Sádát with his family are here to buy ice cream for his kids. 'Where is he?' I asked. I was told he was behind the wheel in his car there in front of me while his children were buying ice cream. That ice cream shop was reputed to be the best ice cream in Alexandria. There were a few guards between me and the President of whom I asked permission to speak to the President, but waited for no permission and dashed forward towards the President and held his arm firmly and said in a loud voice: 'I am Fahima, I am Bahá'í, the Bahá'ís are oppressed Mr. President. Please render them justice!' He answered: 'I shall'¹⁷⁶ and I said: 'Thank you' just in time before being whisked away by the guards.

This would be the second time at least that the direct attention of the President Sádát was drawn to the plight of the Bahá'ís. The first being the initiative taken by Abu Seif who met President Sádát to plead the case of his son Zackaria.¹⁷⁷

Our Visit to Egypt – December 1, 1974 to December 12, 1974

We made this visit by car. This allowed us to take Bahá'í books and literature. The tiresome travel of 4 days in each direction is greatly compensated by the literature we are able to take.

Upon our return, we sent our report to the Universal House of Justice, which included:

Development of the Tanta Court case: A court session was scheduled for the 3rd December, two days after our arrival. Preparation was under way for that session. Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ had inquired and knew the name of the judge of that session and it turned out that he was a good friend of the father of the Judge and consequently had every hope to be able through that friendship to obtain an acquittal in that quite complicated case. The case, however, was adjourned until the 4th February 1975. Should the judge of that session be the same, Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ was to have all those involved in the Tanta case attend personally the session and for him to secure an "a not guilty verdict" on the defendants in that primary court case.

The hope was high that the Tanta case would end favourably.

Developments in the Supreme Tribunal: During the scheduled session of the 7th December the court decided to postpone the case but did not decide on the date. One of the judges was travelling outside Egypt according to information filtered to the friends. During that period specifically, the question of transforming the Supreme Court into the Constitutional Court was in the People's Assembly or parliament, and it is understood that

¹⁷⁶ "حاضر" in conversational Arabic can mean, yes, or I am ready or OK. It need not be affirmative, but could be just obliging in a dismissive way.

¹⁷⁷ Details of this case are not included in this book.

all important cases were postponed for one reason or other. The friends got to know also that among the judges were those who were in favour of the Bahá'í Cause, according to what Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ was informed.

Summary of the Year 1974

The year 1974 ended with the possible or suggested lines of action:

i) It would be useful that Mrs. Shirin Fozdar continue her efforts to meet with the Egyptian first lady Jihan Sádát.

ii) Judge James Nelson to continue contacting both the Egyptian Ministers of Justice and of the Interior reminding them of the issues and status of the Bahá'ís.

iii) Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ and his colleague Lawyer Talaat Abdel-Azeem to continue in their non-official endeavours and good offices to find a solution for the registration of new-borns, and other personal identity documents.

The opinion of Lawyer Mu'awwaḍ, to which Muḥammad Muṣṭafá agreed, is that while the regime of the previous President Nasser¹⁷⁸ was the cause of the difficulties of the Bahá'ís, with the present regime of President Sádát there were some high ranking officials who understand and sympathise with the Bahá'ís. However, Ministers and highranking officials are under pressure from the clergy or Muslim zealots among their subordinates who can stifle and undermined their efforts. Shaykh Dr 'Abdel-Ḥalim Maḥmúd, the Shaykh of Al-Azhar Institution, whom Sádát expelled because of his blind prejudice and the problems he created between Muslims and Copts¹⁷⁹ was reinstated to his previous position - an indication of the power of that Institution.

iv) In a message of the Universal House of Justice dated 28 October 1974, the House wrote:

You should, furthermore, point out to your father that the Universal House of Justice deeply appreciates the spirit of heroic self-sacrifice which animates the beloved fiends in Egypt. Apart from their material and physical deprivations, they are also cut off from the main stream of stimulation and inspiration engendered by the receipt of news and the reception of visitors.

v) Muḥammad Muṣṭafá requested that the following be transmitted to the Universal House of Justice:

...To the Beloved Universal House of Justice the deepest gratitude of the loved ones in Egypt for the kind appreciation of the Universal House of Justice and assure you of the steadfastness and courage of all the friends there. They are happy and joyful, most inspired by anything they feel has come from the House of Justice they love so much, and to whom

they present with utter humbleness their allegiance and attachment.

vi) Ulfet and I added in our report to the Universal House of Justice That we found the friends in Egypt this time jubilant with the memories of their ordeals. Those who were in

¹⁷⁸ Reference to the previous President of Egypt Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

¹⁷⁹ Copts are the Egyptian Christians who predominantly belong to the Alexandria Orthodox Church.

prison relate their various experiences and end with “O! How wonderful were those days. How memorable and a blessing being together, nothing earthly with us, only Bahá’u’lláh and the friends!”

vii) In one of our recent visits to Egypt, Mrs. Raissa Elias gave us her memoir of the prison in Tanta and asked us to send it to the Universal House of Justice. I translated her memoir and sent both to the Universal House of Justice.

In a letter dated 21st January 1975 the House acknowledged receipt of the memoir and translation of that “*fascinating chapter in the history of the Faith in Egypt.*”

The Year 1975

Fluctuating between pause and escalation

The year 1975, not unlike the previous years, had its joyful encouraging events and its negative events. An unexpected event happened, and it was a source of great encouragement to the friends in Egypt. The reason the event was unexpected will be explained.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Member Northern Africa Board of Counsellors

In a letter dated 6th January 1975, the Universal House of Justice has graciously appointed Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to the Board of Counsellors of Northern Africa: The Board member at the time was Councillor Mr. Muḥammad Otmani Kbdani, who was one of the Counsellors appointed in the initial stage of the Institution of Counsellors in 1968. With the appointment of two more, Mr. ‘Imád Šabirán and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá in 1975. The Board membership was raised to three. That was on 6th, January 1975.

6 January, 1975

Mr. Roushan Mustapha,

.....

.....

Tunisia.

Dear Bahá’í Friend,

Please inform your distinguished father that, with profound joy we are announcing to the Bahá’í world his appointment to the membership of the new Continental Board of Counsellors for Northern Africa. His unique and vital contributions to the teaching, pioneering and administrative work in that area make him eminently deserving of this honour.

Your father is fully aware of the need to continue to be careful and circumspect in his activities, and to guide and encourage the friends to follow his example. Specific advice about his relationship with the other two Counsellors in this Zone will reach you through the International Teaching Centre, for transmittal to him.

We also request you to assure your dear father of our fervent prayers on his behalf at the Holy Shrines.

*With loving Bahá’í greetings
(signed and stamped)*

cc: The International Teaching Centre

The first take that attracted my attention is the fact that this letter of appointment is so much different to the usual letters of appointment sent to other Counsellors that I had seen. “His unique and vital contributions to the teaching, pioneering and administrative work in

that area make him eminently deserving of this honour,” the letter states. It continues to explain that his immediate task is “to guide and encourage the friends.” No travelling expected from him.

The terms “Northern Africa” and “in that area” meant the area covering Egypt, Súdán, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco which now includes what was in 1953 Spanish Western Sahara – an area that was visited by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, some places exclusively, during the years 1953 to 1960. Details describing these visits were narrated in some detail, in the history of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá. The appointment of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to the Board of Counsellors was rather unexpected, as generally, Counsellors are young or at least younger in age. They have to move and travel to different countries in their area. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, at 77 years of age, certainly lacked much of such ability.

Indeed, the International Teaching Centre, in their letter of 8th January 1975 to the Continental Board of Counsellors of Northern Africa showed appreciation of this limitation thus:

“We have also been asked to convey to you that the House of Justice does not expect Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, at his age and in his condition of health, to travel outside of Egypt. In fact it might be unwise for him to do so. In contacting him, the other two counsellors should use the services of his son, Mr. Roushan Muṣṭafá, of Tunis, who will exercise his best judgement on how to convey any information to his father or seek advice from him.”

Needless to say, the friends in Egypt were very happy.

General condition of the Egyptian Community at the beginning of 1975

Abdessalam Ghazi re-assumed the employment from which he was expelled since 1967 because he was Bahá’í, with total resettlement of his salary and remunerations for the whole period as well as well as other benefits for that period. He was one of four Bahá’ís who were expelled from their work for the same reason. It being understood that the other three will receive the same fairness that Abdessalam had.

This news was a source of hope to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the friends.

Developments in the Tanta Case:

In the February 4, 1975 session of the Tanta court, 83 Bahá’ís who were involved in that case attended. It was expected that the court will take a decision to acquit all the 93 Bahá’ís of that Tanta Case. The reason for this expectation was that Lawyer Mu’awwad was advised that the judge dealing with this case was a certain Abdel-Moazzaz Shaheed whose father was a close friend, and could be a useful conduit to the judge’s ears to clarify some issues and facilitate a ruling of acquittal for the Bahá’ís. To the dismay of Lawyer Mu’awwad, on arriving in the court a few minutes before the opening, he found that the seat had been occupied by another judge. Lawyer Mu’awwad managed to postpone the case to April 1, 1975, the reason for postponing the case was to ensure that notices are sent to all the defendants and ascertain the death of three defendants.

In the April 1, 1975 session the judge was Abdel-Moazzaz Shaheed himself, the friend of Lawyer Mu’awwad. Lawyer Mu’awwad went to him before the session and explained the case and its background of prejudice and illegal procedures that were adopted against the

Bahá'í defendants. The Judge assured Lawyer Mu'awwad that he will postpone the case to the end of April and terminate the case altogether.

Muhammad Muṣṭafá attended that session as one of the defendants. He wrote to me following this session saying that the address for the defence that Lawyer Mu'awwad presented to the court and all that took place in the court that day was "magnificent... magnificent... magnificent!" In his address, Lawyer Mu'awwad discussed the constitutional issues in the light of the constitution of Egypt current at the time, as well as civil rights and support for freedoms. He further explained the difference between personal meetings and public meetings. The Lawyer further described the suffering experienced by Bahá'ís during the Investigations Department interrogations that resulted in the arrest of some Bahá'ís in absolute confinement conditions, and he laid on some legal issues light of the law. He finally requested the court to postpone the case for a short period, even for one week, and rule the acquittal of the defendants. The case was adjourned to the 30th April 1975.

Muhammad Muṣṭafá continued with the "muse": Again they are "devising"

And they were devising and God was devising and God is the best of devisers¹⁸⁰

In this context, a little diversion will be useful, as it would to appreciate the machinations that were going on behind the scenes in the aftermath of the Tanta court case of 30th April and to describe the major "devise" worked out to maintain the persecution of the Bahá'ís.

It was Gamal Ḥassan again who disclosed the intrigue. Here is what he says:

When Lawyer Mu'awwad brought up the question of there being among the 93 defendants, a girl under 15 years of age and that the whole Tanta case should go to the Juvenile Court, the Court realized that the whole Tanta affair will slip from their fingers and they will lose their best chance to get rid of the Bahá'ís once and for all. A code to modify the Egyptian Procedure Law was introduced whereby the juvenile age was raised from 15 to 18 years and where in a case of a mixed defendants like that of Tanta, the adults would be judged in the usual adult courts while the young defendants transferred immediately to the Juvenile Courts. The change in the law was to be with immediate effect and retrospect application. The instigators of this move were the Interior Ministry represented by the State Security Department as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry of Social Affairs had conducted a survey of the Bahá'ís while they were in prison and had warned the adult Bahá'ís that should they abstain from renouncing their belief in the Bahá'í Faith, the state would strip them of the right of guardianship of their children and place the children in reformatories in order to return them to "the true religion".

Among the prisoners in Tanta, as mentioned before, there was only one girl under 15, but there was also a number of young girls and boys under 18. The Court therefore planned to submit the juveniles and the adults separately to their appropriate courts, allowing an additional ruling of condemnation of the adults and thus terminate the whole affair. Such a ruling would be a "first instance" ruling that is liable to appeal, of course, but the juvenile situation would have been a disaster for the friends".

¹⁸⁰ Qurán 3, 54. Arbery translation.

Now, I shall go back to the court sessions and describe how the Protective Power behind the Bahá'ís intervened.

In the April 30, 1975 session all things went against the Bahá'ís. The friend of Lawyer Mu'awwad, Judge Abdel-Moazzaz Shaheed was said to have desisted from judging in the case of the Bahá'ís because he had previously sided with the Bahá'ís in private discussion among the judges. To note though, Judge Abdel-Moazzaz Shaheed is a Copt – Egyptian Christian. The Copts, variously estimated to be between 10% and 15% of the population of Egypt, are naturally more sympathetic to minority issues and not hidebound by the Islámic attitude towards the Bahá'í relationship to their respective beliefs. So, whether Judge Abdel-Moazzaz actually desisted or was shunted away from the case of the Bahá'ís, is not known.

When the court then decided to split the case into two: one for the juveniles and the other for the adults, Lawyer Mu'awwad was quick in confronting the court by announcing: "What the court calls a decision I consider a judgement and I appeal this judgement now!" – Thus the judge had to announce a date for the appeal which was set for the 15th October 1975 – that is after the summer recess of the courts. Lawyer Mu'awwad's wit foiled the plan, or rather plot, of the court. The court had to adjourn the case. Following various adjournments, the date of 31st December 1975 was fixed.

A further knot of the plot appeared during that ill-judged April 30, 1975 session. The charge changed from a misdemeanour under the Presidential Decree 263 of the year 1960 to a violation of the public prosecutor's pronouncement in 14th April 1972 when the prisoners were released and which designated the Bahá'ís as a "conspiracy to subvert public order". That accusation is not only false, but seriously dangerous as well.

In one of the various adjournments that led to the 31st December 1975 date was one that was held on the 21st May 1975. It seemed that the court had intended to finally rule on the case of the Bahá'ís. A large number of Security Forces were brought in, all of them carrying automatic and non-automatic weapons – a terrifying atmosphere. Yet it was discovered that there was a mistake in the date of the session, which should have been on the 28th of May, and not the 21st. and it had to be postponed.

Following two postponements, a session was held on the 4th of June 1975. Here the intervention of Providence was once again manifest. The President of the Bar in Cairo requested his fellow member of Tanta to attend the session in defence of the Bahá'ís and he requested the adjournment of the court in order to study the file of the case. A mixture of adjournments ensued that brought the adult case to the 5th of November 1975 and the juvenile case to 28th January 1976.

The Arab Boycott Office

On Saturday January 11, 1975, I noticed that "Al-Şabah" Tunisian daily published an information that the Arab Boycott Office will meet in Cairo on February 23, 1975 – a meeting that had previously been announced in Damascus, in its 37th session in order "to examine ways to combat the Bahá'í Movement that is pro-Israel."

I sent the clipping of "Al-Şabah" to the Universal House of Justice two days later.

On the 29th. January 1975, Mr. Nounou of Nice, contacted me by phone and explained that in reference to the "Al-Şabah" clipping that I had sent to the Universal House of Justice regarding the Arab Boycott Office, similar situations exist in all the Arab countries. The House requested Mr. Nounou to contact me in Tunis and ask me to contact in a quiet and

tactful manner influential personalities in Tunis and assure them that the absolute spiritual character of the Faith is not political at all. A report was required before the 10th February.

Ulfet had more than one personality she could contact, and who are close friends to her paternal aunt, Mrs. ‘Alya Boushousha, wife of the well-known historian Hassan Hosni ‘Abdel-Wahab. But we decided that the best person to see on the subject was Habib Bourguiba Junior, the son of the President of the Tunisian Republic, Habib Bourguiba. Fortunately Ulfet was a schoolmate with his wife Na’ila Zouiten when they were young.

Ulfet phoned her friend Na’ila and asked her to inform her husband that Rowshan would like to see him on a matter regarding our Faith. Na’ila knew that Ulfet is Bahá’í. The appointment was obtained for the 1st February 1975 at their home in the beautiful suburb of El-Marsa north of Tunis.

The meeting was cordial and pleasant. We talked about various subjects and came to the subject of the Arab Boycott Office meeting in Cairo. The commentary of Bourguiba Junior was immediate:

All that the Arab Boycott Office decides has no echo in Tunisia at all. The Arabs always seek to unite against some matter, while President Bourguiba imposes on the government in Tunisia and on the Tunisians in general the importance of uniting and gathering their efforts for a matter not against a matter. The efforts of the President towards establishing progressive laws and regulations on the subject of Personal Status gained no support nor a kind comment from the Shaykhs of the Ez-Zaytúna Mosque¹⁸¹ who still wield power. Notwithstanding, equal rights in inheritance for men and women (that the Shaykhs of the Ez-Zaytúna Mosque had adamantly refused to endorse) will be established one day, there is no doubt.¹⁸² Bourguiba (meaning President Bourguiba) in reality has no religion. The Muslim Shaykhs of Tunisia have tried to thwart his progressive efforts.

And Bourguiba Junior continued:

I have to tell you that I have done some research on the Bahá’í Faith when Na’ila told me of your visit and found a favourable article about the Bahá’í Faith in the Islámic Encyclopaedia. (Here we intervened saying that the article he spoke about was written by the Italian Professor Bausani, who we know and are sure that what is written in the article is correct and unbiased).

I was recently in Jedda¹⁸³ (in his capacity of President of the Tunisian Development Bank) and found pamphlets and booklets spread out on a table in the meeting room. I noticed that a few were against the Bahá’í Faith.

Before we left we asked their permission to present to them two Bahá’í books and they accepted joyfully. The next days we took two books one being a volume of The Bahá’í World.

¹⁸¹ Al-Zaytúna Mosque, (Arabic: جامع الزيتونة, literally meaning *the Mosque of Olive*), is a major mosque at the center of the Medina of Tunis in Tunis, Tunisia. The mosque is the oldest in the Capital of Tunisia and developed into an Islamic University. It claims being the earliest and greatest universities in the history of Islam.

¹⁸² President Bourguiba promulgated a progressive Code of Personal Status in Tunisia in the year 1957 – one year after acceding to the presidency of the country and the first in the Arab and Islamic world, which guarantees equal rights for men and women except in the matter of inheritance.

¹⁸³ In Saudi Arabia.

We sent our report to the Universal House of Justice and sometime later the House informed us that “Tunisia abstained from voting against the “Bahá’í Community” at the meeting of the Arab Boycott Office!

I must mention here that it is entirely due to Ulfet’s friendliness with Na’íla the wife of Bourguiba Junior and her continued efforts to identify herself as a Bahá’í ever since her early years, that we met with whatever may be considered as success in our efforts in this case.

What took place in the Arab Boycott Office Meeting?

I was able to obtain some information on that meeting through Counsellor Manuchihr Salmanpoor of Kuwait, noting that the decisions of that meeting of the Office included:

- 1) The Bahá’í Communities are considered Zionists who sustain and promote the economy of Israel.
- 2) To prohibit the establishment of centres of activity of this community and close the existing assemblies in the member countries.
- 3) Prohibit dealing with the organisations of that community anywhere in the world.

Such an accusation as in (1) is very dangerous, and while they seemed to have had little effect in Tunisia, some years later when for some reason or other Bahá’ís were under questioning by the Authority, the question of: Where do the Ḥuqúqu’lláh go? Why do you send the Ḥuqúqu’lláh to Israel? - came up.

To these questions most of the friends answered that they did not know anything about the subject and generally that was true, the Law of Ḥuqúqu’lláh not having been promulgated at the time. Yet as recently as 2018, that is more than 4 decades after that meeting of the Boycott Office, I was asked to explain the subject of sending Ḥuqúqu’lláh to Israel and I said, *“Who said that Ḥuqúqu’lláh are sent to Israel? They are not automatically sent anywhere, Israel or any other specific country. The funds of Ḥuqúqu’lláh are under the control of the Universal House of Justice that is in Israel but they remain in the country of origin, at least in Tunisia that is the case. If this fund is required to go somewhere else, such transfer has to be a legal transfer, otherwise no such transfer is done”*.

The person who put that question to me was an official of the Ministry of Interior who was preparing his doctorate on the subject of the legal status of the Bahá’í Community. I was helping him in his doctorate preparation, and I felt that my comments on the subject Ḥuqúqu’lláh would help to close the subject with the Ministry of Interior also.

Regarding the reaction of other Arab countries to that Boycott Office decisions, Counsellor Salmanpoor has reported the following:

The representatives of Lebanon and Jordan took a reserved attitude declaring that the decisions taken by the Office in its meeting are beyond the scope of the prerogatives of the Office and it is up to each government to organise its relation with the Bahá’ís. The speaker of the Parliament of Jordan Bahjat El-Talhouni said that the Bahá’ís are well known in Jordan.

