

CHRIST

IN THE NIGHT OF GLORY



مجلس شورای اسلامی ایران
کتابخانه و مرکز اسناد

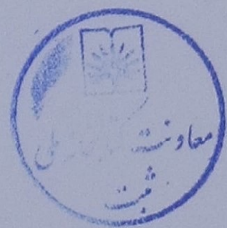
The story of Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei's
presence at the homes of Armenian and Assyrian
martyrs in the years 1984 to 2015

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Translated under the supervision of PROF. Fazlollah Nikayin

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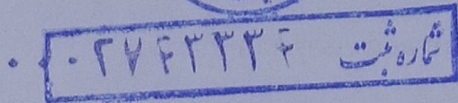
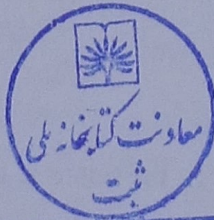
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Introduction

Is writen by Prof.Fazlolla Nikayin

The Iranian supreme leader, Sayyed Ali Khamenei, has since the year 1983 (at this time he was the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran) been frequently visiting the families of Iranian martyrs. Of course, most of these were the families of Muslim martyrs, but a significant aspect of these visits was his meeting with the families of our Armenian and Assyrian martyrs, heroic martyrs from among these two small communities in Iran, who fought bravely and selflessly in defense of their patriotic country and in the path of God.

This book is about Mr. Khamenei's visiting these latter groups that usually took place about Christmas and the Christian new years.

We cannot describe the incredible atmosphere of these intimate, affectionate, kind and emotional meetings in a few words; one must read them all. We may, however, say that the readers often find, when reading them, that tears fill their eyes: they are not tears of pity but of human love, admiration, empathy and appreciation. The other outstanding feature of these meetings is that most often the grief-stricken atmosphere in the house gradually changes and the begrieved family members, especially the mothers of the martyrs, are really consoled and feel a greater pride for their sons who fought and died in a patriotic, rightful cause.

And this translation into English from the original Persian will be sent to Arme-

nia, Lebanon, Europe and the USA for the further knowledge of Armenians (and Assyrians) who were living in Iran since ancient times. As an example, Darius the Great -521-486 B.C- mentions the names of two military commanders of this who were dispatched to certain areas to quell rebellions there (Behistun, Kermanshah, account by Darius carved on a cliff in cuneiform script in 3 languages: Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian.)

We say no more and ask the readers to go over the narration about these meetings to note other sweet-bitter but sublime features we failed to describe.

Fazlollah Nikayin

First scene

Jesus Christ chose the name "Peter" for "Simon" from the moment he declared his faith in God. "Peter" means "rock". No one, even Simon, understood the reason for this naming that day. Months passed, and Peter gained a higher degree of spirituality in the presence of his master. One day, in a gathering of all disciples, Jesus Christ told him: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter: and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven."

The period of the earthly prophethood of Jesus Christ lasted not more than three years. When he transcended to the other world, Peter carried on his message to spread the religion of God, despite facing radical enemies. The mundane Jewish rulers of Jerusalem were happily thinking that they had already crucified Jesus Christ, whereas others had just begun to spread the new message. In front of his disciples and followers, and that the path of this new religion would be more than just a path, but a path that would lead to the "Kingdom of Heaven". The question however, layed out to be otherwise.

The disciples, who had met Jesus before, after his resurrection, believed he was alive, so their faith and determination for spreading the message was strengthened. This made the rulers of Jerusalem, who were standing in the middle of Jerusalem's religion, increasingly speaking about Jesus Christ and his teachings. The officers

First scene

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The period of the earthly prophethood of Jesus Christ lasted not more than three years. When he transcended to the other world, Peter carried on his message to spread the religion of God, despite facing radical enemies. The mundane Jewish rabbis of Jerusalem were happily thinking that they had already crucified Jesus Christ brutally in front of his disciples and followers, and that the peril of this new religion would no more threaten their prestige and position among the “Sons of Israel”. The situation however, turned out to be otherwise.

