

Martyrdom of the Báb

The Holy Day of the Martyrdom of the Báb is celebrated on 17 Rahmat and marks the passing of the Báb, one of the three central figures of the Bahá'í Faith. The Báb declared Himself as the bearer of a divine revelation and the herald of another Messenger of God soon to appear. It was through Him that the people of the world were alerted to the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. The Báb's name, meaning 'gate' in Arabic is indicative of His role, as He was indeed a gate to the Promised One.



Room where the Báb declared His mission

Throughout much of His life, the Báb suffered continual exile and imprisonment. Despite His suffering, His spirit of love and friendliness towards everyone He met never diminished. There were many people who were greatly attracted to Him and the sacred message that He brought. Perhaps as a result, the preaching of the Báb and His followers attracted the opposition of the Islamic clergy, and He was detained in Shiráz in 1845. After a brief period of freedom in Isfahán, the Báb was arrested again and sent to Tabríz in the north west of Persia. Despite His imprisonment in Tabríz and two remote mountain fortresses, His popularity continued to grow.

The Báb was questioned at an inconclusive trial in Tabriz in July 1848, attended by the Crown Prince and numerous local clergy. Despite pressure from the government for a lenient judgment, a prominent local cleric condemned the Báb to death. It wasn't until two years later that the sentence was carried out, and the Báb was brought back to Tabríz to be executed by firing squad.



The barracks where the Báb was martyred

On the morning of 17 Rahmat in the Bahá'í year 7, 1850, the Báb was conversing with His secretary in the prison cell where He had been held overnight, and was interrupted by the guards who had come with orders to take Him to be executed. The Báb told them that no earthly power could silence Him until He had finished what He needed to say to His secretary. Ignoring this, the guards took Him from His cell into the barrack square.

Hundreds of the citizens of Tabríz awaited the spectacle of His execution. The Báb and one of His followers, Anís, a young man who begged for the privilege of being martyred with Him, were suspended by ropes against a wall. A large firing squad of 750 Christian soldiers formed ranks in readiness to shoot them; when the order to fire was given, each rank in turn opened fire. To the crowd's amazement when the smoke cleared, the Báb had disappeared and Anís stood before them alive, untouched by the bullets.

After a frantic search the guards found the Báb back in His cell, still conversing with His secretary. This time He told the guards that He had finished His conversation and He was now ready to be taken back to the courtyard.

The officer commanding the Christian soldiers refused to take part in the second attempt to execute the Báb and marched his regiment out of Tabríz. Instead, a firing squad of Muslim soldiers was lined up and ordered to fire. Now when the smoke cleared, both the Báb and His companion were seen to be dead. The assault had been so fierce that in death their bodies were mingled together. Despite the hail of bullets, however, the Báb's face was entirely untouched.

Before He was martyred the Báb addressed the people in the courtyard:

'Had you believed in Me, O wayward generation, every one of you would have followed the example of this youth, who stood in rank above most of you, and willingly would have sacrificed himself in My path. The day will come when you will have recognised Me; that day I shall have ceased to be with you.'

Every year in July, Bahá'ís meet in their communities to commemorate the life and martyrdom of the Báb. A special prayer of Bahá'u'lláh called the Tablet of Visitation is read, as are other prayers and readings. Often food and music are shared and work is suspended on this sacred day.

9 July when Naw-Rúz is 20 March and 10 July when Naw-Rúz is 21 March.