Qatar sent a representative to the Boycott Office meeting who was not a high official of Government, an indication that Qatar did not care much for that meeting. Bahrain was represented by its Minister of Culture who declared that his country would not take any action regarding the Bahá’ís unless obliged to do so. As for Kuwait its

representative was the head of the Arab Boycott Office, who following the meeting became the prime minister and dropped his Boycott Office position.

Egypt, of course, had a different idea!

The Constitutional Tribunal rules against the Bahá'ís.

Only a few days after the Arab Boycott Office meeting ended, Egypt seemed to have responded favourably to its decisions. The challenge deposited by the Bahá'ís at the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal regarding the presidential Decree 263 of the year 1960 banning the Assemblies and confiscating all their property, as non-constitutional was refused. Although that refusal meant more suffering for the Bahá'ís, yet it was a disgrace for the Egyptian highest justice entity.

The 12th March 1975 prestigious Al-Ahrám daily issue published an information that the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal in its session under the supreme judge Badawi Ḥamouda has rejected the challenge of the Bahá'ís that the Decree 263 of the year 1960 is unconstitutional.

The publication reads:

“Abolishing the Bahá'í Community **The Supreme Court rules its Constitutionality**

The Supreme Constitutional Court has ruled during a session under the supreme judge Badawi Ḥamouda to reject the challenge to the unconstitutionality of the law promulgating the abolition of the Bahá'í sect and ruled the constitutionality of that law.

The Court has further found that this annulment (of the Bahá'í Community) does not contradict the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, because this sect pretends that it is Muslim while its teachings contradict basic provisions of Islámic Shari'á laws in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance. It further considers the months 19 days and imparts attributes of divinity to 'the Bahá' the leader of this sect.

Dr Mohsen Enayat¹⁸⁴ comments on the Supreme Court judgement

On his way to sub-Sahara Africa for a four year travel teaching period, Dr Enayat and his wife Felicity, came to Tunis during the month of December, and he was able to take a look

¹⁸⁴ Dr Mohsen Enayat is a doctor in International Law, born in Egypt August 15, 1931, pioneered to Libya at the age of 21 and then internally to desolate Fezzan, where Sultan 'Abdel-Ḥamid intended to exile 'Abdu'l-Bahá. His life after that and until this day has been in the service of the Faith and the World Centre at large. Indeed a unique life of service.

at the Supreme Court Judgement and formulate an analysis. Included hereinafter, are parts of his report that went to the Universal House of Justice:

The Supreme Court's decision stated that the Decree (263 of the year 1960) only dissolved the Bahá'í Centres and Assemblies, prohibiting their activities, disposed of their belongings and provided penalties for its violation; but never touched on the Bahá'í Faith as a belief. The Court went on to deduce that the Decree could not be seen as an aggression on the freedom of belief.

Meanwhile, the Court seems to give the word "Assembly" a broad meaning as is, for example, the case on page 9, the first line. "Their Assemblies" as it is used in that particular instance seems to imply any Bahá'í gathering, if this impression were true, any meeting where a number of Bahá'ís come together even for prayers, could be considered as overstepping the bounds of the Decree.

The Analysis of Dr Enayat continues:

The decision of the Supreme Court (page 9, line 20 and following) did not deny the existence of inequality between the Bahá'í Egyptians and citizens of other denominations. Rather it tried to justify such a discrimination and give it a legal character. "The principle of equality," said the Court, "does not mean mathematical equality among all the individuals despite their different legal strata. But it means equality among the members of the same category if their strata were equal."

In other words the Supreme Court's interpretation considers that discrimination between the Muslims who are the majority and other members of other minority groups is legal and constitutional. Bahá'ís have no right to be equal in religious freedom as are the believers of the three recognised religions: Islám, Christianity and Judaism.

The Court went on to explain that there was no disharmony between the dissolution of the Bahá'í Assemblies and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. References were made to article 29 paragraph 2 which stipulates that the individual in the practice of his rights and liberties will be subject to those restrictions made by the law for the recognition of the rights and the respect of the liberties of the others or for the fulfilment of the just requirements of the public order, the general interest and the morals of the domestic society.

From this stipulation, the Court deduced that: "Therefore, when the requirements of the public order of the country which are rested in Islámic law, necessitate the dissolution of the Bahá'í Assemblies and the prohibition of their activities, the legislation ordering such a dissolution could not be considered in disharmony with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

I wonder what people who may read this in future, think of the Egyptian Judiciary's concept of "justice" or "human rights"!

International Action for the Egyptian Bahá'ís

The reader of these lines must have certainly realised the precarious condition of the Bahá'ís of Egypt during that period of our history. It was then clear, that the intention of the

Egyptian Judiciary was to judge the Bahá'ís without any attention to justice, to human rights or rights of citizenship, while the supreme Judiciary was bent on “abolishing the Bahá'í sect” as they insist to call the Bahá'í Faith.

While I am not conversant with either the law or the judiciary, yet I am in no doubt as to what is meant by the “abolishing of the Bahá'í sect”.

Again, all the Egyptian high officials contacted by the Bahá'í visitors from abroad, have failed to serve the cause of the Bahá'ís in any tangible manner. There were many promises that never materialised. The same applies to those personalities contacted by the lawyers of the Bahá'ís. These also have not moved to help.

The Universal House of Justice was aware of the situation and took several measures that I will try to summarise as best as I can.

Ulfet and I went to Paris from March 13 to 16, for consultation on the effect of the Arab Boycott Office decisions, as well as the following plan for the precarious situation in Egypt. Mr. Salim Nounou was, of course, there as well as Counsellor Manuchihr Salmanpoor of Kuwait, Dr Victor di Araujo, representative of the Bahá'í International Community and Lawyer Mu'awwad who happened to be on another business of his in Paris.

On the 15th March we received the instructions of the House as well as a summary of the measures being undertaken regarding the situation in Egypt. In the following pages, the reader will be upraised of some of these measures which I believed will be a source of happiness. This is my hope at least.

Visit of Dean Dorothy Nelson¹⁸⁵ and Bâtonnier¹⁸⁶ Lussan

Meeting the Minister of the Interior

Meeting the Minister of Justice

Meeting the First Lady Mrs. Jihan Sádát

The visit of Dorothy Nelson and the French lawyer Lussan in May 1975 was an important event in the efforts undertaken to ease the pressure on the Egyptian Bahá'ís in that Dorothy was able to meet with the First Lady, like Shirin Fozdar a little while earlier.

In the same manner as when Judge James Nelson was accompanied by a French Lawyer Maitre Ducraux, Dorothy was accompanied by the French Bâtonnier Lussan. Why was that measure of accompanying French lawyers taken, I have only my understanding to give for an answer. I think that the idea was to give the intervention in favour of the Egyptian Bahá'ís a tinge of internationalisation. Besides the United States, the next country of importance to the Egyptian government of the time was France. Hence, the accompaniment of French lawyers to the American law personalities.

Dorothy wrote a detailed report of her 5-day visit from May 18 to 23, 1975. I will present the main features as follows:

Dorothy arrived in Cairo on the 18th May 1975 evening after a 32-hour journey. Nevertheless she contacted Mu'awwad by phone and was to meet him the next day. Herewith the main content of Dorothy's detailed report that she sent to the Universal House of Justice:

Monday, May 19,

¹⁸⁵ Dorothy Wright Nelson, born September 30, 1928, senior judge of the US court of Appeals of the Ninth Circuit, married to Judge James F. Nelson, and was nominated by President Jimmy Carter to the Supreme Court of the USA. Dorothy is an active member of the Bahá'í Faith.

¹⁸⁶ Bâtonnier: Leader of the barrister attached to a French court.

Mr. Labib (Mu'awwad) sent Mrs. Asma Bicar¹⁸⁷ and Sayyid Al-'Azzawi to meet me. They were wonderful in briefing me on the history of the Tanta case and on the situation of the Bahá'ís in general. I then decided that since I had only five days, I should call (US) Ambassador Eilts and I did. I explained to his secretary Mrs. Ann Galanni who I was. (Jim¹⁸⁸ had called in advance to tell her of my arrival). She explained that the Ambassador was to leave for the United States the following morning, but would see what she could do through him to help arrange for my visit with Mrs. (Jehan) Sádát. I then took a quick trip to the museum feeling it would be rude not to know a little about Cairo and very suspicious not to visit anything when I had listed myself as a tourist.

At 5.45 p.m., I met the extraordinary Mr. Lussan in the lobby. Although he speaks no English, and my French is rusty school-girl French, we soon learned to communicate very well.

At 6:00 p.m., we met in the office of Mr. Labib who greeted us warmly. Also present were Mr. and Mrs. Bicar, Mr. Al-'Azzawi, Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, and Mr. Ámin Battah, all marvellous Bahá'ís who someday should have their story told in the Bahá'í World. Their love and acceptance of trial for their beloved was pure and tender.

In between phone calls and Turkish coffee, Mr. Labib told us in both French and English (one of his great strengths is languages) of the Tanta case and of the 1960 and 1965 decrees in Egypt. He informed us also that he had made an appointment with the Minister of Interior for 2:00 p.m. the next day, to be followed at 9:00 p.m. by a diner at the Nile Hilton given in our honour by the Bar Association, and that on Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. we were to meet the Minister of Justice. He was working on my meeting with Mrs. Sádát, but the plans were not firm. He was also planning to set up a meeting with the Prime Minister.

That evening the talented Mr. Bicar and his wife invited us, all present, to their home to view Mr. Bicar's paintings and have some refreshments. Mr. Labib was invited and accepted. We spent a charming evening viewing paintings and listening to Mr. Bicar play his various Egyptian musical instruments. Mr. Lussan appeared to be impressed with the talent as well as the devotion of the Bahá'ís to each other and to their Faith. Mr. Labib did not arrive by 11:30 p.m. and so we sat down to a beautiful diner prepared by Mrs. Bicar. Mr. Labib arrived at 12:00 p.m.

All of these events are mentioned because it is often the unconscious feelings we get from events such as these that influence our opinions at a later time.

Tuesday May 20

Mr. Labib had indicated we should meet in the morning before going to meet the Minister of Interior. He called and stated that we should meet in his office at 1:00 p.m. I then called the Ambassador's office to see what progress has been made on my visit with Mrs. Sádát. The secretary stated that she was still working on it.

¹⁸⁷ A well-known Bahá'í wife of the famous artist and Bahá'í Hussein Amin Bicar.

¹⁸⁸ James Nelson – her husband.

At 1:00 p.m. Mr. Lussan, Mr. Al-'Azzawi, Mr. Battah and I met in the office of Mr. Labib. Because of Mr. Labib's business calls, there was literally no time for a briefing on the Minister of Interior.

At 2:00, Mr. Labib led us through the guards to the government building office of Mr. Sayed Fahmy, the Minister of the Interior. We were nicely greeted by his secretary who served us Turkish coffee in the outer office and promptly at 2:00 were received by His Excellency.

It was apparent that Mr. Fahmy was suspicious of our presence. He inquired immediately as to the purpose of our presence in Cairo. He spoke both English and French and so conversed with Mr. Lussan and me alternatively. I explained that I was here to see Cairo and in addition had spoken to Mr. Khalifa in the United States about the criminal justice system and its movement towards reform; that the United States was looking more and more towards the Napoleonic inquisitorial system in many types of cases similar to that of Egypt, especially its stress on human rights, and also in Egypt's new investment law welcoming foreign capital to Egypt. Since my school is having an Institute on Foreign Investments abroad and since Egypt is so progressive in this area, I expressed the hope that perhaps he or his agent find it possible to participate in such an Institute.

He responded very favourably stating that he had a brother attending the School of Education and teaching there at the University of Pennsylvania, that he had not been to California, and I said perhaps something could be arranged. I promised to contact his brother at the University of Pennsylvania and perhaps even visit him on one of my trips east.

After some discussion with Mr. Lussan on the subject of the investment law, Mr. Labib brought up the subject of the birth certificates and identity cards. Immediately, there was a showing of hostility towards Mr. Labib by Mr. Fahmy. I interjected with the comment that as a Bahá'í, I was distressed to see my Bahá'í sisters in Egypt so unhappy over the state of affairs. He asked me how many Bahá'ís there were in the United States. I said to him that there were many thousands of Bahá'ís. He turned to Lussan and asked if there were any Bahá'ís in France. Mr. Lussan said yes, and that they too, were very concerned over the state of affairs in Egypt. He then turned to me and asked how many Bahá'ís there were in the world. I said many millions of Bahá'ís in 300 countries and territories. He appeared very surprised and impressed. Mr. Labib then made a most impassioned and strong speech about freedom of religion in Egypt and the guarantee of it under the Egyptian Constitution. Mr. Fahmy turned to me and stated that this was a political question and not a question of freedom of religion. I asked how it could be a political question when a Bahá'í precept was obedience to government, that the Bahá'ís would fight for Egypt if they were ordered to, just as a Bahá'í in the United States or France would be loyal to his or her government. He then mentioned the Emergency Powers Act which placed these restrictions on the Bahá'ís for political necessity. Mr. Labib replied that that was just an emergency act and should no longer apply. The Minister disagreed openly but to me and Mr. Lussan stated he would look into the matter. He appeared ready to end the interview; I repeated my desire to have him visit the United States and my promise to contact his brother. Mr. Lussan exchanged some pleasantries in French and we departed.

My evaluation of the meeting is as follows: Mr. Fahmy is not particularly friendly toward either the Egyptian Bahá'ís or Mr. Labib. I think he felt a certain unease at the interest of Bahá'ís from outside countries in the Bahá'í situation in Egypt and with added pressure brought to bear may feel compelled to do something to improve the situation. He certainly made no direct promises to do anything more than look into the situation and I do not think that we should expect much more of him.

(Dorothy then describes a dinner given by Mr. Labib and a meeting with the Bar Association where she met Dr Aisha Rateb who said that she was not going to Mexico City for the UN sponsored Conference on Women.)

Mr. Labib confirmed later that afternoon that I had a meeting with Mr. Áḥmad Fawzi, secretary to Mrs. Sádát as a prelude to my meeting with her. This meeting was arranged for Wednesday morning at 10:30 a.m. at the Palace by a friend of Mr. Labib. I was extremely pleased with this development and very grateful to Mr. Labib.

Wednesday May 21

At 10:14 a.m. I arrived at the Palace and had to present my credentials at three different places and watched by numerous guards with Tommy guns before I was escorted to the office of Mr. Áḥmad Fawzi, secretary to Mrs. Sádát. An Egyptian who was raised in American schools, Mr. Fawzi is bright, articulate, and addicted to American rock music which played in the background during our visit. He was extremely cordial and offered me Turkish coffee and lemonade, both of which I took, and then asked me why I wished to see Mrs. Sádát. I told him that I regarded her to be one of the great leaders of the women's movement in the world, I noted that the Time magazine article about her, a copy of which was posted on the wall, had been very inspiring because in it was relating her concerns for equal rights for women, the education of women, her belief in the family unit and her concern for adequate child care in the world. I said that I planned to attend the UN sponsored Conference on Women in Mexico City and that I would like to talk to her about her ideas of the goals of the Conference. Mr. Fawzi then stated that this sounded fine, but was I planning to talk to her about something else? I replied that I admired the Egyptian Constitution very much and its stress on human rights including those for women and that I would probably like to talk to her about this. He then asked me how I knew Mr. Labib. I said that he was a friend of my husband in Cairo and that he was very kind to arrange this appointment for me. It was then that Mr. Fawzi reported that when Mr. Labib's friend had called for the appointment, Mr. Fawzi had called the American Ambassador and talked to him personally. The Ambassador stated that he had just heard from me and that Mrs. Sádát should meet me as I was an eminent legal scholar from the United States, etc. I do not think the visit would have come to pass had the Ambassador not made that statement. Mr. Fawzi then asked again how I knew Mr. Labib and in effect why I had anything to do with him. I repeated the same reasons but started to have a very uneasy feeling. Then Mr. Fawzi stated: "I want to ask you once more, are you going to speak with Mrs. Sádát about anything else?" Mr. Labib had stated to me that under no circumstances should I mention to the secretary that I was a Bahá'í or going to speak to Mrs. Sádát about the Faith that I should simply speak to her about the Faith when the appropriate moment arrived. So I stated that I have covered the topics I wished to speak about. He said fine; I could have fifteen minute appointment at the Palace at 8 p.m. that night. He asked who I

was meeting in Cairo. I told of the appointment with the two Ministers and said I had met Dr Aisha at the Bar Association meeting and was sorry she wasn't going to Mexico. He replied that I was mistaken, she was going.

As I walked home from the Palace I had a very worried feeling. I did not want to be thought to deceive anyone, and I had a feeling that if I did talk about the Faith that night I would be considered to have deceived Mr. Fawzi and would be deemed untrustworthy.

I took a short trip to the Pyramids, again for the purpose of really looking like a tourist. An hour's camel ride left no doubt.

Mr. Labib had asked us to meet him about 4:00 p.m. at his office for a briefing, Mr. Lussan said "no!" we would not come until 5:15 p.m. because we know how busy he was.

Mr. Lussan and I arrived at that time and drove out to another government building to meet the Minister of Justice, Mr. Adel Yunis. This was a most successful visit. I was first surprised to note that Mr. Labib had invited two members of the Bar Association to join us. They brought petitions of their own for the Minister. This seemed inappropriate to me but Mr. Labib could have planned it this way for the ultimate result which was good.

We were warmly greeted by the Minister of Justice who served us refreshments and gravely apologised for being three minutes late. He also spoke English, French and Arabic and so conversed first with Mr. Lussan and then with me alternatively, back and forth. In my conversation, he related that he had visited my school in 1965, that he was a great friend of chief justice Earl Warren and that he would love to visit my school and the United States again. I stated that I knew Earl Warren and his daughter Dorothy, that I would love to arrange a visit for him to the United States and that I would contact Chief Justice Burger about this possibility. He was very pleased. We discussed at length our criminal law systems and the growing interest in the United States in private international law and our pleasure with the new Egyptian Investment Law. He was very interested in the developments here in juvenile law and I stated that I would be happy to keep him apprised. After more conversation with Mr. Lussan (Mr. Labib had not yet said much), he turned to me and asked if there was anything at all he could do for me during my stay. I seized the opportunity fearing it would come no more, and said if he could do anything to help my Bahá'í sisters, I would be so grateful. "What do you mean?" he said. I then explained the registry of marriages, the illegitimacy of children, the identification cards, birth certificates etc. He was absolutely amazed that this was happening and said he would look into the matter right away and do something about it. Then Mr. Labib, joined in by his two friends from the Bar Association engaged in an animated conversation about how horrible all this was in a country as free and with a constitution professing to support human rights. Mr. Labib indicated that Mr. Lussan, although a Christian was also concerned because there were many Bahá'ís in France. Mr. Lussan corroborated this and engaged in a lengthy conversation with the Minister about this. The one hour meeting ended with great promises and assurances that something would be done immediately about this situation. By the way, it was in this meeting that the Minister of Justice agreed that the constitution should be

applied enforcing freedom of religion and the Emergency War Powers Act was no longer in force.

My evaluation of this meeting is that it was extremely successful and that the Minister of Justice truly intends to assist the Bahá'ís in Tanta and elsewhere.

We drove back to the Palace for my visit with Mrs. Sádát. At that time Mr. Labib, Mr. Lussan and I agreed that I should not say anything about the Faith unless asked specifically because of the repeated questions of the secretary Mr. Fawzi. We were all disturbed by his repeated questions about my knowing Mr. Labib. I feared that the Minister of the Interior had called Fawzi to warn him about my being a Bahá'í because Mr. Labib had told the Minister of the Interior that I had an appointment (before I did) with Mrs. Sádát.

It was at this time that Mr. Labib told me that I had not met Dr Aisha Rateb – but another Dr Aisha. I felt terribly embarrassed, feeling once more that Mr. Fawzi would think I had tried to deceive him.

With that admonition in mind, I arrived at the Palace, was escorted through many guard posts and met Mr. Fawzi who escorted me into the Palace sitting room which was very elegant, to await the arrival of Mrs. Sádát. She arrived at exactly 8:00 p.m. I heard from Mr. Fawzi that she had just taken her Master of Arts examinations that afternoon so I inquired about them. She was pleased and stated that she felt very good. I then remarked how much she was admired for her belief in education and equal rights for women. She countered saying that she believed in equal rights for men too. I heartily agreed and that a famous Persian writer had once said that men and women are like two wings of a bird and that if they are not both strong the bird cannot be impelled to fly heavenward. She said that that was what she believed and that was a beautiful way of stating it. She then waved her secretary away which relieved me a little and indicated that she felt comfortable in our conversation.