The disciples, who had met Jesus twice after his ascension, believed he was alive; so their faith and determination for propagation had strengthened and this made the rabbis so angry. Peter was standing in the middle of Jerusalem’s temple, fearlessly speaking about Jesus Christ and his being alive. The officers

* New Testament, Matthew’s Bible/ chapter 16, verses 18 and 19

attacked these assemblies repeatedly and expelled Peter and the rest of the disciples fiercely out of the temple. Yet, after some minutes, some people would gather in another corner and one of the disciples did continue speaking for them. The dignity of Peter, and God's blessings on him, had bestowed upon him the power to heal some ill or paralyzed persons. These incidents resulted in the increase of people's fondness towards him and the strengthening of their belief in Jesus Christ.

The rabbis of Jerusalem could not stand this situation. They put the disciples and their believers under severe pressure. Saint Stephan was the first disciple who was martyred. The rabbis held a show trial for him and sentenced him to be stoned. This sentence was carried out in a most cruel way. The second martyr was Jacob, John's (Yuhanna's) brother. The Emperor of Rome had previously appointed Herod as the governor of Jerusalem. Herod wanted to win the hearts of the Jewish rabbis and so he started arresting, torturing and tormenting the Christians. He arrested Jacob to put an end to propagation about Jesus Christ and ordered his officers to cut his head off. This happened 11 years after Christ's ascension.

Herod's next victim was Peter. He arrested Peter and announced that he would be hanged a day after the coming Jewish feast. The night before, Christians held some secret prayer meetings in certain places to save Peter. Herod ordered 16 guards to watch Peter in jail until hanging deadline.

The feast was over, and they were supposed to hang Peter the following day. Some Christian men and women gathered at the home of Mark's mother. Mark was one of the disciples. They were praying for Peter's life when suddenly they heard knocks on the door. They were first afraid that their secret gathering might have been discovered. They were all silent looking at the door. A girl named "Roda" walked towards the door and asked: who are you? The one behind the door said calmly: "Open the door, my daughter".

Roda froze where she was standing. The voice was familiar to her. Her surprised face became happy gradually, and she said loudly: Peter! This is Peter himself! The people inside said: are you crazy, girl? Yet she insisted on what she said. The one behind the door was knocking again. Finally, they all stood up and rushed

to the door. Despite Roda's insistence, they wondered how it was possible that the person behind the door would be Peter, as he was in Herod's jail. One of them said something that made the hopeful hearts saddened: definitely they have killed Peter and it is his soul coming to us. They had the same illusion, even after they opened the door and saw Peter's handsome face. Peter came in and described what had happened to him: I was asleep in the jail. My hands were tied by two chains to the floor. Two guards were watching me. Some of them were behind the closed door of the jail. Suddenly I felt somebody was tapping on my shoulders. I saw two divine angels standing above me. They told me to stand up. The chains were loosened as I stood up. They told me to go with them. The guards were asleep. The doors automatically opened as we reached them. Now we were outside of the palace. That was the time the angels left me and I realized that I wasn't dreaming. They were there to save me*.

The following day, there was great uproar in the jail. The guards swore that Peter suddenly disappeared, but no one believed them. Eventually, Herod condemned all of the 16 guards to death. He could no longer remain in Jerusalem, and so he left the city.

Gradually, the disciples started to have missionary journeys to spread the message of Christ to all Jewish and non-Jewish people. Most of these journeys took place in the regions of Ancient Rome and they had to be clandestine journeys**. The Roman rulers, on one hand, had relations with Jewish rabbis and the wealthy, as they didn't want Christianity to spread among the Jews and, on the other hand, they were worried that believing in this new religion, which was slipping from the Jews' hands, may become widespread among the European people, as every divine, justice wanting religion could shake the foundation of their cruel reign.

* New Testament, messengers' testament/ chapter 12

** One of the apostles came to Iran; Saint Tadeous had travelled a lot in Mesopotamia and northwards to Armenia for many years to propagate God's religion of the time. Finally, he was martyred by some cruel ruler and was buried in a village near Chaldoran in Western Azerbaijan province. In the year 301 (A.C.), the king of Armenia converted to Christianity, and the people followed Saint Tadeous's way.

According to a narration related to the fifth Imam of the Shi'ite, Imam Mohammad Bagher: there were six nights in which there was blood under every stone taken from the ground; the night Aaron, Moses' brother was martyred; the night Yusha-ibn-Noon was martyred; the night Christ ascended to the heaven; the night Simon-ibn-Hamoon (Peter) was martyred; and the nights Imam Ali and Imam Hossein were martyred. (Kamel-az-Ziarat/ chapter: ما استدل به على قتل الحسين بن علي عليهما السلام في البلاد)

During these apostolic journeys, Saint Peter was arrested by Roman soldiers. This time they took him to the capital and to Nero, the Roman emperor, and condemned him to death. Saint Peter was crucified and martyred in the year 64 (A.C.), 31 years after Christ's ascension.

