

[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:] Iran Wire

[Date:] Tuesday, 1 December 2020

Service of Baha'i Doctors and Nurses to Iran; Dr. Naser Vafaie Was Executed

Tuesday, 1 December 2020 – Kian Sabeti

During the coronavirus pandemic, hundreds of Iranian Baha'i doctors and nurses around the world are helping their patients and are praised by the people and governments of the countries in which they live. However, after the Islamic Revolution, many of these doctors and nurses who studied in Iran and served the people became unemployed, were deprived of university education, and their share of [the Islamic Revolution] was being executed by gallows and firing squads. ...

“Why do you always say, ‘Why did you kill Dr. Vafaie?’ ‘Why did you kill the doctors?’ ‘Why did you kill seven Baha'is?’ They were spies ... If Dr. Vafaie was serving the people and the elderly women, his goal was propaganda! Why do you write and make telephone calls so much?”

These are parts of the responses of the Revolutionary Sharia judge in a television interview in Hamadan, in Tir 1360 [July 1981], a few days after the execution of Dr. Naser Vafaie, one of the highly regarded and beloved doctors of this city.

Who Was Dr. Naser Vafaie?

Naser Vafaie was the second child of Gholam-Ali and Tajieh Vafaie, a Baha'i couple living in Amzajerd, Hamadan. He was born in Aban 1310 [October/November 1931] in Hamadan.

Naser lived in Hamedan until the fourth grade of primary school and then moved with his family to Tehran. He completed his secondary education in Tehran and continued his higher education in medicine at the University of Tehran.

After graduation from medical school, Naser Vafaie was hired by the Ministry of Culture (current Ministry of Education) and was sent by the ministry to Bijar City in Kurdistan Province to head the health department of the educational centre in that area.

After a year and a half of service in Bijar, Dr. Vafaie was transferred to Hamadan in 1338 [1959/1360] where he continued his practice and lived in this city until his arrest, torture and execution in the first years after the 1357 [1979] Revolution.

In addition to practicing medicine in his private office, he also held public jobs related to his profession. Among these occupations, we can mention the administrative responsibility of the

programme for free school nutrition and the management of the Department of Health and School Clinics of Hamadan Province.

Loved by All His Patients! Even Patients From the Hojratieh Society

Dr. Naser Vafaie was known for his good manners and accuracy in diagnosis. He spent a lot of time in the office with patients and listened carefully to their problems and discomforts. This behaviour made him a popular doctor and his clinic was always full of patients. His reputation had spread around Hamedan and many of his patients were from areas and villages around Hamedan.

Jaleh Modiri, Dr. Vafaie's wife, says that in the first days after her husband's arrest, "one night a man and a woman with worried faces came to my door with an eight- or nine-year-old child. They introduced themselves as Dr. Vafaie's patients and asked what had happened to the doctor that his clinic was closed? I said he had been arrested a few days ago. While they were both crying, they told me that their son had rheumatic heart disease and that they had taken him to different doctors... Only the medicine that the doctor [Vafaie] gave to their son was effective and made him feel better. Now that he was not there, they did not know what to do." Dr. Vafaie's wife suggested that they go to the Revolutionary Court and tell them that they wanted a prescription for their son from Dr. Vafaie, who was imprisoned on their orders. They went to the Revolutionary Court, and Dr. Vafaie was able to prescribe the medicine for the boy from the prison, until his execution.

Dr. Vafaie used to record the daily prison events in a notebook. He also recounted many memories for his wife during her prison visits. Among these memories was the story of the interrogator of Dr. Vafaie, whose name was Ebrahim Derafshi. He was one of the city's most famous figures. He was from the Hojratieh Society and was known for detesting the Baha'is. Despite all this, many members of his family went to Dr. Vafaie's clinic for medical treatment.

One day, before the revolution, Ebrahim Derafshi argued with his brother and broke his skull. The brother, who was one of Dr. Vafaie's patients, went to his clinic to receive a medical certificate in order to file a complaint against his brother [Ebrahim Derafshi]. After treating the man, Dr. Vafaie persuaded him to drop his complaint and forgive Ebrahim Derafshi.

Ebrahim Darafshi told Dr. Vafaie in the first interrogation session, "I do not know why my family [members] come to you, a Baha'i dog!" Then he asked, "Do you remember that my brother came to you to get a certificate? After that, I realized that despite being a Baha'i, you are a pure-hearted person."