I then indicated that I was looking forward to hearing her speak at Mexico City and that she was looked upon as a great leader of women in the world. Further, the Egyptian Constitution was a great protector of human rights religious and otherwise and was of great interest to us in the United States. She stated that she was glad and then asked if I would be interested in hearing some of what she planned to say in Mexico City. She was so charming, intelligent and sensitive and I felt so privileged to be in her presence.

She stated she believed in moderation in all things and that although equal opportunities must be created for women, they must not rush into everything too quickly; that the man had to feel that he was head of the household but that women could have equal rights in everything if they were patient and moderate. She said that she felt that the family is the basic unit of society and must continue to be so.

I responded that I agreed with all that she said, and that the women in extremist movements in the United States, in their lack of moderation, had slowed down rather than enhanced the movement for women in the United States. Further, I stated that education appears to be the key for women who are the first teachers of the children. In fact, if I had to make a choice between educating men and women, perhaps the women should be educated first because they are the first teachers. She was pleased

with this remark and stated that the Shaykhs had kept the women back in the Arab countries and that she had spoken to her husband about it many times. The Shaykhs were very much against equal rights for women in Egypt but she had convinced her husband that equal rights must come. She had succeeded in getting him to pass the Equal Rights for Women Act in Egypt during this International Women's Year.

She also expressed the need for continuing education of women (and men). She told of when she attended King Faisal's funeral.¹⁸⁹ First, she said, I wore a short dress; it was black, but I wanted to represent what I felt about modern times and how I felt we should even change our dress according to the times. (She had on a lovely silk, shirtwaist dress that looked very American). She stated that she told King Faisal's widow that she must go back to school and do something worthwhile. She stated that the wives of many Arab leaders have nothing to do and some can only read and write a little. She was happy to report that King Faisal's wife had decided to take her advice.

We spoke also of the need to provide for part-time education for women for they may stay at home at least part-time with their children when they are small. Further, she and I discussed the need for excellent child care centers. She appeared amused by the fact that in the United States there are child care centers at many super markets but not at the universities.

I then stated that I saw the education of women as being an instrumental factor in leading to world peace. That women do not have the culture of admiring military achievements and as they assume more important roles in society they will see to it that women do not have to give their sons and daughters up to war. She then made what I consider to be a most significant statement – one which may well have world-wide implications in the near future. She agreed that women would lead to world peace. For instance, she had had a letter from a Jewish woman after the last war.¹⁹⁰ The woman was hunting for her son who was lost and missing. The Minister and the Shaykhs did not want her to answer the letter. They stated she will become unpopular with the people. She not only answered the letter and helped the woman, but had the papers carry the Jewish woman's letter and her response. She said that she believed that Israel belonged to the Jews; she did not want to take Tel-Aviv as many of the military leaders of the Arab world wished (the Shaykhs also). All she wanted was what belonged to Egypt rightfully and Israel should be able to live with Egypt peacefully forever as they had done for many thousands of years.

(There followed an exchange of statements over a couple of subjects and already an hour had passed, Mr. Fawzi came in and indicated that he had not interrupted before because the conversation had been going so well).

Mrs. Dorothy continued in her report to say that she was at once elated and depressed – elated because she felt that Mrs. Sádát was a truly great lady who could have a major effect on world peace and internal respect of human rights in Egypt. She was depressed for not having mentioned the Faith.

¹⁸⁹ King Faisal of Saudi Arabia who died March 25, 1975.

¹⁹⁰ The Egyptian – Israeli war of 1973.

Later that evening Mrs. Dorothy and Mr. Lussan met at Mu'awwad's office where Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Sayed Al-'Azzawi and Ámin Battah were present. They listened to Mrs. Dorothy relate her meeting with Mrs. Sádát and also the news of the setback in the Tanta case that took place that very day.

Setback in the Tanta case

I will have to revert to the Tanta case.

On the very day that Mrs. Dorothy met with the Egyptian Minister of Justice Adel Yunis, Wednesday May 21, 1975, the famous Tanta court session took place. The courtroom was filled with soldiers carrying guns and the judge had decided not to allow any postponement. But providence interfered. It was found that a court register had registered the session for May 21, while another for May 28. The judge was obliged to postpone the case to May 28 and further continuance had to be adopted.

The Universal House of Justice was informed of this change in the fortunes of the case and the dangerous replacement of the original accusation by "conspiracy to subvert public order". The House took various steps towards this new situation one of which was to have Mrs. Dorothy cable the Minister of Justice referring to the change in the accusation in the Tanta case, to express her astonishment towards what is taking place and soliciting his intervention in favour of the Bahá'ís. It is possible that Mr. Lussan was asked to send a similar cable, but I am not sure of that. The date of the cable seemed to have been June 1. Effectively, in the session that was held four days later on June 4, the Bar Association intervened in favour of the Bahá'ís which resulted in a number of postponements until 1976.

Shirin Fozdar and Dorothy Nelson Meet Jihan Sádát in Mexico City

This took place on 21st June 1975 in Mexico City in Hotel Aristo, during the UN sponsored Conference on Women. In the following paragraphs, the main part of the report of Mrs. Dorothy is transcribed:

Mrs. Fozdar and I arrived at the Hotel Aristo for our appointment with Mrs. Sádát at 9:00 p.m. I had called Mrs. Fozdar in New York and asked her to determine Mrs. Sádát's location because I was arriving a day late. She did and also called Mr. Áḥmad Fawzi to ask for an appointment. He greeted her warmly on the phone and stated that he would be glad to arrange an appointment for us. I arrived on June 19, and saw Mr. Fawzi at the conference just before Mrs. Sádát spoke. He called out to me as I walked by and stated he would call and let me know the time of the appointment.

This evening Mrs. Sádát arrived late because she had been on a trip to Acapulco with her children. She had rushed back for her appointment with us and a journalist from India. She arrived at 9:00 p.m. and her secretary asked if we mind waiting. Of course we said no – but I noticed that he was especially differential to Mrs. Fozdar. We were served refreshments and called in at 9:25 and stayed until 10:35.

Mrs. Sádát hugged and kissed Mrs. Fozdar and shook my hand warmly. She then recalled her last meeting with Mrs. Fozdar who had urged her to assume leadership role with Arab women and several times in the conversation said how much that meeting had impressed her. We complimented Mrs. Sádát on her excellent talk and

indicated our admiration for her. Mrs. Fozdar made excellent remarks about the role of Muslim women, the statements in the Qurán etc. and Mrs. Sádát reminded us that she had used them in her talk. Mrs. Fozdar then recalled a speech President Sádát had given in Malaysia about the equality of men and women and how much of a boost this had given the women in Malaysia. Her remarks pleased Mrs. Sádát very much.

Mrs. Fozdar and I had spent 2 hours planning our meeting and according to plan Mrs. Fozdar said: "I want you to know that I am of Zoroastrian background, but love the Qurán very much for I am a Bahá'í and we love and accept the spiritual teachings of the Qurán." Mrs. Sádát replied that she knew Mrs. Fozdar was a Bahá'í and greatly admired her work in many countries in working towards the education of women, equality of opportunity etc. She then said she was pleased that we both were interested in elevating the family and the station of motherhood and did not agree with extremists in the feminist movement. It was at this point that I intervened and said that I was so happy to hear her say this because I was concerned about our sisters and brothers of Bahá'í families in Egypt. Their lack of birth certificates, identity cards, etc. In condensed form – what followed was miraculous (We felt your prayers). I said I had talked to the Minister of Justice (Adel) Yunis and he had expressed surprise and concern.

She said she had never heard of this – she was amazed this could happen in Egypt and she would look into the matter immediately upon her return to Cairo! Mrs. Fozdar and I then elaborated a number of Bahá'í principles including obedience to and loyalty to government, and expressed the great love of the Bahá'ís for her and President Sádát. She said that she could not believe that Egyptian citizens could be treated in this manner and expressed her sorrow at these events. She then took my business card, my home address and some of the details in writing and said that immediately upon her return to Cairo on Monday June 23, she would take up the matter with President Sádát and write to me.

She then hugged and kissed us both twice and walked with us, along with her secretary to the elevators and waited until we were on it. "We all exchanged God bless!" and thus our meeting ended on a very high note.

(End of extract from Mrs. Dorothy report).

Ulfet visits Cairo

Towards the end of October, Ulfet went to Cairo with important messages and documents that had to go to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá. She was there for one week and returned on October 28, and presented her report that very night by telex through Salim Nounou in Nice.

The Egyptian Ambassador in Washington seemed to have taken knowledge of the details of the meeting of Shirin Fozdar and Dorothy Nelson with Jihan Sádát and of the friendliness which Mrs. Sádát showed towards the two Bahá'í ladies. According to Mu'awwad, Judge James Nelson had visited that Egyptian Ambassador in Washington when he was on his way to Egypt for his first visit. This is how the Ambassador in Washington got wind of the Nelsons' activity.

I do not know why that Ambassador decided to orchestrate a means to spoil the good relationship with Mrs. Sádát. An official report from the Egyptian Ambassador in Washington indicated that Dorothy has gone around boasting she had personally prepared

the speech given by Mrs. Sádát at the Conference of Mexico City. This false information put Mrs. Sádát into a fit of deception against Mrs. Dorothy when she had such a great esteem for Mrs. Dorothy.

Mu'awwad though, had received a letter from Mrs. Dorothy in which she spoke very highly of Mrs. Sádát and called her "World Leader". Mu'awwad felt encouraged and immediately went to his friend Taha Zaki, who had arranged Mrs. Dorothy's meeting with Mrs. Sádát and showed him Dorothy's letter. This is when Taha Zaki informed Mu'awwad of the report from Washington and its devastating effect. Mu'awwad explained that the report cannot be true given the beautiful testimony of Dorothy's letter towards Mrs. Sádát and asked Zaki to explain this to Mrs. Sádát. When he did Mrs. Sádát requested to see the letter and it seems that the severity of the deception was greatly, if not totally, appeased.

On the 31st October 1975, Ulfet received the answer from the Universal House of Justice to her report, through Nice as usual:

Kindly convey deep appreciation House Ulfet's complete report stop Dorothy just phoned Labib who assured her misunderstanding now cleared up.

English Translation of Memoirs of Somaya Daniel and Fawzia El-Masry

Somaya Daniel and Fawzia El-Masry were two young women in their early 20s among the women prisoners in Tanta. They arranged after their release to write their memoirs of that period. Theirs is the only authentic recording of so much of what happened in that prison. These memoirs were a great help to me in this book.

While Dr Mohsen and Felicity Enayat were visiting us in Tunis in 1975, they kindly corrected my preliminary translation of these memoirs and rendered the translation worthy of going to the Universal House of Justice.

Two more Events to be mentioned for the year 1975

Jameson Bond BIC Representative in Egypt

In his preliminary report on his participation in the Preparatory Regional Human Settlements Conference for Asia, the Pacific and Western Asia in Teheran 14 – 19 June 1975 and in the Regional Conference for Africa in Cairo 21 – 26 June 1975; Jameson Bond included:

The Bahá'í International Community was included in the official list of participants at both Conferences and Bond as Representative of the Bahá'í International Community received in both Teheran and Cairo an official invitation from the Iranian and Egyptian governments for, in both cases, a reception and a dinner, which he attended... At each conference, Bond was able to talk to some fifty participants and some showed definite interest in the Faith".

In Cairo Bond met with Lawyer Mu'awwad and through him, with the Bahá'í friends. Bond had the joy of spending an evening at the home of Ámin Battah where a number of Bahá'ís were there for dinner in his honour. He was also able to visit the Bahá'í Cemetery in Cairo where flowers were blooming following the installation of a water mains there. Bond took some of those flowers and laid them on the grave of Shoghi Effendi in London.

Victor di Araujo & Marco Kappenberger meet Mari'í – Speaker Egyptian Parliament

During the World Food Council meeting, that took place in Rome towards the end of June 1975, Victor di Araujo and Marco Kappenberger - representatives of the Bahá'í International Community to that conference tried to contact Sayed Mari'í who is the speaker of the People's Assembly of Egypt. Mari'í was elected President of the Council for its first two informal days. Mr. Victor had already met with him when he accompanied Judge James Nelson in 1974 to Egypt as part of the various efforts to relieve the situation of the Egyptian Bahá'ís. The BIC representatives were able to meet Mari'í on the 28th of June at his Hotel in Rome for some 15 minutes. Following some exchanges of comments on the conference, Kappenberger then shifted to a discussion of the Bahá'í situation in Egypt. He thanked Mari'í again for his courtesy in receiving him in Cairo when he had called on him with Judge James Nelson and Lawyer Labib Mu'awwad, to ask his assistance in restoring the civil rights of the Bahá'ís of Egypt, and thanked him also for what he had done for the Bahá'ís. He immediately replied that he had spoken to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior and that everything would be cleared up. Kappenberger then mentioned one case which seemed to be a result of his action, that of a Bahá'í who had applied for an identity card and had been issued one with his religion listed as Muslim, had protested, and was later called back and a change made on his card to "Bahá'í". He then mentioned that he trusted that soon all such matters, including some trials that were pending for Bahá'ís and which now had been postponed for November, would be dismissed and all would be cleared up. Kappenberger spoke about the commitment of Bahá'ís to loyalty to government... Mari'í then said that he had heard that Bahá'ís had had some problems in Tanta, and "some who had called themselves Baha'is" had caused difficulties. Kappenberger countered how difficult it was for the Bahá'ís of Egypt to function in their Faith since the Bahá'í Community of Egypt had been abolished by President Nasser in 1960 through Decree 263, a Bahá'í was not truly a Bahá'í unless he functioned in a Bahá'í Community. Kappenberger added that the decree banning the Bahá'í Community had been passed at a time of emergency war powers and could be easily abolished by a simple decree on the part of President Sádát. (Mari'í made no comment on this point).

Kappenberger then asked Mari'í whether he had any advice or guidance that he could give. He said "No" but that he would get in touch with Lawyer Mu'awwad.

The Year 1976

Nothing changed

Reflecting as we enter a new year, we are obliged to come to the conclusion that nothing really has changed. The news that Ulfet brought back from her trip to Egypt of October 1975 show that the court cases are still there and alive and that the dangerous situation is still there.

Ulfet and I had planned to go to Egypt sometime during early January 1976, but because of certain exigencies in my work we had to delay the trip to the end of January. We wrote to the House about our intention and we received their instructions dated January 22, 1976:

Assure Ulfet Rowshan loving prayers accompanying them awaiting full report legal situation condition friends.

The House requests two full reports: **full** report on the legal situation, and a **full** report on the condition of the friends.

We left Tunis by car on January 27, arriving in Cairo on January 31. Our return journey began from Cairo on February 14 and arrived in Tunis on February 19. Upon our return I sent two reports to the Universal House of Justice: the first concerning the court cases and the problems facing the individual Bahá'ís and the second regarding the well-being of the Bahá'í Community in Egypt.

In the following lines, extracts and commentry from the **Full Legal Report** are presented:

Regarding the court cases and petitions, the position is as follows:

Súháj: postponed indefinitely and still is.

Wayli: suspended in wait for the Supreme Court decision. The chances of re-activation of this case are as good as its permanent concealment.

Zaytún; Same as Wayli.

Tanta: The next Juvenile Court hearing is scheduled for March 3rd.

The main case and the appeal (against splitting the case into Juvenile and Adult) is scheduled for March 10th.

Both Lawyer Mu'awwad and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá feel that those behind the Tanta case against the Bahá'ís will succeed eventually, in the end, to obtain full punishment against the friends. This may mean up to LE 100 per person and/or up to 6 months forced labour imprisonment. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the friends are not worried about the punishment as much as they wish to keep the case open for as long as possible. As long as the court cases are alive against the Bahá'ís the name of the Faith will continue to be alive in Egypt – a state of affairs that is in direct countermeasure to the strenuous efforts exerted by the enemies of the Faith to wipe out of existence (in the Arab World) the word “Bahá'í”. When asked if he was

optimistic of the issue of the Tanta case, Mu'awwad replied that he was not optimistic.

It was, therefore, decided that Mu'awwad will try to keep postponing the Tanta case as much as possible. This decision will be brought to the attention of the Universal House of Justice for confirmation or modification.¹⁹¹

Registration of Bahá'í Marriages: Around mid-September 1975, Mu'awwad prepared a petition to the Minister of Justice 'Adel Yunis, and presented it accompanied with Ámin Bicar and Kamel El-Mallakh – a non-Bahá'í friend of both the Minister and Ámin Bicar.

'Adel Yunis had met with Dorothy Nelson and Bâtonier Lussan and was sympathetic to the Bahá'í problems in Egypt.

Registration of Bahá'í Marriage Certificates was the subject of a Fatwa of the Council of State some years ago, authorising legalisation of Marriage Certificates through registration at the Real Estate Offices, for other than Moslems, Christians or Jews. However, the Minister of Justice at that time issued instructions to all the Offices forbidding registration of any document for Bahá'ís.

The Minister of Justice 'Adel Yunis has transmitted Mu'awwad's petition to the Council of State for consideration. Neither Mu'awwad nor the friends know much about any progress made in this matter, but organised effort to follow up has been promised by Mu'awwad and the friends.

Identity Cards and Birth Certificates: In filing their applications for these or any document the friends specifically stated their religion as Bahá'í and they usually got their documents with a dash or two in the space for religion with no mention of Bahá'í. Since the Supreme Tribunal decision to reject the Bahá'í Appeal¹⁹² and the Arab Boycott Declaration,¹⁹³ a feeling has developed that the Authorities have stiffened their position against the Bahá'ís. It seems that instructions were circulated to all official agencies concerned, not only to reject any application with the word "Bahá'í" for religion filled in, but that the "applicant" in person should replace it with one of the three recognised religions. Bahá'ís of Muslim background met with more stiffness.

Mohsen Enayat's Commentary re: judgement of Supreme Tribunal

From consultation that issued following the perusal of Mohsen Enayat's Commentary on the Supreme Tribunal Judgement, it was evident that Mu'awwad had used the same arguments in his defence.

(Regarding Mohsen's suggestion to Internationalise the case of the Egyptian Bahá'ís) Mu'awwad and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá both felt that a campaign on an international scale could be premature at present...

¹⁹¹ In the letter from the House to Marco Kappenberger dated March 16, 1976, the House "concurs with this view provided efforts are continuously made to recover the civil rights of the Bahá'ís simultaneously."

¹⁹² That the Presidential Decree 263 of 1960 was not constitutional.

¹⁹³ Boycott the Bahá'ís and their Assemblies.

General

As the above demonstrates, there are divers indications that the Muslim clergy have succeeded in convincing the civil authorities to eliminate the Bahá'í identity in Egypt. While Mu'awwaḍ does not admit to share this opinion fully, 'Al-'Azzawi vehemently insisted on the validity of this theory, and this servant would beg to add his agreement to this opinion. In fact, I may venture to say that this policy could well be one adopted throughout the Arab Muslim World, or at least the part of that world from Egypt westwards which I know more or less. Hence the sudden almost universal agreement of all concerned throughout Egypt to specifically ask the Bahá'ís to replace “in their own handwriting the word Bahá'í by one of the 3 recognised religions”. The mastermind of opposition against the Bahá'ís has, in a sense, declared a war of attrition on the Bahá'ís to wear the Community down through its young strata.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá does not underestimate the severity of the situation and continuously encourages the youth to persevere, be patient, and to put the interests of the Faith above any other.

End of extracts from the first report.

In the following, extracts from the **Full Report on the condition of the friends**, are presented:

During this visit we were privileged with a most inspiring time with the friends. We had over 10 meetings with small groups of friends in Cairo, three in Alexandria, one day amongst the friends in Port-Said and one day with the friends grouped together in Shebeen El-Qawm. We thought of visiting the friends in the south, but were advised by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá against the wisdom of such a visit. However, 3 believers from Súháj came to visit Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and we had the privilege of meeting them. We also met the Bebawí family of Menia at home.

Needless to say, the friends were very happy wherever we went and we were most inspired. We learnt so much from them and admired their steadfastness as we listened to their stories. All the friends, without exception, have a deep love and respect for the Counsellor. They listen to what he says and are all prepared to render the service that he would request of them for the Faith. They are united and love each other and are prepared for any sacrifice for the emancipation of the Faith.

