

# Hands of the Cause of God

Volume II



Martha Root



Dr. Rahmatu'llāh  
Muhājir



Enoch Olinga

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# **Hands of the Cause of God**

## **Volume II**

**Martha Root**

**Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir**

**Enoch Olinga**

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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to the rising generation of youth throughout the world who are striving to respond to the call of the Universal House of Justice to build a new type of community based upon justice, unity, and the love of God. May they be inspired and sustained by the example of the lives of these three Hands of the Cause of God, these immortal servants of the Blessed Perfection.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their profound appreciation for all the individuals who assisted with researching, writing, editing, proofreading, and producing this short work. In particular, we would like to record our grateful thanks to the following individuals.

Our deepest gratitude goes to Mrs. Irán Furutan Muhájir. She not only wrote the full-length biography of her beloved husband from which our brief article draws its content. She also took the time to review and provide detailed feedback on the original draft of this short story.

Mr. Alí Nakhjavání most graciously read and commented upon the story of Enoch Olinga, his spiritual comrade from the early days of the Faith in Uganda. He thereby improved the work significantly. That he did so at age ninety-six — and within a few hours after receiving an unsolicited email requesting his assistance — demonstrated a standard of excellence and service that we will remember always, and to which all may aspire.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the Bahá'í World Centre for providing and permitting the use of the photographs of the Hands of the Cause. Brent Poirier gave generously of his time to provide valuable suggestions for improving the texts of the stories. Nancy Robarts kindly shared with us her photograph of the resting place of Enoch Olinga. Alice Williams once again meticulously and beautifully added color to the original black and white photographs. We would also like to thank Taraz and Amelia Mahony for conscientiously proofreading the final versions of the stories.

Above and beyond all else, the purpose of this book is to call to mind the shining example of utter devotion, joyous sacrifice, and complete dedication to the teaching of the Faith exemplified by these three Hands of the Cause: Miss Martha Root, whom the Guardian referred to as “the Leader of men and women teachers” and the “foremost Hand” raised up by the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; Dr. Rahmatu’lláh Muhájir, Knight of Bahá’u’lláh, called by Shoghi Effendi “a true pioneer”; and Enoch Olinga, designated the “Father of

Victories” by his beloved Guardian for his outstanding services in opening multiple countries in Africa to the Faith.

May these great souls assist, from their everlasting retreats in the Concourse on High, all who arise to serve the Cause of God.



## Introduction to the Hands of the Cause of God

The Hands of the Cause of God had a very special role in history: their lives were completely focused on spreading and protecting the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh gave this title to four wonderful believers in Persia (modern day Iran). By giving this title, He raised them to a high position of service. These four souls helped the friends in Persia to teach the Faith and expand its influence, even though there were great dangers and difficulties. They also prepared the way for the first administrative institution in the Bahá'í world: the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tehran.

Following the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, the Hands helped the believers understand that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the Centre of the Covenant and that they needed to obey Him. In this way, the Hands protected the Faith from the forces of disunity and division.

'Abdu'l-Bahá did not appoint any living person as a Hand. However, He did mention that certain outstanding believers had reached that station; He only did this after they had died. Before passing away, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a very important document—His Will and Testament. In this document, 'Abdu'l-Bahá outlined the role and function of the Hands, and gave Shoghi Effendi, as the Guardian of the Faith, the authority to appoint new Hands and to direct their activities. In particular, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote:

*“The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God are to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things. They must manifest the fear of God by their conduct, their manners, their deeds and their words.”*

During the time he was Guardian, Shoghi Effendi appointed thirty-two individuals as Hands of the Cause of God. When Shoghi Effendi passed away in 1957, twenty-seven Hands were still alive. These wonderful souls faithfully guided the Bahá'í world through one of the

most difficult periods in its history. They protected the Bahá'í Faith from people who tried to divide the believers, and they prepared the Bahá'ís to elect the Universal House of Justice in 1963. The House of Justice has best expressed the importance of that service:

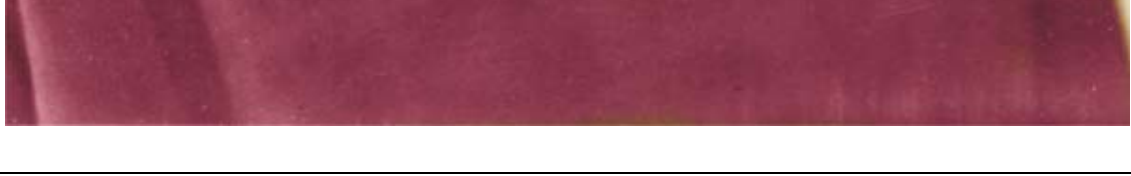
*“The entire history of religion shows no comparable record of such strict self-discipline, such absolute loyalty, and such complete self-abnegation by the leaders of a religion finding themselves suddenly deprived of their divinely inspired guide. The debt of gratitude which mankind for generations, nay, ages to come, owes to this handful of grief-stricken, steadfast, heroic souls is beyond estimation.”*

The following pages tell the stories of three of those beloved souls: Martha Root, Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir, and Enoch Olinga.

# Hand of the Cause of God Martha Root

by **Vered Ehsani**





## *Hand of the Cause of God Martha Root.*

### **An adventurous woman**

Imagine a young lady with an adventurous spirit and a creative intelligence, yearning to use her talents and travel the world. Now, imagine that she is born in an era when women did not have many options outside the household and family life. It was an era in which women did not pursue higher education or careers.

Such was the case for Martha Root. Born in 1872, she refused to be limited by the social norms and culture of her time.

Martha had decided early on in her life never to marry, as an accident had left her unable to have children. This was an unusual decision for a woman to make. She also was not fond of sewing, knitting, cooking, and other pursuits typical of her female contemporaries.

Not discouraged by the limited options available for women, she decided she would pursue higher education. While very few women went beyond high school, she persuaded her parents to send her to college in 1889 where she studied languages and literature.



*A young Miss Martha Root.*

## **Career and service**

She was eventually hired by a newspaper and thus began a career in journalism. This also was not common for women, as the newspaper business was male-dominated. Yet that did not hinder Martha from succeeding in her profession. Soon, others noted her skills, and she was offered a series of jobs, each one of which further developed her capacities.

These earlier experiences as a journalist, coupled with her diverse interests and her extensive networks, would later be of great assistance in her efforts to share the Bahá'í Faith. Her determination to overcome social and physical constraints, combined with her deep faith and reliance on God, would earn her a unique place in Bahá'í history.







*Portrait of the Hand of the Cause of God Martha Root.*

### **A new life begins**

In 1908, a chance meeting in a crowded restaurant changed her life. Martha and some friends were engaged in a conversation regarding religion. A man sitting near their table made an interesting comment about the topic. Intrigued, Martha gave him her card.

The man – Roy Wilhelm – sent her a Bahá'í book which she did not bother reading. They met up a few months later. He taught her about the Bahá'í Faith and gave her another book. She was reluctant at first to read the literature he sent, but eventually decided to investigate.

In 1909, she became a Bahá'í. Her first act was to write an extensive article about the Faith for her newspaper.

### **Roar like a lion**



When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to America in 1912, Martha was eager to see Him. She attended many of the meetings in the New York and Washington areas. She also had the privilege of two private interviews with Him. Imagine meeting the Son of Bahá’u’lláh and the Centre of the Covenant! Martha Root was deeply affected by these encounters.

Just before He left the USA, He told the Bahá’ís: *“Your efforts must be lofty. Exert yourselves with heart and soul so that, perchance, through your efforts the light of universal peace may shine.”*

How those words must have inspired her! All the zeal, energy, fearlessness, creativity, perseverance, dedication, intelligence, and ingenuity she had directed into her journalism career was now channeled into her new work for the Bahá’í Faith. Added to her already impressive qualities were her newfound and utter reliance on God, coupled with her absolute belief that everyone had the right to hear this Message.

When she met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1912 during His North America visit, Martha submitted a proposal for an extended international teaching trip. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá agreed to the plan, on the condition that Martha continue to receive a salary from her employer.