Several centuries passed since Peter's martyrdom. Melika, the daughter of one



The picture of Saint Peter being crucified, drawn in the year 1482 (AC)

of the rulers of Eastern Roman Empire, whose mother was a descendant of Saint Peter, was taken to Baghdad as a slave during the warfares of Muslims against Romans. Imam Hadi (pbuh), the tenth Imam of the Shiite, took this dignified lady to his household and adopted her as a daughter-in-law. Imam Hadi's son, Imam Hassan Asgari, became the Imam of the Shiite after Imam Hadi's martyrdom. The son of Imam Asgari and Lady Melika (Melika was referred to as Narjes at the Imam's home), is the 12th Imam of the Shiite and the last inheritor of the Messenger of Islam.

This blessed son is called Imam Mahdi (pbuh), the savior of humanity who is supposed to appear, before the Last Day, to establish divine reign and justice

throughout the world, and to abolish oppression and godlessness. According to Islamic beliefs, Jesus Christ will accompany Imam Mahdi at this final uprising. According to some narrations, Dajjal (anti-Christ), the arch-enemy of this sacred ultimate battle, shall be killed at the hands of Jesus Christ.

Second Scene

Five years passed since Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had become the leader of Islam. The pressures of sanctions, brutality, torture, and murder upon the small and vulnerable society of Muslims was intensifying every day. The order to emigrate was announced. Yet, the question was: where to?

Prophet Muhammad said: You must go to Ethiopia. There's a just king there. After this order, Jafar-ibn-Abi-Talib, Imam Ali's brother, was chosen as the leader of the migrants; he was not in danger as his father had a special position in Mecca.

The people of Ethiopia were followers of Christianity. They were called "Nasrani" (Christian) at that time. Najjashi, the king, was also a Christian. The teachings of Christ had taught him to be just, not to be cruel, and to shelter innocent people who would come to him as refugees.

Muslims, who numbered fewer than a hundred, sailed to the Red Sea coast secretly. Some were single, and some had families accompanying them. As prophet Muhammad had predicted, Najjashi welcomed them and let them live freely there and worship God in their own religion.

Immigrants were in good conditions. Amr-Aas went to Ethiopia as the representative of the leader of the Quraish tribe to bring the Muslims back. He was renowned for his craftiness. So, first he went to the counselors of the King's Court and offered them bribes and gifts. Then, he went to Najjashi and after bowing down flutteringly, presented him with exotic gifts, and then started slandering the Muslim immigrants: these are stubborn, rebellious young men who have abandoned the religion of their ancestors and insist on their ignorance. The leaders of Quraish beg you respectfully to send these subversive elements back to Hijaz*. The bribed counselors sup-

* History of Islam's prophet; Ayatollah Abbas Safayi Haery. First volume.

ported him immediately to convince Najjashi to expel the Muslims. Surprisingly Najjashi said: they will be under my protection unless their guilt is proved to me; call them to come here. Knowing the manner of the Muslims, Amr-Aas wanted to solve the problem at this very first meeting. So he told Najjashi that those young men are so arrogant that they would not even bow down in the presence of Your Majesty.

Jafar, together with some other Muslims were brought in and saluted the King loudly. The courtiers said: why don't you bow down? Jafar replied: our prophet taught us not to bow down except before God. He also has said that in paradise you will be welcomed by salutation. So, we did salute you this way. Najjashi smiled at hearing this reply and asked Jafar about Islam. Jafar started describing the conditions of that "Age of ignorance": idolatry, necrophagia, cruelty and murder, renouncement of kindred ties, burying infant girls alive and harassing neighbors. He then added: Our prophet invited us to worship God, to be just, kind, pious, not to lie, not to take the orphans, possessions, to perform prayers and to pay Zakaat.