Many of the friends we met seemed to have taught the Faith to some relative, friend or neighbour. They feel sure that one day, when the present restrictions are removed, many new souls will enrol.

We told them of the love and greetings of the Universal House of Justice and that the beloved House prays for them. We spoke about the worldwide range of the 5-year plan, the wonderful developments at the World Centre, the development of the Institution of the Hands and the establishment of the International Teaching Centre, the creation of the Institution of Counsellors and the expansion of the Auxiliary Boards, the increasing number of mass conversion areas and other encouraging news and subjects.

We are humbly grateful to Bahá'u'lláh for allowing us the bounty of bringing joy to the hearts of these dear ones. The radiance that glowed from the faces of the children and the aged will remain for ever engraved in our memory.

End of extracts from the secon **Full Report on the condition of the friends.**

From The Universal House of Justice re: the two reports

On March 16, 1976 the Universal House of Justice addressed a letter to “Mr. and Mrs. Rowshan Mustapha” from which I quote the following extracts:

From the attached copy of our letter addressed to Dr. Marco Kappenberger, and the information conveyed to you through Mr. Salim Nounou you will learn of the actions taken by the Universal House of Justice in response to your two reports after your recent visit to Cairo.

.....

As you see from our letter to Dr. Kappenberger, the Universal House of Justice has approved your translation into Arabic and in summary, extracts of its circular letters and issues of the “Bahá’í International News Service” and sending these to your father to share wisely with the other friends.

The dedicated and prompt manner in which you both¹⁹⁴ discharge your sacred responsibilities is deeply appreciated by the Universal House of Justice which assures you of its prayers on your behalf.

Marco Kappenberger instructed to proceed to Egypt

The Universal House of Justice sent copies of the above-mentioned two reports to Marco Kappenberger with a letter dated 16th March 1976 containing instructions to go to Egypt.

Here are its principle paragraphs:

Dr. Marco Kappenberger

....

....

Dear Bahá’í Friend,

Mr. Nakhjavání reported to the Universal House of Justice the telephone conversation he had with you last night and the House of Justice was very pleased that it is possible for you to proceed to Cairo early next week.

We have been asked to send you copies of reports received about the situation in Egypt and indicate that the House of Justice hopes you will be able to accomplish during your visit

¹⁹⁴ Meaning Ulfet and Rowshan.

in Cairo. Enclosed you will find copies of two reports written by Mr. Rowshan Mustapha, one on the legal situation and the other on the condition of the friends...

We have also been asked to convey now to you the following instructions which are to guide you in your activities in Cairo.

1. The Universal House of Justice feels that it is important to appoint Maître¹⁹⁵ Lussan of Paris as our consultant in the resolution of the problems of the friends in Egypt. Mr. Zahrá'í is being asked to arrange a meeting for you with him before your departure, as well as after your return. Mr. Zahrá'í will endeavour to bring Maître Lussan up to date on the recent developments and it is hoped that your consultations with Maître Lussan will be fruitful.

2. When you arrive in Cairo, you should endeavour to contact Mr. Labib Mu'awwad either directly or through Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá... In the course of your discussion with Mr. Mu'awwad the House of Justice wishes you to report fully on your meeting in Geneva with Mr. Áḥmad and you should include in your report the point made by him that lawyers who are university professors be engaged on behalf of the Bahá'ís. You should inform Mr. Mu'awwad that the Universal House of Justice has no objection to such a course of action, and recommends it to his consideration.¹⁹⁶ You should then make it clear to Mr. Mu'awwad that it is the wish of the House of Justice that you should meet with both Mr. Sayed Marei¹⁹⁷ and Mr. Áḥmad Khalifa.¹⁹⁸ You may either seek his help in arranging the interviews with these two personalities or you may find that you will be able to make your own arrangements for interview with them.

3. The purpose of your meeting with Mr. Marei and Mr. Khalifa¹⁹⁹ is to win their support for the Bahá'ís, both in terms of the Tanta case and, more particularly, in order to find solution to the problem of civil disabilities suffered by the Egyptian friends in matters of personal status.

4. In Mr. Rowshan Mustapha's report on the legal situation there is a reference on page 5 to the case of Sami Shawki Al-Sayyid Fahmy. More recent information obtained through Mr. Nounou indicates that this young man was not granted his identity card because he refused to record himself as adherent to one of the "three recognised religions" and stands to be expelled from the university. Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá has suggested that Bahá'ís of Egypt resident in various localities of the country should send telegraphic petitions to the Minister of Interior and other high-ranking officers of the Egyptian Government, seeking redress and an equitable solution to this young man. The Universal House of Justice has no objection to such a step being taken but leaves the matter to the discretion of Mr. Mu'awwad.²⁰⁰

5. Mr. Mu'awwad had asked through Mr. Rowshan Mustapha (see his letter on the legal situation, page 3) whether his policy should be, for the time being, to keep postponing the Tanta case as much as possible. The Universal House of Justice concurs

¹⁹⁵ Maître in the French title for Lawyer. Maître Lussan had accompanied Mrs. Nelson in her visit to Cairo in 1975.

¹⁹⁶ Mu'awwad did not think that University Professor lawyers would do much in the Bahá'í case.

¹⁹⁷ Sayed Mari'í was the President of the Egyptian Parliament.

¹⁹⁸ Áḥmad Khalifa was the Egyptian Minister of Industry.

¹⁹⁹ Mu'awwad did not think that Khalifa could do much, yet felt there must be a wisdom.

²⁰⁰ To my knowledge this step was not taken because Sami's case was eventually solved.

with the view provided efforts are continuously made to recover the civil rights of the Bahá'ís simultaneously.²⁰¹

6 The friends have asked if it is advisable to go to Persia on pilgrimage. You should inform Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá that it will not be wise at this time to undertake such trips but it would be desirable for some of the friends to attend either the Paris Conference or the Nairobi Conference. If such visits are undertaken, Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá should issue the friends with credentials and these should be sent to the National Spiritual Assembly of Tunisia to enable that National Assembly to issue proper credentials in their names.

7. Mr. Mu'awwad should know that Mrs. Nelson is maintaining her relationship with Mrs. Jehan Sádát and it is hoped that during her forthcoming visit to America there will be an opportunity for Mrs. Nelson to discuss the Bahá'í situation once more with Mrs. Sádát.

8. You should inform Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá that the Universal House of Justice was deeply touched by the news it received about the zeal and love among the friends in Egypt and considers that this is largely due to his own spirit and dedication and love...

The greatest services that the Egyptian Bahá'ís can render at this time is to meet the challenge which is facing them to emancipate the Faith in their country, and to this end the participation of every believer is called for.

.....

.....

In your meetings with Mr. Muṣṭafá and any of the other friends in Cairo, you should assure them of the deep admiration of the Universal House of Justice for the exemplary spirit of devotion animating the Egyptian friends and assure them of its prayers in the Holy Shrines for their protection and blessings.

The reader will certainly appreciate the interest of the Universal House of Justice in exploring every possibility that presents itself in order to relieve the situation of the friends in Egypt.

The last three paragraphs are a beautiful appreciation of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of Egypt and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá – a pride for every member of that Community and their descendants.

Marble Sarcophagus for Blessed Remains of Bahá'u'lláh

In a letter dated October 26, 1975 addressed to Ulfet and me, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

In the course of one of your visits to Egypt, the Universal House of Justice requests you to obtain information on the present condition of the marble sarcophagus made

²⁰¹ This step was followed by Mu'awwad and was useful.

in Burma for the blessed remains of Bahá'u'lláh. No doubt your father would have the information requested...

In October 1975 I had not planned yet for our next visit to Egypt and I thought I should try to obtain some information about the marble sarcophagus before our next visit. Dr. Moḥsen Enayat guided me to Dr. Rowshan Yazdi, who settled in Canada following his departure from Egypt in the late 60s. His answer arrived a few days before our departure for our visit to Egypt of 27th January 1976.

When we arrived in Cairo we were surprised to find that the marble sarcophagus was in the custody of the friends and on our return to Tunis we informed the Universal House of Justice of its safety.

However, the story of this sarcophagus is thrilling, and I feel it is necessary that I record it here as received from Dr. Yazdi, for history and in an honourable memory of that dear friend. Here is a translation of his record, which was dated around 1968, in French:

The sarcophagus was in Port Sa'id since (probably) 1922, after the ascension of the Master 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is a gift from the Bahá'ís of Burma for the sacred remains of the Báb.²⁰² Following the instructions of the Guardian, the sarcophagus was to remain under the (port) customs bond until further instructions. The documents were originally in the name of our deceased uncle Áḥmad Yazdi until he left Egypt, then the documents were transferred to the name of the late Maḥmúd El-Núshúgátí, who, before passing away, endorsed the documents in the name of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Port-Said. Since then the Local Assembly of Port Sa'id continued to pay the storage in transit fees as the Guardian had instructed.

In the year 1960, I was summoned to the court prosecutor's office as the representative of the Bahá'í Community for investigation on the subject of possession of goods destined for an enemy country (Haifa). My situation at the time was very serious, but with the help of Bahá'u'lláh I was miraculously acquitted. The sarcophagus, however, was confiscated as a "war booty."

Meanwhile, the friends kept a close eye on the sarcophagus until one day the Army authorities decided to render it to the military factories to transform it into powder for the production of explosives. This decision, however, never materialised.

Finally, three years ago the sarcophagus was put up for sale in a public auction. The friends arranged that it be bought by a Muslim friend who signed the documents blank. At present the sarcophagus is outside the customs zone and actually in the territory. That was the only means available to safeguard the sarcophagus and the friends of Port Sa'id continue to keep it in safety in spite of the danger that such an attitude entails. In summary the danger involves:

- a) Collect of funds without government permission.
- b) Indirect activity that was once that of the Assemblies.
- c) Application of instructions received from a community residing in enemy territory.

²⁰² It was generally understood, among the friends in Egypt, that the sarcophagus was intended for the remains of the Báb, until the House explained that it is intended for the sacred remains of Bahá'u'lláh.

No doubt the local authorities in Port Sa'id are aware of the measures actually taken by the Bahá'ís and pretend non-awareness – but for how long?

As to the actual condition of the sarcophagus: It is a state of the art in beauty and in choice of material. Sacred verses are engraved in the marble in gold-fill. It is in two pieces with the lid unfortunately broken in two. The whole is assembled in a big box of solid wood. END.

Urgency measures

During our last visit to Egypt, we felt that the difficulties of the friends in Egypt are developing into a critical situation. The Tanta court case was being postponed by short terms of one and two weeks. The petition that Mr. Mu'awwad had presented to the Minister of Justice 'Adel Yunis for the registration of Bahá'í marriages and which the Minister had transferred to the Council of State for their opinion did not get to its destination. A search has been initiated with no success. Added to these, are other matters that are in suspension, so to say.

All this required of us a closer contact with the situation in Egypt compared to that of visits. We decided to use the phone at closer intervals through Al-'Azzawi or Battah and relate our findings to the Universal House of Justice through telexes to Mr. Salim Nounou.

I did not receive a copy of Kappenberger's report, but I understood that he must have arrived in Cairo around March 20, 1976 and left on April 18, 1976. However, through phone calls, I was able to convey some information of his activity to the House of Justice, and the House of Justice sent the following message towards the 16th of April reading:

CONVEY KAPPENBERGER ALL FRIENDS WHO COLLABORATED WITH HIM DEEP APPRECIATION THEIR STRENUOUS EFFORTS WILL AWAIT KAPPENBERGER'S RETURN AND REPORT

In a telecom on the 4th of April, I was able to report, among various subjects, that Kappenberger had met with Mr. Mari'í – President of the Parliament, with Áhmad Khalifa – Minister of Industry, with the Minister of Interior and (with members of) the Chamber of Commerce. He had met initially with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Mu'awwad. Kappenberger wished to advise the Universal House of Justice that everything seems to be fine.

In a telecom on the 15th of April, I was able to advise what Al-'Azzawi reported that Dr. Kappenberger had been very active and kept Mu'awwad very busy. I understood also that Kappenberger had been very successful in his meetings with the above-mentioned personalities and feels he obtained their comprehension. Al-'Azzawi did not communicate positive results but that enormous problems as we have, take much time to show concrete positive results.

Contact with members Egyptian delegation to Vancouver – Canada Conference

A report by Dr. Victor de Araujo dated June 10, 1976 from the Bahá'í International Community shows that members – Gloria Ferguson and Sheila Banani of BIC to the Habitat/Human settlements Conference held in Vancouver, Canada were successful in contacting and meeting members of the Egyptian delegation to that Conference where many wrong information about the Faith were redressed. The Egyptian members contacted were Mr. Muḥammad Ḥosni – Counsellor to the U.N. Mission of Egypt in New York, Mr.

Hosseini Wafik Ibrahim – Egyptian Minister for Youth, Muṣṭafá el-Ḥasnawī and Ismail Suman (no further information regarding these last two contacts).

The two Bahá'í ladies cleared many misinformation regarding the Faith. Following instruction of the Universal House of Justice, Jameson Bond, (BIC member), and Sheila Banání spoke with Mr. Hosseini Wafik Ibrahim – Egyptian Minister for Youth, Mr. Muḥammad Ḥosni – Counsellor to the U.N. Mission of Egypt in New York regarding the situation of the Bahá'ís in Egypt and the astonishment of the Bahá'ís worldwide that the Egyptian Bahá'ís are denied the basic civil rights because of the location of their spiritual centre which has nothing to do with the present condition of the region. The Bahá'ís expressed their hope that this misunderstanding may be soon redressed and the Bahá'ís regain their civil rights under the new Constitution.

The Universal House of Justice requested informing Mu'awwaḍ of a summary of the report as well as the names of the Egyptians contacted.

Contact with Ḥosni Mubarak – Vice - President of Egypt

Around the middle of July 1976, Dr 'Aziz Navídí, the well-known Bahá'í lawyer, went to Mauritius with the intention of meeting Ḥosni Mubarak – Vice President of Egypt who was there, and bring to his attention the difficulties experienced by the Bahá'í citizens of his country. 'Aziz Navídí reported:

I attempted to meet Ḥosni Mubarak (Vice –President of Egypt) at his residence. The Foreign Ministers of Algeria and Morocco were also there to meet him. When he saw my card, he sent his Ambassador to meet me. I explained the situation of the decree of Nasser and of the position of the Bahá'ís in Egypt. He took the documents from me and promised to explain to Ḥosni Mubarak and inform me by telephone of the result. Later I met him in the reception given by the Prime Minister. He said that he had passed on the documents but had not been able to meet Ḥosni Mubarak.

'Aziz Navídí presented the documents in the name of the Bahá'í International Community.

In the letter dated 22 July, 1976 to Mr. Salim Nounou the Universal House of Justice requested that a copy of Dr. Navídí's documents be sent to *“Mr. Roushan Muṣṭafá with the request that he should arrange in a safe way to transmit their contents to Mr. Mu'awwaḍ.”*

Symptoms of annoyance of the Egyptian Intelligence Authorities

Marco Kappenberger's activity in Cairo with its one month duration, the contact established with four Egyptians members by Bahá'í International Community members Gloria Ferguson and Sheila Banani at the Habitat/Human settlements Conference held in Vancouver, Canada and Dr 'Aziz Navídí's attempt to meet Hosni Mubarak the Vice President of Egypt - all of which activity pounding on the rights of the Bahá'ís must have ended up annoying the Egyptian Intelligence Authorities.

Shortly following the departure of Kappenberger, Fahima Sabri requested renewal of her passport, but her request was taken up by the Intelligence Authorities and she was told that she will get her passport against supplying the Authority with information regarding Kappenberger and other individuals who take information outside the country. Naturally, she did not get her passport then. Her son Safa was confronted in the same manner.

There may be other similar situations that other Bahá'ís experienced for which I have no record.

Second visit to Egypt in 1976

On the 9th of September 1976, I sent the following telex message to Mr. Salim Nounou:

SUGGEST YOU CONTACT REVERED HOUSE TO EXPLAIN THAT IN VIEW OF FORTHCOMING START OF JUDICIAL YEAR IN EGYPT IT MAY BE USEFUL THAT ULFET AND SELF WOULD VISIT THERE IN ORDER TO REACTIVATE PLANS OF ACTION FOR THE PROLONGATION OF THE TANTA CASE, CONTINUE GOOD OFFICE EFFORTS WITH MINISTER OF JUSTICE IN VIEW OF OBTAINING CIVIL RIGHTS FOR THE FRIENDS, CONSULT WITH FATHER (Muḥammad Muṣṭafá):

- A) REPORT FROM JAMESON BOND (regarding) CANADA HABITAT CONGRESS.*
- B) NAVIDI REPORT (regarding the tentative meeting with the Vice President of Egypt in Mauritius).*
- C) KAPPENBERGER'S REPORTS INCLUDING LATEST ONE OF HIS MEETING WITH TALAAT (Abdel-Azeem the second lawyer of the friends in Egypt) IN SWITZERLAND.*
- D) ANY INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE HOUSE TO THIS SERVANT*

On the same day we received the answer of the House that read as follows:

INFORM ROWSHAN GRATEFUL HIS AND ULFET'S PROPOSED VISIT. APPROVE PERSUE OF POINTS AS SUGGESTED BY ROWSHAN. LOVING PRAYERS WILL ACCOMPANY THEM. DELIGHTED NEWS SOME FRIENDS ENABLED ATTEND PARIS CONFERENCE. IMPORTANT THAT NEWS ABOUT GROWTH CONSOLIDATION BELOVED FAITH ALL LANDS BE CONVEYED FRIENDS SPECIALLY YOUTH UPON WHOSE DETERMINATION TO DEEPEN THEIR UNDERSTANDING TEACHINGS TO EXEMPLIFY THEM IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES AND TO DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO PROTECTION THE VITAL INTERESTS WILL DEEPEN DIVINE CONSUMMATIONS WHICH WILL GUIDE FUTURE COURSE BELOVED CAUSE THEIR NATIVE LAND.

This was a quick visit for Ulfet and me from the 22nd to the 26th of September 1976. A few subjects to take to Egypt and others to bring back. The Universal House of Justice gave us instructions that we took with us to discuss with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá.

We found the friends as usual supporting their condition stoically and those with whom we met were happy to know that the House of Justice is praying for them and had a message for them and for the youth. This news was circulated by word of mouth to many other friends as usual. In their turn they wished us to thank the Universal House of Justice on their behalf for their prayers and assure the House of their total allegiance.

The important points that may be of interest historically speaking are the following facts:

Mrs. Jihan Sádát and Mrs. Shirin Fozdar: The Universal House of Justice requested that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Mu'awwad be informed that Mrs. Jihan Sádát is in contact with Shirin Fozdar. In one of her letters to Shirin, Mrs. Sádát said that she had not forgotten the difficulties of the Bahá'ís and promised to inform her of any news on the subject.

Egyptian Bahá'ís in Paris Conference

For the first time since 1960, a number of Bahá'ís from Egypt went to the Paris Conference attended by Rúhíyyih Khánum that was held during the 3rd and 6th of the month of August 1976. Áḥmad and Fawzia El-Masry and their three children as well as Mr. Ḥussein Bicar and Mrs. Bicar were among those who attended. Upon their return to Egypt, Áḥmad and Fawzia went around many towns in Egypt visiting the friends and telling them about the Conference – a vivifying breeze for the friends.

The Tanta Case: continues to be postponed and Mr. Mu'awwad is following the matter closely.

Recording history of the Faith: was an amusing operation undertaken by some of the elder Bahá'ís who would make appointments and meet in twos or threes to record their memoirs. After a full day of remembering incidents in their lives that induced laughter and others that caused tears to flow interrupted by cups of tea and diner – no history was recorded!

Lawyer Labib Mu'awwad

A word is necessary here to introduce Lawyer Labib Mu'awwad.

Who is Mr Labib Mu'awwad?

My feeling and understanding after more than ten years of dealing with him, that he was first and foremost heavenly sent to the Bahá'ís of Egypt. He considered the Bahá'í case a personal responsibility and it was neither for money nor fame that he was seeking – he had plenty of both. In fact, taking up the cause of the Bahá'ís could have been detrimental to his fame.

When he met the Bahá'í problem, he was already the lawyer of some of the most famous names in art in Egypt and, in certain cases the whole Arab World. He was the lawyer of Mr 'Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi – the renowned Bahá'í friend, when the upheaval against the Bahá'ís began in 1960. He took up the defence of the Bahá'ís soon after.

