

**[PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]**

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets.]

[Personal information has been **redacted**.]

[The excerpt below is from the section of the article that pertains to the Baha'i Faith]

[Adapted from website:] Rooz Online

[Date:] 5 Shahrivar 1392 [27 August 2013]

Family of Ataollah Rezvani in an Interview With Rooz, Said, "The Murder Was Organized and Ideological".

The body of Ataollah Rezvani, a 54-year-old Baha'i resident of Bandar Abbas, was found on an abandoned road outside the city. In an interview with Rooz, his family said, "He left the house at nine o'clock at night and one day later the Intelligence Office informed us of his murder. They shot him in the back of the head. None of his personal belongings were lost or damaged, and only his cell phone was missing."

Kourosh Rezvani, the son of Ataollah Rezvani, and also Navid Aghdasi, the victim's cousin, told Rooz, "There was no personal motive for such killing. His family, relatives and acquaintances believe the killing was ideological. Mr. Rezvani was one of the well-known Baha'is of Bandar Abbas, and according to his family he had repeatedly been pressured by the city's Intelligence Office.

Roshanak Shakibaie and Malika Rezvani, the wife and the daughter of Mr. Rezvani, were travelling at the time of his murder and returned from Mashhad yesterday. About the night of the murder, Kourosh Rezvani, his son, said, "He [his father] left the house at nine o'clock on Saturday night. He was supposed to return home, but he did not return. We were worried and went everywhere—hospitals, police stations and wherever we could think of. There was no news and we had to file a missing person report [with police].

"We were busy doing something when a gentleman called and said, 'Come to the intelligence office; your father has been found.' We went. They said he was dead. He was found on a road outside the city. They told us that he had been shot in the back of the head and his body was still in the office of forensic medicine had not yet been delivered to them.

I asked him, "Did your father have a personal problem with someone or did someone have a problem or enmity with your father?"

He said, "My father was a special character. He had nothing to do but serve. He had no problem or enmity with anyone. This killing was organized and was not a normal murder case. To take someone to an abandoned road and shoot him from behind was a well-prepared and an organized crime. In fact, he was behind [the wheel of] his car, so they probably took him out of the town with threats. We called [his phone] until 12 o'clock at night. My father's cell phone rang, but he did not answer. The mobile was turned off at 12:00 midnight."

I ask his opinion, saying, "Some reports say that your father was summoned and threatened by the Intelligence Office."

He said, "I do not know. It could be many issues; however, we are from one of the religious minorities and this could be the reason. My father was both threatened and summoned."

I asked him, "What threat? Is your father's murder related to those threats?"

He said, "When the Baha'i institutions were closed down, my father was handling Baha'i affairs here. Everyone that was interrogated was pressured and threatened to turn against my father. They used to call many times, but my father did not answer. They knew him as the leader of the Baha'is here and he was greatly harassed. They had told [others] not to cooperate with my father in government affairs and facilities, etc. ... In general, they created a lot of problems in his work. These pressures were through the Public Places Supervision Office or Intelligence Office."

Some websites have also reported threats and pressure from the office of the Friday prayer leader in Bandar Abbas. In this regard, Mr. Rezvani's son said, "For a long time, the Friday prayer leader [of this place] used to speak against the Baha'is and threaten them. At that time, because the Baha'i institutions were not closed, my father and two of his friends wrote letters and gave them to the office of the Friday prayer leader. They wrote to him saying, 'What you are saying against us [Baha'is] is not true. We Baha'is are not like those people, as you say. You are the Friday prayer leader of the city, and your words provoke some people to persecute the Baha'is. You, as the Friday prayer leader, should not speak against us like this and...'

"The Friday prayer leader also said in his speeches during the Friday prayers that, yes, they wrote these letters and ... my father and his friends also complained to the security and the military forces that these words would lead to tension and bloodshed and ... but it did not bring about any results. Of course, my father was not threatened directly by the Friday prayer leader or his office. The pressures and threats were by the intelligence services, who would summon my father. Of course, my father did not respond, and he used to say, 'Telephone calls are not legal.' Now that this situation has arisen, we really still do not know who has killed my father in this way, and with what motive. Nothing comes to my mind, except the ideological issues. Anyway, we are looking to see what happens. We will also file a complaint at the prosecutor's office and will get a lawyer to find out who has committed the murder."

In an interview with Rooz, regarding the family's investigation and follow-up to clarify Mr. Rezvani's murder, Navid Aghdasi, the cousin of the victim, Ataollah Rezvani, said, "The [past] two days, when Kourosh has gone to the Intelligence Office, it has mostly been for the interrogations and questions and answers. We have not yet seen the body. What is clear is that no object or money was stolen from the car; even the car was not stolen. They have not even stolen a penny. They have only stolen the victim's mobile phone. The last person who saw the victim [alive] was an acquaintance who said that he [Ataollah Rezvani] had talked on his mobile phone for half an hour, before they got him in the car. Now we are trying to get a [court] order to find out through the telecommunications company who had called him, to whom he talked, and what was going on."