Najjashi, who was quite, asked: do you have anything in your mind about what your prophet has brought? Jafar, in a beautiful accent, recited some verses of the Sura Mary about Jesus Christ's birth and Mary's innocence and what Jews accused her of. Najjashi and Christian scholars present in the court were most impressed. Najjashi, with tears in his eyes, said: undoubtedly the source of what has been revealed to your prophet and Christ is the same. Now Amr-Aas had to employ his last trick. He cunningly told Najjashi that these people say that Jesus is not the Son of God. The monks and scholars raised their eyebrows and made noises of objection. Najjashi was now worried. He looked at Jafar and asked: what do you say about this? Jafar, Imam Ali's brother, fearlessly explained the Islamic belief: Jesus is God's servant, His messenger, His spirit, and a Word granted to Mary.*

The monks were not satisfied but Najjashi was pleased and said: this is the true belief. Consequently, Najjashi expelled Amr-Aas from his court with contempt and went on: I won't let you touch these young people even if

* History of Islam's prophet; Ayatollah Abbas Safayi Haery. First volume.

you offered me a mountain of gold. They will be in my protection as long as they wish*.

Third Scene

Friday, 29th of dey, 1357; January 19, 1979

It was the 40th day after “Aashura”. That day was very different from previous years. It was more than a year after people held “Arbaeen” demonstrations for martyrs. The number of people martyred for the victory of the revolution was increasing: Tabriz rose up for the martyrs of Qom; Yazd and Ahvaz and Jahrom for the martyrs of Tabriz; 20 cities for Yazd and Ahvaz and Jahrom; these demonstration continued until the 17th of Shahrivar when many people in Tehran were murdered, there was a demonstration for Tehran’s martyrs in Kerman, etc.

Finally these courageous bloody incidents bore fruit: the Shah had to escape; three days before the next “Arbaeen”.

That day there was a different mood in the city. Even “Saint Sirkis Church” on Karimkhan Street enjoyed a higher spirit. Some were busy writing placards in Armenian and Persian languages. They showed them to their bishop to get approval. The first placard read: we want freedom, independence, and national and territorial integrity for Iran. Another read: There is constant alliance of the Iranian nation against East and West Imperialism.

All this enthusiasm was the result of resisting suppression and the Shah’s dependency on world powers, and suppression of the people for many years which affected all the people, whether Muslim or Christian. A modest, honest clergyman rose against this regime and all its powerful supporters, and became the leader of the Revolution. Some days before Arbaeen, Imam had sent a message to the people from exile in France that encouraged all Iranians to come out and struggle:

“In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

* This incident was the first friendly circle between Muslims and Christians during the early period of Islam; it continued after the Hijra and spread Islam in Hijaz. In the Holy Quran, it was referred to as the friendliness and kindness of Christians and Muslims in Sura Ma’edeh, verse 82 as follows:

«وَلَنَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَىٰ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قِسِيْنَ وَرَهْبَانَا وَ أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ»
 And indeed you will find the people saying “we are Christians”, the closest people in being friends with believers, because some of them are scholars and religious who don’t become godless.

It is the day of Arbæen. Our awakened people have seen so many gainful Arbæens. During these years, following more than 50 years of brutal kingdom of Pahlavi's dynasty, we have faced so many disasters and internecine barbarity; 50 years of bitter and painful memories; it got worse in the last two years, which made our brave nation to move against autocracy and colonialism.

Our martyrs followed the manner and behavior of the Holy Martyrs of Karbala. The recent Arbæen of our brothers is the reflection of the Arbæen of those brave men. Their pure blood put an end to Yazid's cruel reign. And our brothers' blood destroyed the brutal kingdom. This year's Arbæen is extraordinary and unique; it is the national and religious duty of the people to walk and demonstrate enthusiastically in this Arbæen.

Our great nation, throughout Iran, will bury this regime through their demonstrations. They will declare their opposition to the illegal "Royal Council" and their advocacy of the "Islamic Republic" again and again".

There were rivers of angry determined people in every street, joining one another in the streets, struggling to eradicate the Shah's regime as Imam had told them.

There were groups of demonstrators on the Arbæen who shouted slogans wherever they went, and the rest of the people welcomed them and accompanied them. There were motivated Christian youth, carrying placards, who shouted slogans against the Shah's reign. They carried another interesting slogan apart from "down with Shah", it read: Christianity is our religion, our leader is Khomeini.