Ulfet and I got to know Mu'awwad during our visit to Egypt in 1973 – a short gentleman, very awake with a rapid wit and a typically Egyptian face and complexion. One felt at ease with him. I understood that he originates from El-Minya (245kms south of Cairo) and is a Copt – Egypt's Orthodox Christian.

Ulfet and I would meet with him every time we visited Cairo to obtain news of the Bahá'í situation and reported our findings to the Universal House of Justice upon our return to Tunis. Once he was in Paris on his own business but he phoned me and we went to Paris to consult with him and inform the House. When he went to New York, he contacted the Bahá'í International Community and through them he was able to speak with Mr. 'Alí Nakhjavání by phone. The same operation happened when he went to London and through the National Office and Phillip Hainsworth, the National secretary at the time, he was able to consult with Mr. Nakhjavání by phone. This is to say that he misses no occasion to keep the Bahá'ís informed of the situation in Egypt.

Mu'awwad simply loved Muḥammad Muṣṭafá. He said of him: "He is a Saint!" He also had great respect for Ulfet and loved to speak with her in French.

One humorous situation occurred when some person asked him to take up a case for him with the courts and Mu'awwad being overloaded with work excused himself more than once. The frustrated client then exclaimed: "Must I be Bahá'í in order that you take up my case?"

The Passing Away of Dr. Al Sayed Muḥammad Al-'Azzawi²⁰³

On November 14, 1976, the friends in Egypt and in other Arab countries were shocked to know of the death of Mr. Al-'Azzawi from a sudden heart failure leaving his wife with four daughters and a son.

Deep sorrow and a feeling of great loss were the sentiments of those who knew Mr. Al-'Azzawi. His contribution in translating "God Passes By" to Arabic will remain an indelible memory of him among other contributions. He was eloquent, knowledgeable and a most pleasing person.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was deeply sorry for the departure to the Ábhá Kingdom of that dear friend.

The Universal House of Justice sent the following message in his honour:

*DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING MUHAMMAD AZZAWI HIS DEDICATION CAUSE HIS
STEADFASTNESS HIS SCHOLARLY WORK UNFORGETTABLE STOP FERVENTLY
PRAYING SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM ASSURE HIS WIFE
CHILDREN DEEP LOVING SYMPATHY.*

²⁰³ The Bahá'í World vol. XVII p 425.

The Year 1977

Lawyer Mu'awwad continues with the Bahá'í Court Cases

At the beginning of this year, Ulfet and I made a quick visit to Cairo between January 14 and 18. We took with us copies of international news and the message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of America regarding Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, pioneers and the early history of the Faith in America.

On the very day of our return, I wrote a report to the Universal House of Justice in which was included:

In a meeting with Mr. Mu'awwad, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Ulfet and I, understood that during a recent trip to London, Mr. Mu'awwad had been able to communicate with Mr. 'Alí Nakhjavání through the Bahá'í Centre in London, and Mr. Mu'awwad informed Mr. Nakhjavání that the Egyptian Council of State (Majliss el-Dawla) will consider the legalisation of Bahá'í marriage contracts in April.

We further understood that there was hope that there will be a possibility for the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kurt Waldheim to find an appropriate opportunity to drop a few words in favour of the Bahá'ís with President Sádát of Egypt during the latter's planned visit to the United States – probably in February. Mr. Mu'awwad explained that two of the close assistants to Mr. Waldheim are Frenchmen and in the same time they are close friends of Dr. Di Araujo of the Bahá'í International Community and it is through their good offices that this contact with the Egyptian President may be possible.

The Counsellor related to this servant a case that had arisen wherein two of the most adult believers in Cairo tried to divert the friends away from the Counsellor. The Counsellor visited the more active of the two, and feels that certain misrepresentations were cleared with him. Fortunately, these two friends were not successful at all in influencing any others, and to all intents and purposes we could safely call the situation as clear now.²⁰⁴

All the friends we met and talked to have asked us to remember them to the beloved House. The passing away of our dear Azzawi left a deep gap among them. His wife and children are very steadfast and patient, and the friends have encompassed them with such love and affection.

The friends continue to face the problems of obtaining their official papers such as identity cards, passports etc. with great courage and deep faith.

There are signs of easing on behalf of the Government, because a few identity cards have been recently issued to believers with the already established “dash” in

²⁰⁴ Gamal Ḥassan reports that certain actions of these two believers could have had very bad consequences for the Bahá'ís in Egypt, and that they were buried in Moslem cemeteries by their families when they died.

the line for “religion” that the believers were denied during the whole of 1975 and the best part of 1976.²⁰⁵”

Signs of easing in the Bahá’í situation

As I said in my report to the Universal House of Justice, there were signs of easing in the Bahá’í situation. Midway down last year I received a handwritten letter by mail from Muḥammad Muṣṭafá containing among other things the names of the Egyptian Bahá’ís intending to attend in the Conferences of Paris and of Nairobi.

Then there was the information regarding the delivery of identity cards to the Bahá’ís with a “dash” in the line for “religion”. There must have been other indications for the easing of the situation, which I did not cross.

As for the court cases, it was quite evident that throughout 1977, there was a lull, as the courts showed less interest in the Bahá’í cases than before.

The question arose as to what was behind such a calming of attitude, and the possibility that the action of the Universal House of Justice could have succeeded!

A review of the court cases in progress in this juncture is therefore appropriate:

The Tanta case:²⁰⁶ Wherein 93 Bahá’ís – male, female and the young, were held in Tanta prison for some 40 days between the end of February and the beginning of April 1972. The case was then split into a juvenile case and an adult case. The adult case was postponed first to February 9, 1977, then to March 30, then to May 19, then to June 19, then to October 12, then to December 21, 1977. On the 22nd December 1977, I informed the Universal House of Justice that it was postponed to March 22, 1978.

The Wayli case: This trumped up case of misdemeanour ref 11278 for the year 1967 began in June 20, 1967. There were 13 Bahá’í defendants sentenced to pay each 100 Eg. Pounds fine and 6 month imprisonment. The primary defendant – ‘Abdessalam Ghazi was the only defendant present in court and he was taken to prison immediately. The other 12 defendants appealed and requested suspending the case proceedings until Supreme Constitutional court reaches a decision on the constitutionality of the Presidential decree 263 of the year 1960.

The case remains dormant in spite of the fact that a ruling of the Supreme court against the Bahá’í claim was pronounced. Nobody intended to stir up this dormant court case.

The Súháj case: The court in Súháj seemed to have either shelved the case or the file was lost. The case was registered under reference 1446 for the year 1970 and was adjourned without fixing another date. It has remained “postponed”. Normally a case is dropped if it remained inactive for three consecutive years. To all intents and purposes, the case could be considered closed.

²⁰⁵ Instead of writing “Bahá’í” for religion on official papers especially identity cards, the Government Authorities used to put a dash “-” or “=” instead. Then there came the period where the Bahá’í was required to write in own handwriting one of the three recognised religions: Islám, Christianity or Jewish. The return to the dash “-” or “=” is a significant step forward.

²⁰⁶ Which is being deliberately postponed in order to keep the name of the Faith omnipresent.

The Zaytún case: In early June 1977, the court took up this case in spite of the fact that it was intermittently picked up and then shelved during the period since when it started in 1965. It was to wait for the result of the Supreme Constitutional Court decision regarding the decree 263 of the year 1960, and when the Supreme Court pronounced its negative ruling, the case was taken up again. Lawyer Mu’awwad was hopeful that the Zaytoun case would be dropped through “ageing”, but this was not to be.

After being postponed to May 7, 1977, the misdemeanour court sitting of June 21, 1977 effectively ended the criminal proceeding for the 21 defendants of that case. The minutes of the court included all names of those who were incriminated including the names of the friends who had passed away, as follows:

1	Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Súlaymán	12	‘Abbas Muḥammad Músa
2	El-Sayyid Muḥammad El-Azzawi	13	Taleb Kamal Isma’íl Ádam
3	Ámin ‘Abu’l-Futuh Battah	14	Şobḥi Daniel Yusuf
4	Şobḥi Elias ‘Abdel-Massih	15	Hamid Maḥmúd Salama
5	Foad Tewfik Mikha’íl	16	Isma’íl ‘Abdel-Khaliq
6	El-Sayyid Fahmy Muṣṭafá Saleḥ	17	Muḥammad Fethi ‘Alí Hindawi
7	‘Abdel-Rasheed ‘Othman Nassar	18	‘Abdalláh Ibrahim ‘Alí
8	‘Abdel-Aziz Shalabi	19	Kamal Ed-Din Yusri Nosseir
9	Khalil Muḥammad ‘Ayyád	20	Mohyid-Din El-Sayyid Fahmy
10	‘Alí Isma’íl	21	Rowshan Muḥammad Yazdi
11	Fethi Tadros ‘Abdel-Massih		

Hand-written Letter from Muḥammad Muṣṭafá

The acquittal of the Bahá’is incriminated in the Zaytoun court was considered by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the friends in Egypt as a harbinger for a change in the attitude of the Authorities towards the Bahá’is. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá felt that it was safe to mail a handwritten letter including news and information for the first time.

The Zaytún first instance case in which ‘Abdel-Raḥim Yazdi and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá were condemned to a 6 month prison sentence with labour, while Messrs. El-Azzawi, Ámin Battah, Foad Tewfik, Badii Bushru’í, Şobḥi Elias and Şobḥi Daniel each were sentenced to 6 month prison – this case was dropped. The case began in June 1965 and was dropped in June 1977.

In the beginning of October 1977, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá sent a handwritten letter to the Universal House of Justice, probably by some traveller posting it from outside the country. That letter included a survey of the situation of the remaining court cases as well as other news.

In a message dated August 9, 1977 through Mr. Salim Nounou of Nice, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

The House of Justice requests you to extend its gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Rowshan Mustapha for their report about the friends in Egypt. In the meantime, a report in Arabic has been received from Counsellor Muḥammad Muṣṭafá about the various

Bahá'í cases before the Egyptian courts. From that report it appears that the closure of the Zaytoun case will allow the friends to apply for the restitution of their books and papers confiscated at the time when this case opened. Great care should be exercised by the friends, however, so that nothing is done to retract from the seemingly favourable attitude of the authorities towards the Bahá'ís and put in jeopardy the outcome of the pending court cases, especially the one in Tanta. Thus, it might well be for the friends to postpone their application to take their books and papers back, for the present, provided that delay does not prejudice their right to seek restitution at a later date.

Mr. Rowshan Muṣṭafá should be asked to convey to his father the deep appreciation of the Universal House of Justice for the exemplary way in which he has served the Cause and the friends over the past difficult years in Egypt. And to assure him of its prayers on his behalf and for the friends in that beloved country blessed by the footsteps of the Master”.

I communicated by phone with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá on October 21, 1977 and informed him of the instructions of the Universal House of Justice regarding the postponement of *their application to take their books and papers back*. On the next day, I informed the Universal House of Justice that the friends reclaim the deposited money only and not other belongings from the court in the Zaytún case.

President Sádát mentions the name “Bahá'u'lláh” in public address

The “Al Ahrám” daily of the 12th October 1977 published the news of the celebration of laying the foundation stone for St. Mark's Cathedral in the city of ‘Ain Shams – east of Cairo²⁰⁷. The paper published parts of the speech delivered by the President and of that delivered by the Coptic Pope. In his speech the President mentioned that King Akhnaten or Pharaoh Akhenaten, was the first to announce the unity of God and chanted a poem to “Bahá'u'lláh” as well as the love of beauty.

The Pope, in the Al Ahrám daily, expressed his agreement to what the President said and mentioned specifically the name of Bahá'u'lláh in his speech.

When the Universal House of Justice was informed of what was mentioned above, it requested a copy of the poem of Akhnaten. The friends in Egypt sent to me a booklet on Akhnaten by author Dr. ‘Abdel-Mone’ím Abu-Bakr which included the poem of Aton (pronounced Aten) on page 94 of the booklet. Mr. ‘Abdel-Wahab ‘Abdel-Fattah, a Bahá'í of Cairo sent to me a memo on the history of Akhnaten which I translated into English and sent it to the Universal House of Justice.

Was the mention of the sacred name of “Bahá'u'lláh” by the President and the Pope of the Copts a random remark? It is difficult to be so considered!

²⁰⁷A suburb of Cairo, purported to be where Joseph and Mary sheltered beneath a tree, on reaching Egypt.

The General Intelligence Service calls in some Baha'is

The General Intelligence Service is part of the State Security Intelligence Department that deals, among other activity, with what is known as “religious communities.” Contrary to the State Security Intelligence Department the General Intelligence Service does not raise court cases or detains and imprisons people.

For some unknown reason to the Bahá'is, the General Intelligence Service decided in November 1977 to call some Bahá'is to meet with the director of the Intelligence Service dealing with the religious communities and this began, as usual, with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá.

In a handwritten report to the Universal House of Justice dated February 10, 1978, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá describes this event in the following words:

In November last, 1977, a number of Bahá'is were requested to see the chief officer of the Intelligence Department concerned with the religious communities including the Bahá'is. He was satisfied to their replies to his questions. I was supposed to be the first to attend. During this meeting a detailed talk was maintained which lasted about 2 hours, and I found it a good opportunity to explain to him the Bahá'í Faith. The talk dealt with proofs from the Qurán, as I tried to enable him to admit that the Revelation of God is everlasting and that His Bounty is continuous. He seemed sincere in all his questions and was respectful in his manners. He lovingly shook hands upon leaving him and offered his car to take me home as it was 11 PM. I thanked him cordially and explained that one of the friends was waiting for me with his car to take me back”.

The Year 1978

The Beginning of Tranquillity

The latter months of the year 1977 and those at the beginning of 1978, saw the friends in Egypt feeling a kind of assurance at heart that there is an evolution towards détente. This feeling was enhanced by the visit to Egypt of Mr. Muḥammad ‘Alí Faizi, brother of Hand of the Cause Faizi accompanied by Counsellor Emad Şabírán, Mrs. Şabírán and Ulfet Mustapha. Mr Faizi had come to Tunis around mid-January where he spent some two weeks. From thence he went to Egypt where he spent 19 days from the 4th to the 23rd of February 1978.

Visit of Muḥammad ‘Alí Faizi to Egypt

In his report dated February 10, 1978 to the Universal House of Justice, Muḥammad Muşţafá commented on that visit in the following report:

This humble servant begs to acknowledge receipt of your message dated February 2, 1978 on the occasion of the visit of Counsellor Emad Şabírán, Mrs. Şabírán, Mr. Muḥammad ‘Alí Faizi and Ulfet Mustapha.

I beg to say that these dear visitors were warmly received by the friends of Cairo, Port Sa’id and Alexandria, as abundant grace your Supreme Body has showered upon them. Several orientating meetings were attended by the friends in good numbers and at various quarters as it could not be possible for a big number to attend in one place. Heart touching speeches of Mr. Muḥammad ‘Alí Faizi followed by clear and satisfying answers to questions caused the friends to feel themselves spiritually uplifted and their understanding deepened. Counsellor Emad Şabírán was greatly confirmed in lovingly attracting the attention of the friends to the fact that they prepare themselves to the forthcoming day in which they will be called upon to carry their responsibilities both spiritually and administratively.

He encouraged them to endeavour to live the Bahá’í life and understand the administrative work, that behoves them to strengthen bonds of unity and love between all the friends.

Several meetings were also held in Port Sa’id and Alexandria where the visitors were warmly welcomed and the friends were no less enlightened by the speeches.

It was regretted, however, that there were some 3 other communities which were not visited. The reason was the shortage of time on the one hand and on the other special arrangements should have been made. As most of the speeches were recorded, those communities will be visited by certain individuals Bahá’ís to familiarise them with all those glad-tidings”.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Report to the House – Further considerations

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá went on to record certain examples of treatment of Bahá'ís that are indicative of a positive change in attitude of government departments towards the Bahá'ís.

Muhammad ‘Abdesalam Hassanein received his secondary education certificate (which had been withheld) and filled his application for University recording “Bahá'í” in the space for religion. His application was referred to El-Azhar by the Coordinating Committee as usual. The applicant drew the attention of the Committee that being “Bahá'í” the El-Azhar University – the highest Islámic Institution, cannot accept him. In the meantime he was accepted at the Faculty of Arts (Cairo University). Three months later, the Faculty discovered that he had an application deposited at El-Azhar University which excludes him from any other university under any circumstances. He then went to El-Azhar and explained to them the fact that being “Bahá'í” his application should not have gone to El-Azhar at all. After study of the case by higher authorities El-Azhar finally decided to return his papers as he refused their offer to accept him as an exceptional case.

(Under previous conditions Hassanein would have had trouble extricating his application from El-Azhar, and El-Azhar would have never offered to accept his application.)

Religion in the Examination sheets: “Al-Akhbar” daily paper of February 9, 1978 published the information that it was decided (probably by the Ministry of Education) to add an examination sheet in “Morals and Conduct” to the sheets on religion – Muslim, Christian or Jewish, for students who do not embrace these religions. This is the first time that such action takes place in the history of religious examinations. Up until the present, pupils and students were examined in one of the three recognized religions.

(It is hoped that Bahá'í pupils and students will do well in an examination in Morals and Conduct!)

Sorayya Mari'í went to Kuwait and Dubai in December 1977 to visit her brothers and in the same time was able to visit Shiraz and the blessed House (of the Báb), returned to Cairo with some 23 Bahá'í books. At the Cairo Airport the customs officer transferred the books to the Prosecutor at the airport for scrutiny. At one o'clock after midnight the officer told her that he does not wish to retain her until he hears from the Prosecutor, and therefore, she can go home and contact him after a week by telephone concerning the books. He ordered one of his attendants to arrange for a car to drive her home. A week later she was told that the books were still with the Prosecutor Mrs. Sorayya said that the officer was very polite, regretted the inconvenience, and presented his apology to her.

(In the past such cases were severely dealt with and the person or persons involved would have suffered a harsh treatment and considered as criminals.)

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá concludes his report with the following hopeful tone:

Prospect:

From the above-mentioned instances, it could be gathered that remarkable changes as far as Bahá'ís are concerned, effectively took place. In schools and even El Azhar University, to which non-Moslems are not admitted, a new spirit of tolerance began to prevail. Intelligence officers show respect in their contact with the Bahá'ís.

Bahá'í students and pupils are now exempt from the compulsory school examination in one of the three recognised religions (Islám, Christianity and Judaism) by choosing to sit the new "Morals and Conduct" examination instead

Articles attacking the Bahá'í Faith which used to appear in the papers frequently, have become scarce for some months.

The mention of "Bahá'u'lláh" in President Sadat's speech on the occasion of the laying of the corner stone of Mar Girgis Cathedral near Cairo and which was read and broadcast to the millions of Egyptians must have moved minds and hearts towards deeper understanding of fact.

All these instances quoted above seem to me as signs of great developments destined to open doors wide in due time for the Faith to spread.

We attach great importance to Samy's case of Alexandria (16th instant) with warm prayers to Bahá'u'lláh. If the judgement be in our favour it would remove all obstacles that render the friends deprived of their rights.

The judgement of the Supreme Tribunal rendered the situation very difficult as it stated that law 263 of 1960 has been issued by the then President, and therefore, can only be cancelled by the same top authority, the President.

Súdán opened to Egyptian Bahá'í visitors

The Universal House of Justice sent the following letter to the National Assembly of Súdán a copy of which reached Muḥammad Muṣṭafá:

March 14, 1978

*The National Spiritual Assembly
Of the Bahá'ís of the Súdán*

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice is highly pleased with your suggestion contained in your letter of January 20, 1978 and is requesting Counsellor Muṣṭafá in Cairo to help in encouraging two or three individual friends or possibly families to settle in the Súdán. We have been asked to say that you should feel free to correspond with Mr. Muṣṭafá on this matter, provided this correspondence is sent in a safe way to him. Mr. Muṣṭafá is also being requested to ask those friends in Egypt who have the means to travel, to undertake visits to the Súdán in order to meet the friends in various localities. The House of Justice feels that such trips will be stimulating both to the visitors as well as those being visited.

With loving Bahá'í greetings

This message of the Universal House of Justice was a source of joy and happiness to the friends in Egypt, first because they felt that the House had opened for them serving the Faith outside Egypt and secondly because it indicates that the situation of the Baha'is in Egypt is getting better.

Effectively, the year 1978 had witnessed some progress in the government dealing with the Bahá'is as well as an increase in the activity of the Bahá'is themselves.