Dr. Naser Vafaie and Dr. Firouz Naiemi, another Baha'i doctor who was arrested at the time, treated and visited the patients in prison; however, prison officials harassed him and his fellow-religionist. Every day when food for the Baha'is was brought, it contained hair, thread, pieces of rope, and even pebbles. This was the reason why Dr. Vafaie did not eat and became ill and weak.

From Intention to Emigrate to Decision to Stay in Homeland

After living in Hamadan for two years, in 1340 [1961/1962], Dr. Naser Vafaie married Jaleh Modiri. The couple had two daughters, Mahta and Ziba, who were 17 and 12 years old respectively, at the time of their father's execution.

About a year before the Islamic Revolution, Naser and Jaleh traveled to the United States at the invitation of Jaleh's brother, and after two months in the country, decided to settle in the United States. They returned to Iran to sell their homes and belongings and go to the United States of

America. On the other hand, Naser had worked for 19 years and had one year left until his retirement. Vafaie's family decided to stay in Iran until he retired and sell their house and belongings during this time.

After the revolution of 1357 [1979], from the very beginning, the Islamic government that emerged began persecuting the Baha'is. Many Baha'is were arrested and executed. The property of a number of Baha'is, their religious centres, and Baha'i cemeteries were confiscated. The mass dismissal of Baha'is from government departments and offices had begun.

At this time, Dr. Vafaie, who had only a few months left before retirement, suddenly changed his life plan and decided to stay in Iran. During those difficult and unbearable conditions, many Baha'is of Hamadan considered his presence as a warm support for themselves. Naser Vafaie decided that in that unfavourable situation for the Baha'is of Iran, instead of leaving his homeland, he would stay and be with them.

In 1358 [1979], dozens of Baha'i families who were living in the surrounding districts and villages [of Hamadan] fled their homes and farms at night, without money or food due to the persecutions and death threats from the fanatical locals, and came to Hamadan.

A few years before the revolution, Baha'is of Hamadan had bought a house on Abbas Abad Street and held their religious meetings there.

The homeless Baha'is settled in this house. Their children went back to school and the situation was improving when a confiscation order was issued. To prevent this action, Dr. Nasser Vafaie and another Baha'i in Hamadan met several times with Ayatollah Seyyed Asadollah Madani, Ayatollah Khomeini's representative in Hamadan, and Ayatollah Alami, one of the city's most influential clerics, but to no avail. The house, which legally belonged to the Baha'i community of Hamadan, was confiscated.

From Arrest to Torture and Execution

On the morning of 18 Mordad 1359 [9 August 1980], several revolutionary guards arrested Dr. Naser Vafaie at his clinic. Ten months later, on 24 Khordad 1360 [14 June 1981], this Baha'i physician, at the age of 50, along with six other Baha'is, including Dr. Firouz Naiemi, were tortured and shot by firing squad.

At dawn on 24 Khordad [14 June] three gunmen in black masks threw the bodies of the seven Baha'is in front of Imam Khomeini Hospital and told the hospital guard, "These are the corpses of the Baha'is that we killed ... Collect them!"

Dr. Naser Vafaie had five bullets in his body. He had been severely tortured before his execution; his body was cut with a knife from the abdomen to the back of the thighs and under the hips. He was also cut with a knife from the lower abdomen to the left knee, in such wise that the leg-bone could be seen. They had dislocated the same leg, so that it rotated in all directions.

The death sentence of seven Baha'is in Hamadan was long ago issued in a closed court by the then Sharia judge of Hamadan, Sheikh Abolhassan Alami Eshtehardi. The defendants were denied the right to a lawyer. According to a quote from Dr. Vafaie, whenever the defendants' defences began, an unknown group sitting in the audience prevented the defendants from speaking by reciting prayers. The execution of these seven people, especially two Baha'i doctors, caused a stir in Hamadan, so that Abolhassan Alami, the religious judge and head of the Hamadan Revolutionary Court, was forced to speak to various media outlets.

In these interviews, he accused these individuals of having activities in the Baha'i community, propagating the Baha'i Faith, propaganda against the Islamic Republic, cooperation with the Pahlavi regime, and the like, and never provided any evidence to substantiate his claims. After the execution, all property, assets and bank accounts of Dr. Naser Vafaie and his wife, Jaleh Modiri, were taken and confiscated in favour of the Islamic government.

The last note from Dr. Vafaie is a phrase he wrote in his journal hours or minutes before the torture began: "They brought us for the execution. I told the friends [six other Baha'i prisoners], "We are all going to be immortal and it is worth it!"