During Imam's presence in France, journalists, ordinary people, and Iranians in Europe kept meeting him and listening to his speeches. One day, four Iranian university students who were Armenian came to his temporary residence in Neauphle-Le Chateau village. There were journalists there, each asking a question. Then one of the Armenian students asked: what happens to Armenians if your revolution succeeds and you establish your Islamic regime? The Imam's kind look at this young Iranian-Armenian was the best reply.



Then he said: "Armenians living there, who have been living in Iran since ancient times have the same rights. After the revolution's victory, all will be free and they will be treated with utmost justice".

In Neauphle-Le Chateau village, Christians received a flower spray from the Imam at Christmas Eve. The Imam had asked what people usually give to each other as present, and the answer was "flowers".

Eventually, after some 15 years, Imam Khomeini returned to Iran on February 1, 1979, so that the people would take the final steps to destroy the cruel regime in the presence of their brave leader. The biggest national welcome in history was there: Millions of ordinary people were waiting in Tehran streets to meet and welcome the Imam. There were also some dignitaries and representatives of different groups waiting at Mehr-Abad Airport. Mr. Khamenei was at the "welcoming headquarters"; he was in charge of the publicity Committee. Mr. Motahari had asked him to deliver a speech at the welcoming

* Imam's Sahifeh, fifth volume.



ceremony*. The airplane landed, all were waiting to see the Imam. There were some Christian clergymen wearing special gowns, who stood near Mr. Khamenei; they were the representatives of Christians in Iran who wanted to express their feelings towards Imam Khomeini.

Fifteen days had passed after the victory of the Revolution and the Imam was still staying at the Alavi School in Tehran. Different groups of people came to meet the Imam and declare their loyalty to the Revolution. That day, Mr. Ardaak Manoukian, the Armenian bishop, together with the Armenians' Council of Caliphate, were guests of the Imam for some time. The Imam told them: "This movement, I hope, will benefit all religions, and minorities living in Iran. I know all stratas of the people in Iran, Muslims or non-Muslims, suffered during the reign of this Shah and his father. And we all know that Islam has always respected minorities. I respect them too. They are parts of our nation. I hope that the Just Islamic state will bring good for them too and that they live here in welfare, freely, and properly under the protection of Islam**".

* It was supposed that the Imam's arrival would be on Friday, 6th of Bahman. Thousands of people were waiting in Behesht Zahra (Tehran cemetery). Everything was ready for Imam's arrival and his speech. But Bakhtiar, the Shah appointed prime minister's communiqué, ordered the Shah's army to lay a siege at Mehr-Abad Airport. In Behesht Zahra, Mr. Beheshti delivered a speech for the angry people. Then Mr. Khamenei wrote a communiqué and read it for the people. In this communiqué, the people were asked to demonstrate the following day. That demonstration paved the way for the Imam's return. (The book "Names Description" by Hidayat-allah Behboudi).

** Imam's Sahifeh, sixth volume.



Fourth Scene

Everything was going well for the so-called “New Global Order” by the big powers, which were based upon cruelty and suppression, but then something happened that spoiled their calculations. In a country most dependent on foreign powers, a revolution came about contrary to all predictions and equations. During an age when it was supposed that religion had been forever put aside from politics, a religious revolution had succeeded to form a religious government. Finally, during the period when all had to connect to a big power to progress and stay powerful, a revolution happened and its slogan was independence from the East and the West; a regime was founded that was not dependent on the world powers, but in fact stood against them and questioned their legitimacy. The Revolution and its political order seemed so dangerous to the big powers that they impalpably allied to eradicate it. Coups, terrorism and disturbances bore no fruit. They then resorted to military action against this newly-founded regime. The agent for this plot was at hand; Saddam Hussein, a ruthless, power-seeking man, who had recently become the ruler of Iraq.

The imposed war against Iran began. The domestic conditions were unstable

and the army, saved from The Shah's suppression, was not in good form and so if the people would not fight and stand against the invasion, the enemy could succeed. The Iranian people however, kept their faith and stood against all powers.



It is natural that when a country is engaged in a long, extensive war, the young people go and fight. But what makes the imposed war on Iran different is the way that these young people see the war, how their families reflect on the sacrifices of their young, beloved ones and how a family who has lost their sons feel about them. These are the clearest manifestations of their outlook towards the war. Here is when the difference between a war caused by the arrogant powers and a defensive war on the basis of values and the valour of the martyrs manifests itself, such was the scene of the war in Iran in the 8 year-war and the magnificent scene of patient, resisting families who had lost their dearest ones.