Signs of positive development in the treatment of the Bahá'is

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá corresponded rarely with me during the 60s and the 70s and his letters were mainly family news. The situation of the Faith and of the friends prohibited otherwise. Mail was subject to censor and safety had to prevail.

Since two years however, his mail to me increased and slowly included news of the friends, the court cases and subjects to be referred to the Universal House of Justice. I have recently received telegrams from him including the names of the youth who are going to a Bahá'í conference arranged by the Counsellor Board of North Africa.

In a handwritten letter he sent to the Universal House of Justice through me, he mentioned among other subjects, the following news as an indication of the positive development of the situation of the Bahá'is in Egypt:

1) The "Al-Akhbar" daily paper of February 17, 1978 (p. 3, column 4) included the news that the "Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly" was one of the contributors towards the restoration of the Aqsa mosque...

2) Again in the "Al-Akhbar" daily paper of April 5, 1978 (p. 7, column 2) presented a clarification regarding the final exams of the general secondary school certificate and explained that it was decided also to provide "question sheets" in Morals and Conduct for students other than Muslims and Christians...

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá says in his report to the House *that he considers this move to have been taken, to a great extent, for the Bahá'í students who will sit the final exams of the year.*

3) In an article by Tharwat Abaza published in the prestigious "Al-Ahrám" daily of April 11 1978 (p. 11, column 2), Abaza wrote: ...it is not true that the government of "Misr party" is for the members of "Misr party" only, for the "Misr party" is for the people of Egypt regardless whether they are from the left or from the right or from the centre, whether they are Muslims or Christians or Jews, whether they are religious or believers in any other religion they take for themselves, whether they are Bahá'is or not Bahá'is...

"In the past," says Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, "prior to this year 1978, any mention of the the word Bahá'í Faith or Bahá'í in a paper was followed with a surge of denunciations, mockery and insults from the public or papers or certain organizations. Today the sacred name of Bahá'u'lláh and the word Bahá'í are mentioned and are respected without the sarcasm we were used to see!"

Further cases of change of attitude towards the Bahá'ís

In his letter dated 1st October 1978 to the Universal House of Justice, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá presented “some developments in dealings with Bahá'ís indicate that the restrictions in delivering passports and work permits in other countries have been removed.

Here are some of these developments:

During the month of July, a Bahá'í presented a request for work permit in a foreign country. Two days later he went to the officer in charge to answer some questions regarding his religious belief and his involvement in the two court cases of the Bahá'ís. That friend doubted that he will obtain his permit, but to his surprise, the officer said to him:

Had you made this request two months earlier, your request would have been refused. Even a Muslim involved in only one court case similar to yours, would have had his request refused. Now, however, these two court cases of the Bahá'ís have no consequences of importance. The situation of the Bahá'ís has now changed and they have been removed from the black list... Here is your permit approved!

During the months of August and September last, some officers from the State Security contacted Bahá'ís in a number of different towns and asked if the Bahá'ís, had any requests. Some friends answered that they request the return of our civil rights, others asked for the restitution of Bahá'í properties ...

On the occasion of the Commemoration of the Martyrdom of the Báb, 28 Shaaban according to the lunar calendar, an official from the Ministry of Interior came to meet Muḥammad Muṣṭafá' at his home. The following conversation took place:

- Is there a chief or leader of the Bahá'ís? Asked the officer
- *No there is none!* Was the answer.
- Do you have demands like those of the Muslim Brotherhood for example?
- *No, the authorities are well aware of the case of the Bahá'ís. Any decision remains for the authorities to take.*
- The ministry has papers that belong to the Bahá'ís. How, where and to whom could they be remitted?
- *There is only one person to whom these effects may be remitted and that person is me. I am the only person alive from among the nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the year 1934 that had prepared the constitution of the Assembly and registered it with the Mixed Tribunal at the time – now called Property Registration Agency, the same year. This authorises me to receive these papers from the Ministry at the Ministry offices or at my home!*

The officer informed Muḥammad Muṣṭafá that he will obtain an answer concerning the papers the following week. Weeks, however, have gone by and there was no answer.

The Universal House of Justice expressed its gratitude for the news of these developments, congratulated Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and gave further guidelines in the following message through Salim Noonou of Nice, France:

21 SEPTEMBER 1978

KINDLY THANK MUḤAMMAD MUSTAPHA THROUGH ROWSHAN FOR HIS REPORT. HOUSE GRATEFUL NEWS DEVELOPMENTS CONGRATULATES HIM ON HIS WISDOM IN HANDLING QUERIES REPRESENTATIVE MINISTRY. IN HIS AND OTHER FRIENDS FUTURE CONTACTS AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE REQUESTED FIND WAYS REMOVE CIVIL DISABILITIES FRIENDS ARE FACING. IMMEDIATE RETURN BAHAI PROPERTIES AND EFFECTS SHOULD BE MENTIONED BUT NOT STRESSED. IN ALL SUCH MATTERS GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FRIENDS SHOULD BE FIRST CONSULTED UPON IN PRINCIPLE WITH MUAWWAD.

PRAYING HOLY SHRINES MULTIPLE CONFIRMATIONS.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

North Africa Conference in Marseille – Egyptian Youth participate

The Counsellor Board for North Africa planned a North Africa Conference to be held in Marseille in France on the 24th and 25th of August 1978.

This was a “first” in the history of the Faith in North Africa including Egypt. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá grasped the opportunity to encourage youth to participate and while in Europe, maybe participate in the French summer school and further visit the resting place of Shoghi Effendi in London.

Effectively, six youth and grownups of Egypt were able to attend. These being: Ámin Battah, Anwar Nagmed-Din, Shawky Seoudi and his wife Tahera, Miss Suzan Ḥelmy and ‘Alá Ḥamdy.

It befell to me to ensure the success of this relatively small, yet important, enterprise and at least cost for the friends. We found that the best solution would be for the friends to come from Cairo to Tunis, stay with us at home during a transit period and then Ulfet and I would accompany them to Marseille and remain with them throughout their stay and travels in Europe and see to their return safely and happily to Cairo.

The friends came to Tunis and we accompanied them and attended the Conference that was held in the local Ḥazirat’ul-Quds of Marseille, to the happiness of both the friends from Egypt and the friends of Marseille. We then all attended the Summer School in Loran in France and there again the friends at the summer school were greatly inspired by their oriental visitors.

Egyptian Youth active again in Pioneering

Pioneering activity started again Egyptian Bahá’í youth. Issam Ismail and his wife Samira Saaded-Din and their two girls Iman and Doaa pioneered to Súdán in July, followed by Shawky Seoudi and his wife Tahera and their five children in November and December of the same year 1978.

A victory for a new rise of vigour that filled the hearts of the friends with happiness after the gloom created by the Presidential decree of 1960.

Reflection over the Year 1978

As the year 1978 comes to its end, it was clear that there was a change in attitude of the authorities towards the Bahá'ís.

What was the cause for that change?

Was it the result of the endeavours of Shirin Fozdar and Dorothy Nelson?

Had Mrs Sádát been able to convince President Sádát that he should help the Bahá'ís?

Was it Dr. Kappenberger's persistent knocking on the doors of Ministers?

Any or all of these elements could have been behind the change!

We may conclude the survey of this year with the Message from the Universal House of Justice dated November 14, 1978 as follows:

14 November 1978

Mr. Roushan Mustapha

Dear Baha'i Friend,

The Universal House of Justice requests you kindly to inform your father of the safe receipt of his two letters of October 1 describing the situation of the friends in Egypt, and to convey the following.

Your father's visit to France, the participation of a few Egyptian friends in the Summer School there, and the subsequent meetings held in Tunis, the news of the pioneers to the Súdán, the successful resolution of the marriage problem of Miss Sana, the purchase of a house where the beloved Master stayed in Schutz, the work undertaken at the Cairo Baha'i cemetery, the removal of some of the travel restrictions affecting the believers, and the full story of the visits and investigations of the State Security Inspectors - all these are evidences of the confirmations of the Blessed Beauty which, in increasing measure, are now surrounding him and the other steadfast friends in Egypt.

It is the hope of the Universal House of Justice that through the alertness and constancy of the friends and the able assistance of their lawyer it will be possible to achieve progress in solving the remaining problems of recognition of Baha'i marriages and of the issuance of birth and death certificates and identity cards, so that the friends may be able to enjoy the fundamental civil rights of every law-abiding citizen in the country.

The Universal House of Justice will continue to offer fervent prayers at the Holy Shrines for abundant divine blessings to confirm your father's efforts to sustain and protect the beloved friends in Egypt.

With loving Baha'i greetings,

Signed (Mrs.) Loraine Johnson

For Department the Secretariat

(Actually Muḥammad Muṣṭafá was not able to go to France, but eventually came to Tunis.)

The Year 1979

A short visit to Egypt

Ulfet and I went on a short visit to Egypt in April 1979.

Upon our return I sent a telex message, dated April 16, 1979, to the Universal House of Justice followed by a written report concerning some attitudes and issues on the part of a few friends that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, in his capacity of Counsellor, wished to present to the Universal House of Justice for their guidance.

We presented to the House the heart felt love of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá on behalf of himself and of the friends in Egypt. A meeting with lawyer Mu'awwad was held and in it he suggested that the time is propitious for a visit by a Bahá'í delegation to come to Cairo headed by Dr. Victor de Araujo and some important personalities like Judge James Nelson, Dorothy Nelson and the like. That visit from the delegation should include a meeting, arranged through the American Ambassador or Mr. Mu'awwad himself, to meet with President Sádát and request his intervention in favour of the civil rights of the Bahá'ís.

Mohammad Muṣṭafá recommends the suggestion of Mu'awwad.

Our report included the information that the friends in Egypt feel comfortable with President Sádát.

In a message dated June 5, 1979, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

“Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The universal House of Justice has received your letter of 13 May and is confident that the visits undertaken by you and Ulfet inspire and stimulate, not only your distinguished father, who has been assigned such a heavy responsibility towards the Faith and the Community in Egypt, but indeed all those friends with whom you come in contact in that country as this is virtually the only steady association they have with the friends outside Egypt.

We are asked to express the pleasure of the House of Justice with the reports you have given about the activities of the beloved Egyptian friends and their hopes for the future.

.....

The House of Justice is interested and is confident that you will be sending information on the outcome of the case of Mr. Sami Shawki Sayyid, which was due to be heard last month at the Council of State.

.....

We are to assure you of the loving prayers of the House of Justice on your behalf, and that of your dear wife and beloved father.

With Loving Bahá'í greetings,

*Signed (Mrs.) Loraine Johnson
For Department of the Secretariat*

Another handwritten letter from Muḥammad Muṣṭafá

A handwritten letter dated 21st July 1979 that was addressed to me this time and it began as usual with family news. This letter, however, was different from previous letters in that it described an active process of translations in participation with some young Bahá'ís, enabling Arabic versions of messages to be distributed to various towns with 11 copies made for the different districts of the greater Cairo area – all to be read and enjoyed by the friends during the Commemoration of the Martyrdom of the Báb – 28 of the month of Shaaban which falls on the 23rd of July. Copies of the translation of the Naw-Rúz message of the Universal House of Justice were also sent to the same communities.

Such activity of translation and reproduction in many copies and distribution among the various communities had been impossible since 1960 when the Assemblies were disbanded by the Presidential decree. I could imagine the happiness of the friends receiving all these news and messages in Arabic.

The letter further carried the wonderful news of the increasing numbers of new Bahá'ís among whom were the El-Hady couple: Abdel-Aziz El-Hady and his wife Sawsan Ḥosny El-Hady who are graduates of Al-Azhar and were professors teaching in the Emirates. It took Mrs. Somaya Hindawi 8 years before the couple accepted the Faith. They had to leave their work in the Emirates after accepting the Faith. Within a very short period they in turn, were able to confirm eight other new Bahá'ís from among members of the two families.²⁰⁸

The last paragraph of the letter reads:

There is a noticeable improvement with regard to the Bahá'ís. They are treated with utmost respect by the Security Investigation Officers, some of whom even show sympathy towards the friends and facilitate the issuing of passports more easily. Similar improvement has been experienced with Civil Registrars in delivering identity cards to Bahá'ís with religion indicated with (=) – something that was not available before.

Another group of Bahá'í youth of Egypt visit Europe

Towards mid-August 1979, a second group of young Egyptian Bahá'ís went to England and attended the Summer School in Nottingham. The group consisted of Gamal Ḥassan and his wife Somaya, Miss Sally Daniel, 'Alaá Ibrahim Ḥamdy and Miss Hala Rifaat Shirazi.

Interrogating Muḥammad Muṣṭafá at Intelligence head office

In a letter dated August 19, 1979 from Muḥammad Muṣṭafá to the Universal House of Justice, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá stated that last year, 1978, he was called over by the Ministry of Interior on the very day the friends were commemorating the Martyrdom of the Báb in his home. This year again he was called over by the Ministry of Interior on the 22nd of July 1979, which is the date of the Martyrdom of the Báb according to Hejra calendar this year, 1979.

²⁰⁸ A year later, I got to know that the number of converts of the El-Hady couple was over 18. Who knows to how many more these 18 have multiplied since?

Here is the part of his letter to the Universal House of Justice concerning this incident:

“Meeting the Chief Officer of Intelligence concerned with Bahá’is:

I humbly beg to recall last year when I was visited by a certain officer who introduced himself as an Official of the Ministry of Interior.

That happened on the commemoration day of the martyrdom of the Báb which we still observe according to the Muslim Calendar. This year’s commemoration day coincided with July 22, 1979. A few friends were present. After reciting the Tablet of Visitation and other prayers, someone called on me and informed me that I was required to see the Chief Intelligence Officer next morning, July 23, at 11.00 a.m.

I attended there in time, and was received with welcome. Then the officer began to ask questions and took note of all answers. This meeting lasted for about an hour and a half and I beg to attach a report on all questions and answers.

I was much interested as I felt we needed to push our affairs a step forward.

Begging your prayers

*Your humble servant
(Signed)*

Report on Questions and Answers

Q. Do you visit each other and meet together?

A. Yes we do.

Q. Do you hold prayers?

A. Bahá’í prayers are performed individually, congregational prayers are only performed on burials.

Q. Then what do you do and talk about in your meetings together?

A. Reciting prayers by any attendant who may keep any by heart. As for talks, we talk about our Bahá’í affairs as we are neither politicians nor partisans.

Q. What is your opinion regarding peace?²⁰⁹

*A. We have to return to the Holy Texts. In the Holy Qurán it is written: “**And God calleth to the Abode of Peace**”.²¹⁰ President Sadat, I continued, with a heart full of devotion to God, conveyed the Holy verse to the whole world and succeeded in attracting many nations to the necessity of establishing peace. Now, I continued,*

²⁰⁹ This question was very delicate to answer. Following the 1973 war between Egypt and Israel and the Camp David Accord between the the Israelly Prime Minister Menahin Begin and the Egyptian President Anwar Sádát in September 1978, Sádát suffered from terrible opposition to his signing the Accord and to the accord in general both in Egypt and the Arab States. The political atmosphere was explosive and the situation of the Bahá’is in Egypt with their Holy Shrines and World Centre in Israel rendered that atmosphere very critical for the Baha’is. The answer to that question had to be such as to eradicate any doubt regarding the Bahá’í position on the subject.

²¹⁰ Qurán 10 v. 25.

which would you prefer, having a piece of bread with mere salt under the tent of peace, or a rich banquet under shells and destructive bombs? That is my opinion.

Q. That is right.

A. Thank you.

Q. Are there any difficulties which you suffer from?

A. Yes, there are and with your permission I will quote: Identity cards both personal and family, certificates of birth, of marriage and of death and all other matters pertaining to civil rights. These rights apply to every individual citizen with no discrimination. Concerning Bahá'ís, they are absolutely dispossessed of all such common civil rights unless the applicant should fill in the space of religion on the form that he or she is either Muslim, Christian or Jew, as the case may be. Furthermore and in case of Death Certificate, should the applicant go to the grave of the deceased to bring him out and give him life again so that he may declare his religion personally to the registering officer? (A smile). Therefore, the applicant is only acting on behalf of the deceased and the only document is the birth certificate of the deceased which illustrates his religion as Bahá'í. Again, children of Bahá'í parents should, according to instructions to the Civil Registration Offices, be regarded unlawful and issue of an unknown father. (The face of the officer showed deep disgust).

Q. Do Bahá'ís marry non Bahá'ís?

A. Bahá'ís marry Bahá'ís.²¹¹

Q. Do you have a notary or how do you perform your marriage contracts?

A. Anyone from among the attendants could undertake the procedure. The bridegroom and the bride should each declare before the attendants his/her consent to marry one another. Both respective parents should declare their consent too; dowry should be paid; and two witnesses. The marriage contract is thus performed and signed by the parties concerned. It is as simple as the Muslim marriage used to be performed till 1926, afterwards it took the present form.

Q. Do you know all the Bahá'ís?

A. Before 1960 we had Spiritual Assemblies that kept lists of recognised Bahá'ís. Now, there are no Spiritual Assemblies and this is why I only recognise those whom I still remember. If, however, you have a list you may kindly read names and I will say: yes or no depending on the name and my memory. (He then read some names from a small list he had, and I said I know all of them.)

Q. Do you know Sayyid Hasheesh?

²¹¹ This condition that Egyptian Bahá'ís only marry Bahá'ís in Egypt was enforced on the Community following the Qawm El-Sa'áyda Ecclesiastic Tribunal decision to divorce Bahá'í families in 1926. The whole subject is documented earlier in this book under the headings "The Qawm El-Sa'áyda case" and "Marriages".

A. That man, Sayyid Ḥasheesh,²¹² was expelled from the Bahá'í Community since a very long time.

Q. President Sádát is going to Ḥaifa, don't you like to go too to visit your Holy places?

A. We pray for him, for President Sádát, in all his travels, he never sought rest. He rather travels with his heavy responsibilities of establishing peace and stability. After such noble goals are achieved and the government permits, Bahá'ís hope to visit their Holy Shrines.

After the questions were finished, and with his permission, I referred to the question of Identity Cards, Certificates etc. Among the particulars of those forms is religion according to the instructions which are applicable to all citizens. They only serve as evidence that those particulars belong to the specific holder of that card. As such, this does not hold any harm to either Muslim or Christian. Bahá'ís, I continued, have full faith in our just government. They have full confidence in H. E. Minister of Interior and fervently hope to have these difficulties kindly removed.

To this the officer commented that as to himself, he will make his report in the spirit of what his conscience may dictate. As for the High Authorities, they alone can say “yes” or “no”.

I thanked him sincerely and we shook hands.

*Your humble servant,
(Signed).”*

The Universal House of Justice sent the following message dated September 16, 1979:

Kindly convey to your father the deep appreciation of the House of Justice for everything he is doing, with such vision, courage and wisdom, for the protection of the friends and the vindication of the rights of the Egyptian Bahá'í community.

A Case of Covenant Breaking in Egypt

Gamal Ḥasan kindly supplied the information included hereinafter, on this episode of Covenant Breaking:

“The one and regrettable case of Covenant breaking that happened in Egypt dates back to the period before the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly. A group of Bahá'ís, led by a certain Áḥmad Fayeḡ, established the “Scientific Society” – an enterprise of publication of Bahá'í books and literature. Áḥmad Fayeḡ is Armenian in origin and Sayyid Ḥasheesh is the stepson of Áḥmad.

Shoghi Effendi gave instructions that all Bahá'í Literature must obtain prior approval of the National Assembly before publication. This condition did not appeal to Fayeḡ and his

²¹² Stepson of Áḥmad Fayeḡ – a deceased Covenant breaker. Further information follows the end of the questions to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá.

collaborators, of whom are Tewfiq Ghareeb and Shaykh Hussein Bijara, and they did not comply with the rule. They were therefore, expelled as covenant breakers.

With the death of Ahmad Fayeḡ and the other members of the Society, Sayyid Ḥasheesh expressed his repentance to the National Assembly before the year 1960, but his request was not accepted. After 1960 and the disbanding of the Assemblies, Ḥasheesh continued to visit some of the friends he knew

Gamal Ḥassan relates that one day he accompanied Muḥammad Muṣṭafá on a visit to the Bahá'í Cemetery of Cairo and there Zaqzuq, the caretaker of the Cemetery, brought over a quantity of books that Ḥasheesh had brought to him as a gift. Among the gift books were a number of copies of the "Iqán – The Book of Certitude" translated to Arabic by Hussein Bijara. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá explained to Zaqzuq that the edition of the "Iqán" brought by Ḥasheesh had been translated by and printed by the Scientific Society without permission, and Shoghi Effendi had prohibited its consideration by the Bahá'ís. He asked Zaqzuq to bring all the books he received from Ḥasheesh and burn them there and then. He further warned Zaqzuq not to accept anything from that man Ḥasheesh".