He added, "These are the things we know so far, and the rest is guessing and speculation. There are many clues, if they [authorities] want to pursue the case. One [clue] is the mobile phone, [another clue is] how he was shot, the type of the bullets and the phone calls he received in the previous days. The challenge and what we are afraid of is that there will be no interest in clarifying the issue, and also the Intelligence Office may order the case file closed. The murder itself is one thing, and the main issue is the motive for the murder."

I asked, “What do you think was the motive for killing Mr. Rezvani?”

He said, “This is the most important shock—not only to the victim’s family and the Baha’i community in Bandar Abbas, but also to the non-Baha’i community in Bandar Abbas. There is no motive. Mr. Rezvani did not even hold a cigarette in his hand. He was a believer in the Baha’i Faith, who did not even drink. He had no financial problems with anyone and did a lot of charitable work. In Bandar Abbas, he was quite popular with everyone, amongst both the Muslims and the Baha’is. No matter how much we ponder on what was the motive for killing him with a gun, nothing comes to our mind except the ideological motive, because he was under pressure for years.

“He was the most prominent Baha’i in Bandar Abbas and perhaps in Hormozgan Province. He had very good relations with everyone and was a well-known person, and the Ministry of Intelligence did not like that. They pressured him directly and indirectly many times. They put a lot of pressure in terms of work. His friends who were taken away were intimidated by the Ministry of Intelligence that they should not contact him—or they [Intelligence] scared them to go and put pressure on him. “In any case, the only thing we can suspect is the ideological issue, of which, of course, we do not have any evidence at this moment, and we may not have any evidence to prove it in the future. It is the government of the Islamic Republic and we are a detested religious minority here. The only thing we can be suspicious of is this, and no other motive comes to our mind.”

Mr. Aghdasi said, “Mr. Rezvani had been threatened and pressured several times.” He explains, “There are two kinds of threats. One is threats that are public knowledge and we all know about them. For example, the Public Places Supervision Office would disturb him, and the Intelligence agents would come and harass him with regard to his business. He was one of the most influential individuals in the field of water treatment and water facilities. One of his partners was a Muslim, but they used to work together. The Ministry of Intelligence told the Hormozgan Water and Sewage Organization not to collaborate with him. But they always had to work and be in contact with this organization.

“He had an optical shop with another partner. Again, the Ministry of Intelligence, in coordination with the Public Places Supervision Office, interfered with their business. They threatened his partner and his sons. When other Baha’is were summoned, they [officers] spoke against Mr. Rezvani during their interrogation sessions and even threatened them [the Baha’s] to pass on the pressure to Mr. Rezvani and to disassociate themselves from him. He was a very humble man; on the other hand, because he did not want to worry his family, he did not convey many threats to members of his family and relatives. He did not reveal any of the subtle threats, but we know that he was under pressure. His family were travelling to Mashhad.

“His wife said that he [Ataollah Rezvani] was very upset and distressed for few days but would not talk; neither would he say what had happened.” She added, ‘As far as we know, he did not receive any direct threat from the Friday prayer leader of Bandar Abbas, but the Friday prayer leader of Bandar Abbas has made repeated statements against the Baha’i Faith and the Baha’is of Bandar Abbas for about two years.’

“Mr. Rezvani and two or three of his friends who were in charge of the affairs of Baha’i community in Bandar Abbas, wrote a letter and reminded him that these divisions and inciting the religious sentiments of the people, were likely to lead to catastrophe. This was the only issue, with regard to the Friday prayer leader. We know that the Friday prayer leader had not said anything directly to Mr. Rezvani.”

Mr. Aghdasi said, “Mr. Rezvani had no personal problem with anyone. Everyone here believes that this is a religious issue. The family is following up, anyway. They have filed a complaint, but you

know that with the imprisonment of Mrs. Sotoudeh and Mr. Soltani, few other lawyers are willing to accept such cases.”

He then referred to the imprisonment of some members of Mr. Rezvani's family in recent years. He said, “Mrs. Sahba Rezvani (Fanaian) is the sister of Mr. Rezvani, a Baha'i from Semnan, who has been in prison for three years for believing in the Baha'i Faith. Mr. Rezvani's niece and the husband of the sister of Mr. Rezvani [Mrs. Sahba Rezvani] have also been in Semnan Prison for a long time and have recently been released. On the other hand, many Baha'is in Bandar Abbas have been persecuted or beaten and detained. In Iran, since the beginning of the Islamic Republic, more than 200 Baha'is have been killed on fictitious charges such as espionage. Interestingly, if they wrote a sentence saying, 'I am not a Baha'i', the accusation of espionage would be dropped! After all, what kind of espionage case is this, that it is resolved in such a way? It is not just a matter of execution or murder; it includes unnecessary imprisonment and obstruction of Baha'i businesses and trades. Until six or seven years ago, Baha'i youth were not allowed to enter the national university entrance exam. These are examples of the persecutions that Baha'is face because of their own ideological issues. Even now, while I am dealing with the murder of my aunt's son, there is no other motive for the murder, except the issue of ideology.”