The picture becomes touchingly more significant when it involves members of the small Christian minorities in the face of the martyrdom of their youth.

In the course of the war, there were some 48 martyrs, 105 wounded and 35 war prisoners from among the small Armenian –Christian minority. There were also some 30

Armenian men, women and children who died during air-attacks and bombings. The same kind of sacrifices were witnessed among the yet smaller Assyrian-Christian minority; more than 30 of them were martyred defending their country in the unjust,



unequal war imposed on the Iranian nation for they considered themselves as part of this oppressed nation and the war as a national question and they did whole - heartedly participated in the war effort. Apart from these efforts, the Armenian were also most active in the war's relief work; they did set up a headquarter for this purpose from the early days of the war under the supervision of their religious authority. They began this important task by issuing this statement:

Our dear fellow-Christians; as you know our beloved Iran is presently at war, a war that has been imposed on us. In these sensitive days all Iranian are selflessly engaged in the holy defence of our patriotic country.

We too, as all Iranians, have the duty to take part in the holy defence of Iran's territorial sovereignty, therefore it was decided that we also extend our financial assistance to the war efforts at this juncture. We are certain that our people will, as in the past, fulfill their duty of guarding the security and territory of Iran and shall generously give their help at this crucial moment.



Afterwards, the Armenian financial assistance went on and their caravans of material commodities were continuously sent to the war-front. On the other hand, as most of the Iranian-Armenians were skilled repairers and specialists in technical fields, they carried out effective service at the war-fronts as far as various equipments and machinery were concerned.

The 5th Scene

This was a most beautiful scene: an Armenian spiritual leader next to a Muslim spiritual leader, one was the arch-bishop of Tehran Armenian community and the one next to him, the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in other words, His Eminence Ardaak Manukian and Ayatollah Khamenei, they were talking very intimately. The Archbishop had brought with him a cheque representing the Armenian's financial assistance for the war effort. The president had warmly shaken hands with him saying: Today I am meeting a Christian spiritual leader, and there is nothing between us but friendship, we both walk the an same path and towards the same goal. I never forget a scene at one of war-fronts in Ahvaz. I was speaking to our soldiers in one of the trenches. Then a soldier addressed me and said: I am Armenian, I really felt good that Armenians were fighting shoulder to shoulder with their Muslim brothers. He fought so selflessly alongside Muslims; he never felt alone among so many Muslims. The Muslim soldiers also never felt that he was an outsider, both fought for the same goal.

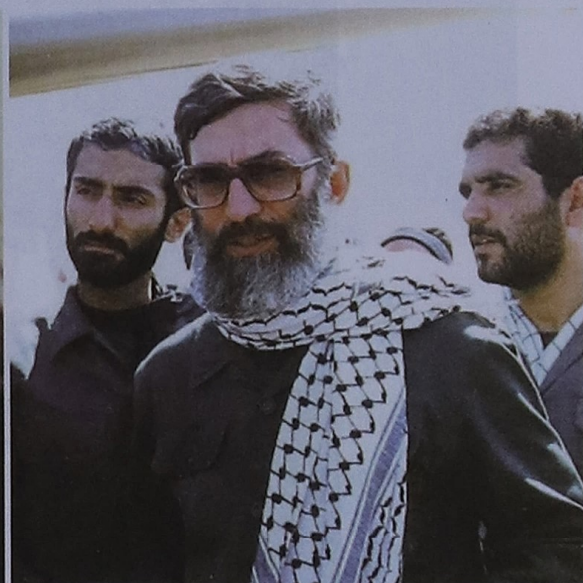
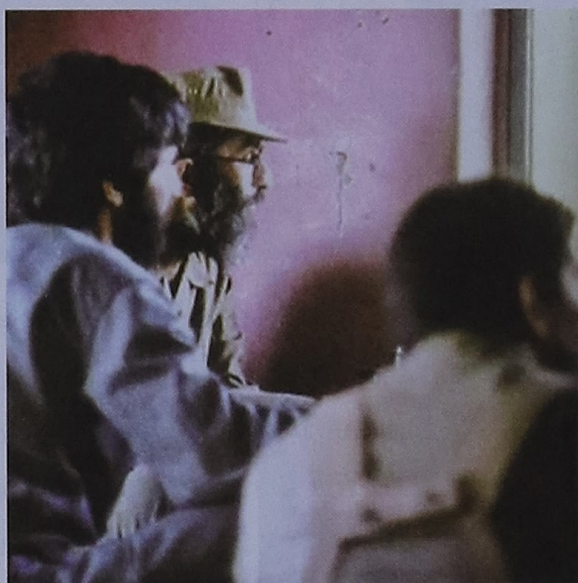