Thus was launched a lifetime of travel. Martha Root dedicated her every waking moment to teaching the Faith throughout the world, in both hemispheres, to every person from every background, be they a farmer or a queen. While as a young woman she had sought out adventure for the thrill of it, she now embarked on great adventures with a purpose: to share with all she met the message of Bahá’u’lláh.

The Bahá’í world knows Martha Root as one of the foremost teachers of the Bahá’í Faith, a Hand of the Cause of God who, despite her health problems and numerous other challenges, travelled the world several times over to spread the message of Bahá’u’lláh.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá had requested Martha Root *“...to travel... to the different parts of the globe, and roar like unto a lion.”* And that is what she did.



*Martha Root and Agnes Alexander with Mr. Fukuta, the first Bahá'í in Tokyo, Japan (seated on Martha's right), July 18, 1915.*

### **A dangerous crossing**

There are so many stories about Martha Root's travels. One memorable journey occurred in the winter of 1919. As a direct response to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets of the Divine Plan, Martha boldly decided to take the Message of Bahá'u'lláh up the west coast of South America, across the Andes and into Panama.

This was a very dangerous undertaking. The passage through the Andes was treacherous at the best of times, but it was particularly risky in winter. Many of her friends and colleagues tried to discourage her from the trip. They told her stories of snowstorms, frozen faces, and frostbitten fingers. A newspaper described the journey in this way: "If

you would consider riding around the edge of the Woolworth building (a very tall building) when it is covered with ice and snow a safe pastime, then have no fears regarding the inconveniences in crossing the Andes in winter.”

Martha Root took no heed to the warnings. She had made her decision, and she placed her trust in God to assist her.

From Buenos Aires, she took a train for part of the journey. A landslide blocked the next section of the trip where she was supposed to travel by car. Of course, that did not stop her at all. She rode on a mule through the mountains with other travelers. While some may have admired the spectacular, top-of-the-world view, or complained of the cold, or worried about the steep mountainsides and the numerous other dangers, Martha prayed the Greatest Name:

“To pray the Greatest Name among these minarets of God is to glimpse the glory of the Eternal, Unknowable... Everybody felt very small and a wonderful feeling of camaraderie sprang up.”

This doesn’t mean that Martha Root was immune to the cold or the fears that plagued the group. The trip was so bitterly cold that, as Martha explained, “I wore three suits of woolen underwear, two sweaters, two coats and a steamer rug, and then nearly froze to death.”

At one point, a storm forced them to detour into a dark, slippery tunnel. The mules were not the only ones nervous inside the lightless, confined place. Martha prayed continuously in that passage through the rock. One of the other travelers would shout through the dark to check that she was all right.

After exiting the tunnel, the travelers were relieved, believing that the worst portion of the trip over the mountains was now behind them. Instead, the most treacherous part of the journey had just begun. As they began their descent, the route became so narrow and steep that everyone had to dismount for fear that the mules would slip off of the ledge. At some points, the slope was so steep that they could barely walk without sliding down.



*Martha Root and Shirin Fozdar in India 1938.*

Most travelers would wish to rest after such an ordeal, but not Martha! She considered every minute precious, and not to be wasted. She feared losing any chance to share the wonderful news about the Bahá'í Faith. After the climb down the mountains, she used the four-hour stopover in Valparaiso City to ensure that articles were provided for the local newspapers to publish.

### **Using every opportunity**

While on the ship sailing up the west coast of South America, Martha viewed every port visit as an opportunity to meet new people and deliver Bahá'í materials and newspaper articles. During a three-hour stop near Lima, Peru, Martha wanted to provide letters of introduction to a newspaper owner, a senator, and two physicians. The time was

impossibly tight, but nothing seemed impossible to that spiritual adventurer.

Placing her confidence in God, Martha boarded an electric tram in Lima and miraculously met two young English-speaking Peruvians. They willingly took her to meet the manager of a renowned hotel. The manager in turn offered to deliver the letters of introduction, along with Bahá'í booklets and newspaper articles, to all four people she had wanted to meet. Her task completed, she returned to the ship.