Farida: wife and support of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá passes away

On that day, the 1st of October 1979, I received a Telex message from my father. It read:

GRIEVED INFORM PASSING DEAR MOTHER TODAY 10 A. M. INFORM
NABÍL AND LAILA. DEEPEST SYMPATHY FROM FATHER WHO PRAYS FOR
YOU ALL. MUSTAFA

Ulfet and I went the next day to Cairo. We found Muḥammad Muṣṭafá in deep sorrow as well as our young brother, Momtaz. All the believers in Egypt and all the neighbours, without exception were in mourning for the loss of "mother Farida" – that mother who exuded kindness to all. She had served everyone with open arms and accommodating heart for decades, ever since she married her beloved husband in 1926, more than half a century before. She kept her home open to all and a heart loving all and an ear ready to listen and thoughtfulness ready to render them happy.

Very soon the following message was received from the Universal House of Justice through Mr. Salim Nounou of Nice:

SADDENED NEWS PASSING ROWSHAN'S MOTHER. CONVEY THROUGH HIM
DEEP SYMPATHY HIS DEAR FATHER AND ENTIRE MUSTAPHA FAMILY.
ASSURANCE LOVING PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER SOUL.

Messages of sorrow were received from the International Teaching Centre, from Counsellor Aziz Yazdi who was also a member of the International Teaching Centre and close friend of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Farida, from the Counsellor Board of Africa, from the friends of Tripoli in Libya and many others.

Consideration of health condition of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá

The Egyptian Community had not known any Auxiliary Board Member appointments other than Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and Mr. 'Abderrahim Yazdi in 1954 and 1957 respectively. With the regrettable deportation of Mr. 'Abderrahim Yazdi in 1965 following the issue of

the presidential decree 263 of the year 1960 banning the Assemblies and Bahá'í activity in the country, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá became the lone reference for the Bahá'ís in Egypt who came to him with their affairs of the Faith, both personal and collectively. He had no Assistants either – the institution of Assistants was initiated in the year 1973.

I believe that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá did not think it wise to appoint Auxiliary Board members after being appointed Counsellor because there was no Bahá'í Administration. He did not think it wise also because such an appointment could, and most probably would, be considered by the Authorities as an attempt to reinstate the Bahá'í Administration in Egypt. In our efforts, Ulfet and I, to help the friends in Egypt we were very careful to keep to our limit of being a connection between the Universal House of Justice and the friends in Egypt through Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and were very careful not to overstep our self-imposed limitations.

Following the death of mother Farida, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá's health deteriorated more rapidly and meant that the friends were reluctant to come to him with the matters of the Faith as often as they needed. In fact, the death of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá himself became an expected event any time. He felt, though, that being available to the friends was very important to the extent that he refused to stay more than a few days at his son (Dr.) Nabíl's home in England lest his absence from Egypt be harmful. Nabíl could have arranged for a thorough check and help for his health.

These considerations, I felt, had to be presented to the Universal House of Justice, and this was done in my report dated October 17, 1979.

The report further included a summary of a meeting that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá arranged on October 5, 1979, asking Mr. Ḥussein Bicar, Mrs. Asma Bicar, Ámin Battah and his wife Nigar Ardekani, Shawki Iskandar Hanna, Ulfet and I to join. That meeting, with so many friends who were considered by the Intelligence as the Bahá'í "Top Brass", was itself already a positive development that the recent change in condition of the Bahá'ís in Egypt allowed. Never before during the years since 1960 had such a meeting taken place.

Some points considered in that meeting and included in my report of October 17 are:

- 1) There is no change in the Court cases since my last report to the House
- 2) Although there is a noted improvement in the treatment of the Bahá'ís by the Authorities, the question of registering Bahá'í marriage contracts remains unsolved and while the danger of severe measures being taken against the Bahá'ís such as imprisonment, house raids and interrogations, had apparently ceased, yet the Counsellor Muḥammad Muṣṭafá had noticed that in other Arab countries, such as Iraq, for example, local papers had accused the Egyptian President of what they called "Complacency with the Baha'is". Muḥammad Muṣṭafá believes that the attitude that appeared in some Arab countries, had prevented the achievement of any intention by the Egyptian President to proceed with any measures he had intended to take to remove the restrictions facing the Bahá'ís.
- 3) The participation of the friends and youth in European Summer Schools and Conference and then visiting the resting place of the Guardian and praying in that Holy precinct inspired them to a great extent. Upon their return they shared their spiritual uplift with their brothers and sisters in Egypt. It is regrettable that there are no localities conveniently closer to Egypt, such as Cyprus for example, where the Bahá'ís of Egypt can join such activity but even that, at the present time is

inconvenient, as the political relations with that country do not allow for such a possibility.

The Universal House of Justice sent its guidance regarding my report in a message dated 13th November 1979 of which the following excerpts are presented:

“Dear Baha’i Friend,

We have been asked by the Universal House of Justice to thank you for your letter of 17 October and the information it contained about the conditions in Egypt. The House of Justice has instructed us to convey to you its comments on the points raised in your letter.

It is hoped that the health of your dear father will gradually improve, and he will be able to continue his services to the Cause in that important country with renewed strength and vigour. The passing of his precious wife is certainly a great loss to him personally and to the community, but no doubt it was among her highest aspirations, while in this world and now in the next to see him overcome his obstacles, triumph over his difficulties, and win all his battles, especially when these are in the path of service to God’s glorious Cause.

.....

“When you are next in Cairo you should openly and frankly discuss on our behalf with your distinguished father the general question of the appointment of one or more Auxiliary Board members and the manner in which he visualizes the affairs of the Faith can be dealt with in the future. The intention is not to press him to appoint Auxiliary Board members now, nor to necessarily consider whom he should appoint, but to receive his views in general on this subject. Of course, he should in the meantime continue to call on suitable friends to consult with him on problems when they arise, as he has been doing in the past.

.....

“It would be highly rewarding for individual friends in Egypt to attend Baha’i events, such as summer schools, held elsewhere, and associate with the friends in other lands. It is hoped that the current difficulties affecting travel to Cyprus may also be removed, thus facilitating the participation of the Egyptian friends in Baha’i activities on that island.

Kindly assure your dear father of the prayers of the Universal House of Justice at the Holy Shrines for his continued success in discharging his spiritual responsibilities and rendering his valuable services to the Threshold of the Blessed Beauty. The House of Justice will also offer loving prayers on your behalf and on behalf of your wife, Ulfet”.

Visit to Egypt towards the end of 1979

Ulfet and I travelled to Cairo in December 1979 (14th to 18th) on receiving news of the deteriorating health of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá. A little improvement in his condition while we were there, provided us with the opportunity, as we usually do in similar cases, to review the messages and instructions of the Universal House of Justice. This time it was the message dated 13th November, parts of which are shown above. We consulted first with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá alone, then he decided to extend the consultation to include Mr. Ḥussein Bicar, Mrs. Asma Bicar, Mr. Ámin Battah and his wife Mrs. Nigar Ardekani, as well as Mrs. Shawkiyya Šobhi Elias and Gamal Ḥassan and his wife Mrs. Somaya Daniel – a wonderful panel.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the panel members first asked us to assert their love and their total humbleness at the Threshold of the beloved and revered House. Camelia (the young girl attending to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, who was deeply touched by the bounty of the House also added her voice to that of the friends. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the friends felt that she was a gift from heaven.

As for the appointment of Auxiliary Board members. This subject was discussed with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá as requested by the Universal House of Justice. It was also discussed in the meeting mentioned above. The common view that was formed says:

a) It is important to avoid what can be interpreted by the Authorities wrongly as an attempt at (Re)organization.

b) The general feeling is that the appointment of Auxiliary Board members under the present circumstances may not be useful.

c) In view of the necessary need for having some helpers among whom there should be ones with special capabilities, the friends at the meeting agreed that there could be five such individuals available to communicate first hand news to and from the Counsellor, to help the friends in personal problems and obtain guidance for them when necessary, to encourage taking care of the children and junior youth and educate them in the Teachings, and to deepen the youth and encourage them to attend the 19 Day Feasts and Holy Days. Four areas of the country should be covered, each by one helper. These areas are: Alexandria and the Delta, the Canal Zone, the Greater Cairo area and the southern area covering the South of Egypt. The legal and treasury affairs will have to be allotted to two separate helpers.

This was what the meeting agreed to communicate to the House, but no names were proposed.

The Court Cases

As it was towards the end of the year 1979, a survey of the situation of the remaining court cases, was also considered during the meeting:

The Súháj Case: One of the believers of Súháj, Abbas Maḥmúd, gave the information that the case is scheduled for a session on December 24, 1979. Mu'awwad prepared a memorandum pleading that the case be dropped as it has exceeded the legal limit of inactivity beyond three years. Lawyer Noshí Al-Jaziri of Súháj will attend for the Bahá'is.

The Case of Sami Shawki Fahmi: This case has been directed to the Supreme Administrative Tribunal (State Council) but no date for a session has been announced.

Cases of dismissed Bahá'í employees without disciplinary decision: These were: 'Abdessalam Ghazi, Shawki 'Abdessalam Ghazi, Fawzi Hassan Mari'í and Foad Tewfik Mikha'il. A decision of the State Council was issued in the 6th.December 1979 sitting rejecting the claim since the dismissed individuals are followers of the Bahá'í Faith...

Mu'awwad informed that he will appeal this decision at the Supreme Administrative Tribunal before the lapse of the 60 day limit which falls on February 4, 1980.

In the meantime, 'Abdessalam Ghazi had, after being re-instated in his job, passed away, and the other three Bahá'ís found work in different avenues: Shawki 'Abdessalam Ghazi found a job with a foreign company, Fawzi Hassan Mari'í found work in one of the Gulf countries and Foad Tewfik Mikha'il migrated to Canada.

It was clear, however, from the minutes of the judgment that the court had obscured the truth to support the measure taken by the administration to dismiss the four Bahá'í employees. Such conduct by the Supreme Court was very disturbing to the Bahá'ís who are predominantly government or public employees.

The findings of the meeting of the panel were sent to the Universal House of Justice in a report dated December 29, 1979.

The Year 1980

Appointment of Assistants to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá – a Significant Step

In a telexed message from the Universal House of Justice through Salim Nounou dated January 30, 1980 we read:

INFORM ROUSHAN MUSTAPHA APPRECIATE HIS ULFET'S RECENT VISIT AND HIS REPORT 29 DECEMBER. HE SHOULD INFORM HIS FATHER WE APPROVE HIS APPOINTMENT ASSISTANTS AS SET FORTH PAGE TWO ROUSHAN'S LETTER. ...

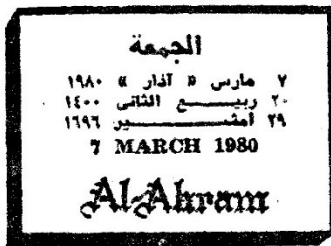
This was good news and a significant step towards rebuilding the Administration in Egypt. The appointment was for assistants to Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and not Auxiliary Board members and they were to help in contacting the friends in the various localities and in special matters. The appointments were as follows:

Mr. Ḥussein Bicar and his wife Mrs. Qassema el-Neshoquati
Mrs. Shawkiya Şobḥi Elias
Mr. Ámin Battah and his wife Mrs. Nigar Ardekani
Mr. Shawki Iskandar Hanna
Mr. Gamal Ḥassan and his wife Somaya Daniel

Without adjoining to the names any specific duties, Ámin Battah and his wife Nigar were to take care of the legal affairs, Shawki Iskandar was to take care of the financial matters, while Gamal Ḥassan was to act as secretary.

Registration of Bahá'í Marriage refused

The Egyptian Al-Ahrám daily of 7th March 1980 published the following notice:



□ ص ١٠ ١٩٨٠/٣/٧ □

**رفض التصديق
على عقد زواج
تم على الطريقة البهائية**

رفضت مصلحة الشهر العقاري
التصديق على عقد زواج تم على الطريقة
البهائية. مخالفتها للنظام المسام
لتمرض البهائية مع احكام الشريعة
الاسلامية وسائر الاديان.

وقد تبين لمصلحة الشهر العقاري
بعد دراسة الموضوع من زوايا
التاريخية والدينية ان البهائية بدأت
في ايران عام ١٨٤٤ وتضمنت كتبها
مبادئ واحول تتعارض مع احكام
الشريعة الاسلامية وسائر الاديان
الساوية وتهدد نظام الاسرة والمجتمع
كذلك لايجوز الفحص بين هذه الدعوة
المضللة وبين الاديان الاخرى التي اعتبر
الاسلام بعتنقيها من اهل الذمة واصحاب
كتاب ويكون زواجهم صحيحا في نظر
الاسلام.

كما لايجوز المجادلة بحرية العقيدة
وحرية ممارسة الشعائر لان البهائية
ليست عقيدة اصلا وبالتالي لاصرح
لها الدولة باقامة الشعائر المسموح
بها للاديان المساوية. وقد تم بتعين
هذا الحظر بمقدور القانون رقم ٢٦٢
لعام ١٩٦٠ الذي نص على حل جميع
الحائل البهائية ووقف نشاطها.

Refusal to Recognise Marriage Performed in Accordance with Bahá'í Rites

The office of Registrar of Documents and Titles refused to recognise a marriage ceremony performed in accordance with Bahá'í rites, for such marriage is contrary to public order, and Bahá'ism is in conflict with laws of Islám and other religions.

It became clear to the Registry office, after studying this subject from its historical and religious angles, that Bahá'ism began in Írán in the year 1844, and that its literature contains principles and precepts which contradict the law of Islám and that of other heavenly religions, and which threaten the foundations of the family and society. It is likewise not permissible to compare this misguided persuasion to other religious denominations, whose followers fall under the protection of Islám as they are people of the Book, and whose marriage ceremonies as performed by them, are regarded as valid in the eyes of Islám. Similarly, it is not permissible to interfere in personal beliefs and the freedom to celebrate religious rites. However, Bahá'ism is not basically a religious belief, and furthermore, the Government does not grant this community the right to perform its ceremonies in the manner that heavenly religions are permitted to conduct neither affairs. This ban was passed in accordance with Decree N° 263 of the year 1960, which required all Bahá'í Assemblies to be disbanded and all their activities stopped.

Universal House of Justice Takes Action Regarding the Announcement

The Universal House of Justice “*is distressed that the official attitude of the authorities in Egypt towards the Faith continues to be negative ...*” wrote the House in a letter on the subject of the Al-Ahrám announcement, to the Bahá’í International Community dated March 11, 1980.

In their letter of the same date to this servant, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

The attached copy of our letter to the Bahá’í International Community and Dr. Dorothy Nelson refers to the distress and concern of the Universal House of Justice at the recent decision taken in Egypt to continue to refuse recognising Baha’i Marriages.

The House of Justice asks you to seek the views of your father on the wisdom of possible action taken by Bahá’is outside Egypt to appeal to the Egyptian Government to protect the basic civil rights of the Bahá’is in the country. If such an action is wise, the House of Justice would appreciate receiving specific recommendations on the nature and scope of such proposed steps.

In addition, the House of Justice needs to have full information on the circumstances which led to this decision by the authorities, and whether there is any possibility to appeal the decision.

An early reply to this letter would be valued by the House of Justice.

The Universal House of Justice wrote to the BIC and Dr. Dorothy Nelson on the 11th of March also saying:

Dear Bahá’í Friends,

Attached is a clipping from the “Al-Ahrám” paper of Friday, March 7, 1980 regarding the refusal of the authorities in Egypt to recognise the Bahá’í marriage ceremony...

The Universal House of Justice is distressed that the official attitude of the authorities in Egypt towards the Faith continues to be negative and repressive, and would appreciate receiving your suggestions on any course of action you deem it wise to be followed at this time.

What was the opinion of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá regarding the request of the House of Justice?

Before presenting the answer of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá regarding the Al-Ahrám announcement it may be necessary to explain that even before the last interrogation that Muḥammad Muṣṭafá went through in July 1979, some 9 months ago, there was a positive change of the attitude of the authorities towards the issue of civil papers (except marriage

certification) of the Bahá'ís. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and the friends, after consulting with their lawyer Mr. Mu'awwad, probably thought it wise not to disturb the situation. The answer to the House of Justice, therefore, was given in the message herein after:

On April 4, 1980, I sent the following telex message through Mr. Nounou of Nice, France:

For the beloved House:

Subject: Letter from House dated March 11, 1980 regarding what was published in Ahrám of March 7, 1980 on refusal recognition of Bahá'i marriages.

Nabíl Mustapha returned yesterday from 10 day trip to Egypt and reports that Counsellor and friends there presently following very low profile attitude and seem to attain success in obtaining civil papers (except marriages). Their preliminary impression is that Ahrám publication not all that important. They will advise this servant of any suggestion they may develop contrary to the above opinion and this servant will relay as soon as possible.

Invitation to attend Summer School in Valencia, Spain

An invitation was extended for friends from Egypt to attend the Summer School of Valencia, in Spain that was scheduled to begin on July 20, 1980. Rúḥiyyih Khánúm was to be present at that event.

Muḥammad Muṣṭafá intended to attend that summer school and therefore came to Tunis to visit us and the friends here whom he knows, but unfortunately he did not feel that well health wise to go to that event. However, Mr. 'Abdel-Aziz El-Hady and his wife Mrs. Sawsan Ḥosny as well as Mrs. Fatima Sharqawi Shirazi also came to Tunis to meet with Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and proceed to the school. It was a great privilege for friends from Egypt to attend that school and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá asked Mrs. Fatima to represent the Bahá'ís of Egypt at that event – a delegation that was very useful. Mrs Fatima felt that she had a responsibility to bring the spirit of the school to the friends in Egypt upon her return.

In a letter to us, Ulfet and I, dated September 9, 1980, Mrs. Fatima wrote:

... Some time has passed during which I was very busy visiting many dear friends in an effort to live with them the spiritual atmosphere I experienced in the summer school. Praise be unto God, I feel that the Almighty has helped me succeed and with the help of some friends, to go from place to place with wonderful success. Praise be unto God, many a heart had felt the humbleness and humility towards the bounty and love of God.

Because it was made in Egypt...

Gamal Ḥassan remembers when he was present in one of the meetings in Cairo when Mrs. Fatima was highly successful in inspiring her audience with the spirit of the school. She was careful to expose all the details such as when Ámat'ul-Bahá began her talk she realised that many in the audience were greatly affected by meeting her and some were in tears. She then immediately chose to bring humour to the meeting. She looked at Suheil Bushrui and said: Suheil, you have changed a lot. You had lots of hair when I used to see you when you were a young man, what

happened to your hair... Soheil had nothing to say but everyone laughed and the atmosphere changed. Mrs. Fatima also said that Amatu'l-Bahá was holding a swatter²¹³ and said that she is proud to have this swatter because it was made in Egypt!

Codification of Law on Personal Status

On the 12th November 1980, I received a telex message from my father Muḥammad Muṣṭafá reading:

I wish you sincerely come with Ulfet without fail for importance. ... I need you both for two – three days. Nothing to worry about. Love to all. Father.

The telex continued:

Dear Rowshan – father's health excellent ... Gamal Ḥassan.

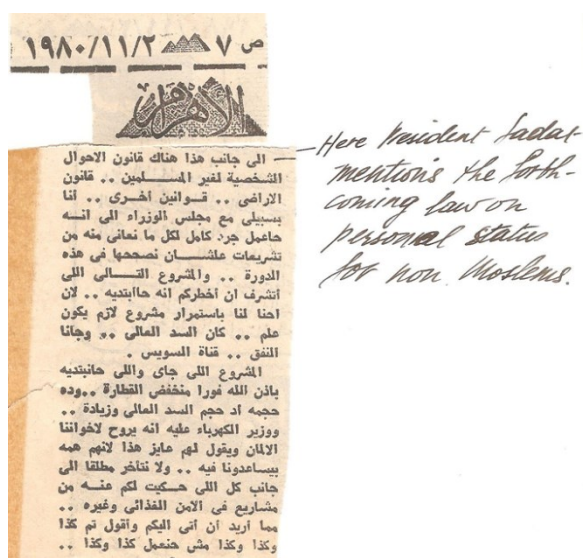
This request was very unusual. In fact, it never happened before. I informed the House explaining that should I be able to get some information from Egypt by phone before our departure on November 18, I will communicate it to the House.