During those days of hardship the Iranian Armenians proved how they felt about the imposed war on their fellow-countrymen: at the beginning of the Christian year 1982, they decided not to celebrate the new year in respect for thousands of families whose sons had been martyred during the war as victims of Saddam Hussein's crimes. Ayatollah Khamenei was the first person who valued this significant action by the Armenians.

In his message concerning the Christian New Year he said:

I congratulate this new year, which commemorates the blessed birth of Messiah, Mary's son, the grand prophet of God, to all Christians in our country and to the true followers of Jesus Christ and wish the best of happiness and salvation by asking the Word and Spirit of God to help them.

The new year begins at a time when millions of people who thirst for justice, peace and love to pray for the realization of Christ's promises in the future ...in our country the blood of many of our people including the Christians were shed in the defence of our land ...Now the Iranian Christians have decided not to celebrate the new year in sympathy with families who have lost their loved ones during this war ...I, in the name of the Iranian nation, express my appreciation for this kindness and insight and I hope that under our Islamic state and the rule of the Quran, the new year will be a year of happiness and progress for the Christian community, and I wish happiness and success for all Christians throughout the world.



In the early months of the war, Mr. Khamenei together with Dr. Chamran asked the Imam to allow them to visit the fronts, but this period was not long as, after the assassination attempt on his life, the Imam did not allow him to go to the war-fronts or even visit the provinces neighbouring Iraq.

This prohibition lasted until the adoption of the cease-fire communiqué, but, as there was another assault against Iran by a mercenary organization, he decided to visit the front. During these years, however, he was leading the people's resistance to continue to support the war-effort as a true soldier of the Imam and the revolution; Ayatollah Khamenei started his program of visiting the families of the war martyrs as from the year 1984 and in this very year, he visited a few families of the Christian martyrs on the occasion of the Christian New Year.

The Iranian Christians are mainly Armenians and Assyrians and there have been martyrs from among both communities. The Leader of the Islamic Republic has visited the families of either group on a yearly basis. In these visits the Leader has listened carefully to their emotional statements and grievances and has sympathized with them and prayed for them. Addressing the elders he has talked about Christianity and Christian history and with the young ones, he has asked them about their activities, their education and Jobs and our Christian people have truly appreciated these intimate, personal meeting with the Leader.

About this book

We in the Sahba Institute started a blessed endeavour to shed light on the leader's presence at the homes of the families of the Iranian martyrs, something that has continued for the last 25 years. There are many beautiful and valuable lessons to be enjoyed in the reports of these visits.

We named these series of books "Sunshine at the Landing Site of Angels"; that is in fact how the leader named these blessed homes. The first book in these series was titled "A Host from Heavens". The book narrates what went on in the homes of five martyr families in Mashhad, Khorasan province.

"Christ in the Night of Glory" is the title of the second book in these series. It is about the Leader's presence at the homes of the martyrs in the Iranian, Christian communities which contains many a sensitive, interesting and attractive point.

These books could only be published through the help and cooperation of “the section for people’s communications” at the Office of the Leader.

This section existed when the Leader was the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran and after the demise of the Imam, and the Leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei, it was named “the office for people’s communications” headed by one of his trusted former pupils, He, together with the faithful, hard-working staff in this office have selflessly tried to become the examples of what Imam Ali recommended in his famous letter to Maalik Ashtar; O Maalik, for those people who need you, do appropriate some of your time or hold special sessions to sit with the people so that they could express their complaints and opinions fearlessly and openly for I myself heard the Holy Prophet saying that the Islamic umma would not be a proper, flawless society if the down-trodden or ordinary people could not voice their wants fearlessly. (Nahjolblagha, Letter 53)