The following Telex message was received through Mr. Nounou:

*ASK ROWSHAN ASSURE HIS FATHER CONTINUED PRAYERS HIS HEALTH
WISE RESOLUTION PROBLEMS FACING BELOVED EGYPTIAN COMMUNITY.
UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.*

Ulfet and I left on November 18, for Cairo and we were informed that the important subject for which we were asked to come to Cairo was the possible promulgation of a law on Personal Status for non-Muslims in Egypt.

The President of Egypt Anwar Sádát mentioned this among a list of laws that were to be promulgated in his address before the Parliament. The Al-Ahram daily in its 2nd of November 1980 issue mentions that, on its page 7.



²¹³ A brush that looks like a horse tail to chase flies. In Arabic منشة Menasha.

On the next day of our arrival that is on the 19th of November, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá with Ámin Battah, Ulfet and I, met with Lawyer Mu'awwad to consider the subject and what could be done to ensure the benefit of the Bahá'is in the country.

Mr. Mu'awwad informed the meeting that he had seen the head of the legal department of the Ministry of Justice, Dr. Iskander Ghattas who is entrusted with preparing that law and he found that the form in which that law is being formulated does not cover the Bahá'is. In fact it excludes the Bahá'is.

Mu'awwad and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá feel very strongly that this could be the unique occasion to obtain inclusion of the Bahá'is without necessarily mentioning the name of the Faith and that through a discreet and open wording of the text. However, President Sádát alone could do that, as no responsible officer could venture in such an adventure.

The suggestion, therefore, is to find someone who is both a friend enough and near enough to the President that allows a frank conversation with the President on the subject.

Mr. Mu'awwad explained further that the President seems very sensitive and touchy regarding religious prejudice and that he really wants this law promulgated as soon as possible.

The next day after our return from Cairo that is on the 26th of November, the above information was sent to the House of Justice in a telex message through Mr. Nounou.

Action of the Universal House of Justice

On the 4th of December 1980, I received a telex message from the Universal House of Justice advising that Dr. Victor De Araujo and Mrs. Dorothy Nelson will arrive in Cairo on the 13th of December on two different flights. Their hotel accommodation, as well as their appointments are to be arranged.

Mohammad Muṣṭafá and his Assistants prepared a folder with examples of the difficulties the Bahá'is are experiencing with regard to their civil and identity documents. The folder was to help the two visitors in their negotiations with the Minister of Justice and other officials and/or influencers.

The visitors reported their activities and findings directly to the Universal House of Justice. I do not have any details in my files.

The Year 1981

The Passing Away of Şobhi Elias

January 26, 1981 was a day of mourning for the Bahá'ís of Egypt. Şobhi Elias passed to the Abhá Kingdom at the age of 79 years following five days of illness. His death was a source of deep sorrow for all the Bahá'ís of Egypt who revered and loved him.

Şobhi Elias²¹⁴ became Bahá'í through his kind uncle Ibrahim 'Abdel-Massih in the year 1921 and served the Faith with all his power until his death.

The Universal House of Justice sent the following message regarding the death of that dear friend:

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING VALIANT PROMOTER DEFENDER CAUSE SOBHI ELIAS. HIS DEDICATED SERVICES OVER SEVERAL DECADES LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. ASSURE RELATIVES FRIENDS FERVENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL.

The Passing Away of Muḥammad Muşţafá

Around the middle of March 1981, Moḥyid-Din M'rad, a Tunisian Bahá'í was on visit in Cairo and went to see Muḥammad Muşţafá at his home in Zaytún. Moḥyid-Din's relation with Muḥammad Muşţafá was very intimate and goes back to the year 1955 when Muḥammad Muşţafá was in Tunis and helped confirm Moḥyid-Din in the Faith at that time. He found Muḥammad Muşţafá very tired and when he returned to Tunis the following day he phoned me to say: "Your father is waiting for you." In other words, that father was dying.

On the 26th of March 1981, I flew to Cairo alone, Ulfet was unable to accompany me this time, and Laila Muşţafá also came from Italy and by a useful coincidence Laila Ruḥi, Nabíl's wife, was there.

We found father really tired and unconscious and it looked to me that he will pass away anytime.

Besides the worry for the state of my father, my thoughts went immediately to the friends in Egypt. They should not be left without "a point of reference" for any length of time. This was important, in my opinion, and my first action was taken immediately.

I phoned Ulfet in Tunis and told her about the condition of father and asked her to inform the Universal House of Justice that Muḥammad Muşţafá may pass away anytime now and that I humbly ask the beloved House for its instructions as to whom the friends in Egypt were to turn upon his death.

The second action was my consultation with Laila Ruḥi to take Muḥammad Muşţafá to a hospital, maybe he can be brought out of the comma. We took him to the "Dar El-Shifá" hospital in Abbasia.

The next day we went to see him in hospital. He was up in his bed and looking reasonably well. However, he was adamant to staying in the hospital and asked to be taken home immediately. "These people here are not humans, they are savages!"

In the meantime, the instructions of the House of Justice was received:

²¹⁴ An "In Memoriam" article for Şobhi Elias is in The Bahá'í World vol. XVIII p. 746

The reference point of the Bahá'ís of Egypt after the death of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá is:

Hussein Bicar assisted by Ámin Battah and Hassan Ruhi.

I returned to Tunis of the 4th of July 1981.

On the 15th August 1981, I went to work at 6:30 am as usual and went to the Telex machine for news I found two telex messages from Cairo. The first dated August 14 at 22:14 hrs reading:

14th August 1981 at 22 HRS 14.

M. ROWSHAN— REGRET INFORM FATHER HEALTH UNEXPECTEDLY DETERIORATED PAST FEW DAYS - HIS CONDITION NOW EXACTLY AS IT WAS LAST TIME. HE IS OCCASIONALLY COMATOSED AND HELPED BY OXYGEN AND GLUCOSE AT HOME. DOCTORS SAY THIS TIME IS FROM HEART FAILURE AS WELL AS LUNGS. THE FRIENDS ARE OFFERING ALL POSSIBLE HELP. WHETHER TO COME IS LEFT TO YOUR DISCRETION. WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED AND YOU MAY GET FURTHER DETAILS BY TELEPHONE MR. RUHI. LOVE GAMAL HASSAN.

The second telex read as follows:

15th August 1981 at 02 HRS 01.

DEAR ROWSHAN- PURSUANT GAMAL'S TELEX SORROWFULLY INFORM THAT YOUR DEAR FATHER PASSED PEACFULLY TO ABHA KINGDOM 01.00 HRS. MORNING AUGUST 15. ON BEHALF BEREAVED COMMUNITY BICAR RUHI AND MYSELF WOULD EXTEND DEEPEST SYMPATHY AND HEARTFUL CONDOLENCES TO YOU, DR NABÍL, LAILA, AND YOUR FAMILIES. THE FRIENDS BEG PRAYERS UHJ PROGRESS HIS SOUL WHICH WAS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE FOR THEM OVER A PERIOD OF SIXTY-FIVE YEARS. NOW ENQUIRING POSSIBILITY PRESERVING BODY TILL YOUR ARRIVAL BUT DO NOT THINK SUCH FACILITY EXISTS. PLEASE TELEPHONE RUHI FOR OUTCOME OF OUR TRIALS AND YOUR FLIGHT DETAILS. LOVE. AMIN BATTAH

The news of the death of Muḥammad Mustafa was transmitted to the Universal House of Justice immediately and by 11 am the following message was received:

15th AUGUST 1981.

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING EMINENT DISTINGUISHED SERVANT BLESSED BEAUTY MEMBER BOARD COUNSELLORS AFRICA KNIGHT BAHÁ'ULLAH DEARLY LOVED MUḤAMMAD MUṢṬAFÁ HIS LONG RECORD DEDICATED SERVICES IN ADMINISTRATIVE TEACHING FIELDS HIS SELF-SACRIFICING AUDACIOUS EFFORTS IN PROMOTION DEFENSE BELOVED FAITH UNFORGETTABLE CONVEY BEREAVED FAMILY FRIENDS LOVING SYMPATHY PRAYING HOLY SHRINES FURTHER UNFOLDMENT PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL ABHA KINGDOM UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

On the 19th August 1980, the following message was received from the Africa Counsellor Board:

DEEPLY SADDENED NEWS SUDDEN PASSING YOUR BELOVED FATHER OUR PRECIOUS FRIEND AND COWORKER STOP HIS LONG RECORD LOYAL

DEDICATED SERVICE LASTING INSPIRATION TO US ALL STOP PLEASE
CONVEY OUR HEARTFELT SYMPATHY YOUR DEAR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
THEIR DEEP LOVE – ISOBEL SABRI

Upon my return to Tunis, I sent the following telex to the Universal House Justice:

(AUG. 25. THROUGH Mr. SELIM NOUNOU)

LOVED ONES EGYPT AND MUSTAFÁ FAMILY HUMBLY PRESENT BELOVED HOUSE
DEEPEST FEELINGS SUBMISSIVENESS AND GRATITUDE FOR MESSAGE SHOWERED
UPON COUNSELLOR MUHAMMAD MUSTAFÁ. PLEDGE RENEWED AND REDOUBLED
EFFORTS SERVICE BELOVED FAITH. HUSSEIN BICAR ASSISTED AMIN BATTAH AND
HASSAN RUHI HAVE TAKEN UP THEIR RESPONSABILITIES MOST BEAUTIFULLY AND
ALL FRIENDS REVOLVE AROUND THEM MOST LOVINGLY. THIS SERVANT MADE
ARRANGEMENTS TO KEEP LINES OF COMMUNICATION AVAILABLE. HAVE ALREADY
TRANSMITTED EGYPT 25 AUG RECONFIRMATION OF MESSAGE OF HOUSE DATED
30TH MARCH APPOINTING BICAR AND AMIN AND RUHI AS REQUESTED THROUGH M.
NOUNOU. HUMBLY ROWSHAN MUSTAPHA.

To which the following kind answer from the House of Justice was received:

DEEPLY APPRECIATE SENTIMENTS YOURSELF FAMILY ASSURE ALL LOVING
PRAYERS SHRINES. UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
(Telecom received from Mr Nounou 11.45 a.m. 27th AUG. 1961).

On September 9, 1981, Isobel Şabri cabled on behalf of the Africa Board of
Counsellors:

MEMORIAL SERVICE YOUR BELOVED FATHER BEING HELD AT HOUSE
WORSHIP KAMPALA ON SUNDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER AT 10.30 AM AT REQUEST
HOUSE PLEASE INFORM HIS FAMILY FRIENDS THERE UNQUOTE LOVING
APPRECIATION – ISOBEL SABRI

On the same date? Counsellor Oloro Epyeru cabled:

MEMORIAL GATHERING COUNSELLOR MUSTAPHA SCHEDULED SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER TWENTIETH KAMPALA STOP ACCEPT OUR HEARTFELT
SYMPATHETIC CONDOLENCES STOP MAY SOUL PROGRESS ABHA KINGDOM –
OLORO EPYERU

And from the dear Counsellor Aziz Yazdi:

ATTENTION FAMILY MOHAMMAD MUSTAFÁ
DEARLY LOVED ONES SHARE YOUR GRIEF LOSS MY BELOVED BROTHER
CO-WORKER MOHAMMAD MUSTAFÁ MY HEART WITH YOU OFFERING
FERVENT PRAYERS YOUR BEHALF AND MINE FOR HIM - AZIZ YAZDI

A Closing Note

I continued to help the new “Point of Reference” Mr. Hussein Bicar and his assistants as
I did during the past decade. Ulfet did not travel with me anymore, but I continued to travel

to Egypt during the following 4 years until the end of 1984. What happened in these four years and after, I leave to Gamal Hasan and, to some extent, my brother Nabil. On my last trip, to Egypt in December 1984, I was called back from the departure lounge of the airport and questioned by an Intelligence officer. My brief case, including papers and my notebook, my wallet, addresses and telephone list and whatever there was, were taken to a hidden room, to be photocopied, while he interrogated me. The questioning was more a conversation about the Faith, Its aims and teachings and principles. I missed my flight, of course, and took a later one, which was luckily scheduled that afternoon.

In November 28, 1987, Nabil dictated to me by telephone the following message from the Universal House of Justice dated September 5, 1987 with which I shall conclude this book:

We have been following with keen interest and deep sympathy the recent developments in Egypt and are fully aware of the dedication evinced by the Egyptian friends and the spirit of courage and determination they have exemplified in facing the persecutions to which they have been subjected.

In our Holy Writings a clear distinction is drawn between the friends in general, however well meaning and loving they may be, and those believers who have endured ordeals and trials and whose faithfulness and loyalty have been tested. There is no doubt that the Egyptian friends like their brethren in Iran are tested friends who, through long years of persecution, have emerged purified, enkindled and radiant – a vibrant community which has won high distinction in the eyes of our Bahá'í world, and whose glorious future has been clearly foreshadowed in the Writings of the blessed Master and the beloved Guardian.

The time has come for the friends in Egypt to demonstrate unprecedented solidarity and to strengthen the bonds of unity existing amongst themselves. This does not mean that they should engage in undertakings which are not permitted by the existing regulations. If they are prevented from having community activities on the local and national levels, there is nothing to prevent each Bahá'í family from making itself a nucleus of Bahá'í love, a promoter of unity and concord, and a source of joy and inspiration to others so that the children are reared in the spirit of the Faith, and the Bahá'í youth become enamoured of the bounty of the Writings and each, according to his or her capacity, becomes an exponent, in word and in deed, of the high standards inculcated in our Teachings.

Believers who reside in remote localities or in isolated areas of the town, or who are living partially or wholly with no-Bahá'í families and are, therefore, unable to partake fully of the benefits of the environment that can be provided in a Bahá'í home, should not be left on their own. They must be visited, encouraged, and the flame of their faith kept alive. The friends should feel that the joy and wellbeing of each individual Bahá'í is a source of joy for all, and any misfortune, God forbid, that may touch any of the believers is similarly an adversity for all. So real and deep should be the spirit of cooperation and collaboration that each believer should conscientiously endeavour to avoid putting his own burden on the shoulders of others: instead, he should seek to share and lighten the burdens of his fellow-believers. It is this degree of unity that is now displayed by the community of the

Bahá'ís in Iran. It is this spirit which will carry the friends in Egypt safely and triumphantly through the difficulties that in these days bestrew their faith.

Another point which the friends should bear in mind is that those who are now causing hardships for them would have achieved their purpose if the small Egyptian community, through immigration from the country were gradually to cease to exist. It is true that the pressures are increasing and the possibility of the free world is attractive and tempting, but if the dear Egyptian friends were to follow such a course of action, the communities would soon disintegrate, and all the persistent efforts currently being exerted on their behalf with the governments of the self-same countries, would prove to be pointless. This is the day of heroic steadfastness, for reliance on the Hosts of the Kingdom and the unwavering perseverance, so that the Banner of Bahá'u'lláh, hoisted in His own days in your country will not be brought down and the lights of His guidance illuminating that land will never be extinguished.

If, in accordance with the workings of an inscrutable divine wisdom, it proves necessary for the believers to go to prison, the community's resolve should not be weakened nor their confidence and optimism be shaken....

Our prayers are offered at the Holy Shrines for the protection, sustenance and ultimate deliverance of the beloved and noble Egyptian Bahá'í community

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Ibrahim 'Alí Mansúr
First Egyptian native to accept the Faith



Muḥammad Taqí Isfahání
Early pioneer Bahá'u'lláh sent to Egypt.
Appointed Hand of the Cause of God



Hag Hasan Reyhan of Port Sa'd
Suffered from persecution



Muḥammad Sa'íd Adham



Dr Muḥammad Ṣaleḥ



'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad²¹⁵

These three Bahá'ís passed away from right to left while they were chair of the NSA of Egypt and within a period of less than four years.

²¹⁵ 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad or Judge 'Abdel-Jalíl Sa'ad was designated Hand of the Cause in posthumous by Shoghi Effendi.



Muḥammad 'Aly Ḥuseinawi Baghdadi was one of eight porters of the sacred remains of the Báḅ from its hiding in Baghdad to Beirut in Lebanon.



Bahá'ís of Port Said
First picture of Bahá'ís of Egypt to be published in the Bahá'í Year Book.



Delegates to the Annual Bahá'í Convention in Egypt

1924 or 1925

Seated L to R : Maḥmúd Nushogatí, Moḥyid-Dín Šabrí El-Kurdi, Abu'l-Qasem Gollestaneh, Áḥmad Yazdi, 'Abdu'l-Jalíl Sa'ad, Ḥasan Mari'í, (Name unknown).

1st standing L to R: Muḥammad Muštafá, 'Abdel-Raḥman Rushdy, Shaykh Ḥassouna (?), Sharúbím 'Úbayd, Philip Naimi, Khalil 'Ayyád.

Last standing L to R: Muḥammad Sa'ád Adham, 'Abdel-Fattáḥ Šabrí, (Name unknown).

Knights of Bahá'u'lláh of Egypt



Ḥabib Isfáhání



Labib Isfáhání



Shoghi Rohaní



Sabri Elias



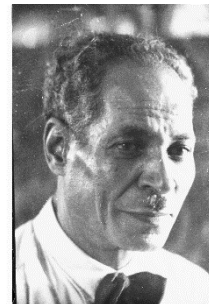
Ra'issa Elias



Amin Battah



Fawzi and Bahiyyeh Zein (w/Kamel and Sherif)



Muḥammad Mustafá



Dedication ceremony of the Ismáílyyih Bahá'í Cemetery framed picture that the Guardian put up on one of the walls in Bahji. Khalil Ayad, chairman of the LSA of Ismáílyyih in the centre and Isabel wife of Philip Naimi first from left.



Laila Muṣṭafā
First Egyptian girl to pioneer under the Ten Year Plan



Egypt second Convention in 1925

L to R seated: Maḥmūd Nūshogati, Mohyid-Din El-Kurdi, Abu'l-Qasem Gollestaneh, Ḥmad Yazdi (?), 'Abdel-Jalil Sa'ad, Shaykh Ḥasan Marī'i, ???.

Standing middle row: Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, 'Abdel-Raḥman Rushdy, Shaykh, ???, Sharobeem 'Ūbayd, Philip Na'imi, Khalil 'Ayyād.

Standing last row: Muḥammad Sa'id Adham, 'Abdel-Fattāḥ Sabry, ???.



1945 Annual Convention Egypt

Seated L to R: ‘Abdel-Aziz Shalaby, Khalil ‘Ayyád, Áḥmad Ḥosny, Ḥusayn Rúhí, Sa’id Adham, Muḥammad Taqí Iṣfáhání, Abu’l-Futúḥ Battah, ‘Abdu’l-Waháb Rohaniv ‘Alí Rohani.

Standing from L to R: Rowshan Yazdi, Fawzi Zein, Tewfiq Muḥammad ‘Alí, Şobḥí Elias, ‘Alí Ismail, Muḥammad Muşţafá, Taha El-Ḥamamsy, Muşţafá Salem, Yusuf Muşţafá, ‘Abdu’l-Raḥim Yazdi.



Bahá'í Youth Conference 1950

Seated L to R: Qassema Núshogatí, Munawar Rúhí, Bahiyyeh Sa'ad Edín, Beddour Iskander, Ĥuriyyeh Galál, Assia Rúhí.

Standing 1st Row: Anwar Iskander, Nayir Bushru'í, Ĥusayn Bicár, 'Ezzat Músá, Ámin Battah, Taleb Kamal, Ragi 'Enayát, Nábíl Mustapha.

Standing last Row: Foad Rushdy, Mohsen Enayát*, Muḥammad Al-'Azzawi*, Danish Bushru'í.

*Names marked in Arabic are inter-exchanged. The English names are correct.



In front of the Tanta Tribunal

L to R: Tahera Seoudi, Malakout Elias, **Mrs. Fahima Elias**, Rimond El-Hamamsi, Shawki El-Sayed, Sabri Elias, unknown, Safa Elias, Ibrahim 'Abdel-Massih, Kamal Noşeir.



With the Lawyer in Tanta.

L to R: Munir El Sayed Fahmy, Wagdi 'Alí Farag, **Mrs. Badr El Hamamsi**, Ámin Battah, 'Abdel-Wahab 'Abdel-Fattah, Lawyer Labib Mu'awwad, Šobhi Elias, Kamal Nosseir, Áhmad Ghanem, Muḥammad Ghanem, Ibraḥim 'Abdel-Massih, Maher El Sayed Fahmy.