All our documents, observations and what has been recorded testify that from when the program for visiting the families of martyrs began, all attempts in this respect and the collection of documents and other materials, except for security matters, were all performed by this office in the best forms. Thousands of photos and documents and many hours of recordings and films were collected and arranged and classified in the best possible ways. The preparation and collection of such an immense archives were carried out by the staff of this office, not as official duties, but faithfully and sincerely for God’s sake. Here, we in the Sahba Institute, should express our thanks and appreciation to Sayyed Ali Moghaddam, the head of the Office for People’s Communications, as each time we had the chance to meet him, he did enhance our spiritual insight and gave us brilliant advice to carry out the work in serving Islam and the Islamic community. God bless all those who serve Islam and Muslims and may God Almighty bestow his blessings on the Leader of the Revolution to continue his exciting meetings with the families of martyrs.

In all the houses of martyrs we did witness the effects of the assistance and favours extended to them by the Martyrs Foundation and other charitable organizations; may God bless them to further their good work.

Apart from the available documents and records, we had extensive conversa-

tions with the members of the martyr families in order to obtain information about the martyrs, their opinions and their ways of life prior to the meetings with the Leader. We are most grateful that almost all of the families welcomed us in very intimate atmosphere and freely talked about their martyrs.

Some three years before the publication of the present book, we found out that someone had bought many copies of our previous books concerning the Leader. The name of the purchaser was Hamlet Toumanian, obviously an Armenian. We contacted him and it was the basis for a good friendship. Mr. Toumanian, 40 years of age, is a grand master of chess. He had already studied all our books and had even distributed them among his Armenian and Muslim pupils. All this showed that he was a great enthusiast of the Leader and the Islamic Revolution. All this led to his becoming our advisor in the preparation of this book and our guide and consultant about the Armenian community and coordinator of the interviews. He was also kind to write down the story of one of those visits at the home of an Armenian family. We do hope that our friendship and cooperation with him will last for a long time.

Although the narrations about these visits are in the forms of story-telling, they are all based on documents, records and recordings. This is important, as some years ago, a newspaper published an account about one of such visits by the Leader which was totally a figment of the writer's imagination about a martyr whose name was not mentioned! So, it is worth noting again that all accounts published in this book are absolutely documented.

Our narrations are arranged in a chronological order, that is, starting with the first martyr in the war to the end; this way it will be noted that there were Armenian (and Assyrian) martyrs throughout the war. Therefore there were meetings with the families of the martyrs both during the presidency and leadership of the Leader.

Unfortunately in the case of some visits there is not sufficient records, photos or recording; therefore we had to base our reports in these cases on our interviews with the family members. In a few cases we could not find any information or addresses of the martyrs. We hope that we will be in a position to get more information about such cases for future publications.

We are indebted to our dear Armenian fellow-countrymen who acted as liaisons with the Armenian families of martyrs: Mr. Avanes Karapetian (the brother of martyr vigen Karapetian), Mr. Varuzh Yasaian (martyr's brother), Mrs. Rubina Madadian (wife of the martyr Nourik Mahmoudi), Mr. Razmik Tourusian (martyr's cousin), Dr. Varuzhan Babumian (martyr's son), Mr. Vartan Davidian (of the Armenian Khalifate Council), Mr. nerva Nersesian (martyr's nephew) and Miss Ariyela Karapetian (niece of martyr Karapetian and martyr Davvidian).

We are equally indebted to our Assyrian fellow-countrymen who acted as liaisons with the Assyrian families of martyrs:

Mr. Yonan Bet-Kalya (the Assyrian representative at Islamic National Assembly, Mr. Peter Lazar (cousin of martyr Ordushahi). His Reverend Moghaddas-Nia (of the Evangelical, Assyrian Church in Tehran) and the mother of martyr John-George John-David. Finally our special thanks go to: The editors of the Armenian newspaper, Alik, the staff at the Documents center of Martyrs Foundation and their Public Relation Office, The Military Office for Martyrs Information (esp.Colonel Majid Sheikhian), District 2 of Tehran Municipality, the internet site Saajed (Mr.Hussein Salesi) and The Urumia Association of Assyrians (Mrs. Dnial).

We thank God Almighty to be able to breathe in an atmosphere perfumed by the breaths of martyrs and the scent of the supreme Leader. We hope that God may help us to continue our humble efforts in the path of our martyrs.

Sahba Institute

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