Later on, during the five-day trip from Panama to Havana, she asked the captain for permission to give a presentation on the Bahá'í Faith. This was the only program provided on that portion of the trip. It happened only because she made her own opportunities rather than waiting for them to arrive. She did so in the spirit of faith and service to the Cause of God.

As she explains, “If anyone feels timid about asking for opportunities to speak, let him remember that no day comes twice to any servant in the Cause, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said to ‘*roar like a lion the Words of God*’ and ‘*sing like a bird the Melodies of the Kingdom*’. The great heart will not falter — and the world is ready!”

## **Cradle of the Faith**

In January 1930, Martha Root fulfilled a dream of hers: she travelled through Iraq to Iran, where she stayed for four months. How excited she was at the prospect of spending time in the Cradle of the Faith, the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh! While a prolonged pilgrimage was very exciting, it was not without dangers. Great care was needed, for the government did not look favorably upon the Faith.





*Governor and mayor of Adrianople, Turkey, with Martha Root (front row, third from left) and Marion Jack (front row, far right).*

Martha experienced an indication of the intolerance at the border to Iran. Customs officials informed her that she would have to burn any Bahá'í books she carried with her. Fortunately, she had known this might happen and had not brought any.

To avoid attracting attention, Shoghi Effendi had requested that only the spiritual assemblies meet Martha during her travels through Iran. Large crowds could raise hostility amongst officials and religious clergy. Despite this request, people could not help themselves. Many had heard of her trip. She would be met by hundreds of people wherever she went, including people of other religions. Upon arriving in Qazvin, for example, forty-five cars filled with Bahá'ís escorted her!

In Tehran, she had to be particularly careful as there was much prejudice against the Bahá'í Faith. She stayed in a hotel owned by

Bahá'ís. No one could visit her until the owners had met the visitors first and ensured that they were not planning any harm against Martha. Despite the very real risk of hostile actions against her, Martha Root settled into her normal routine of public lectures and journalistic work. She interviewed various heads of government and sent the articles for publishing to numerous newspapers.

Martha was also able to make a pilgrimage to the site of the martyrdom of the Báb in Tabriz. Once there, the Chief of Police and the Commander-in-Chief of the army invited her to a garden party. Oddly enough, they sat beneath the window of the cell in which the Báb had spent the last of His earthly hours. Not one to miss an opportunity, Martha taught both men about the Faith and arranged for literature to be sent to them.



*Martha Root at the House of the Báb in Shiraz, Iran. May 4, 1930.*

Her pilgrimage did not end there, for she also visited the House in Shiraz where the Báb had first declared His mission. When she saw the House, she fell to her knees and said through her tears, “To think that such a great message should have come from such a small House!”

Government officials in Shiraz treated her like royalty, and she was able to give public talks to the city’s residents. However, the mullas (religious teachers) of Shiraz were not happy about her presence at all. The most important mulla preached against her in the mosque, but Martha was not worried in the least. She explains why:

“I did not feel afraid at all, for I had a vision in the House of the Báb, and Bahá’u’lláh told me He would protect me... I lectured each day, and in Shiraz I spoke before many Moslems at each lecture. There were 1,100 men present at the meeting in one Garden in Shiraz.”

Despite the overall difficulties for the Bahá’ís in Iran, Martha Root was welcomed everywhere she went. In Bushire, a military major invited her to visit the hospitals in the city. How surprised he was to discover that most of the staff were Bahá’ís!

Nonetheless, it was not the safest part of her travels. Fearless as she was, she did take a few precautions, for example flying to Bushire rather than driving — the mullas had been watching for her on the roads. Upon leaving the country, she boarded her ship at three in the morning to avoid being seen, and locked herself in her room until the ship left port.

Reflecting on her experiences in Iran, she wrote:

“Persia, blessed Land of Bahá’u’lláh, I lived a lifetime in those four months... Many times each day now, I stop and thank Bahá’u’lláh for the journey through Persia. I thank Him that through His Bounty and Favour this servant came safely. Step by step was the inner drama, I do not like to say I was sometimes afraid.”

Afraid at times, yes, but that did not stop her from going ahead with her mission.





*Martha Root with Iranian Bahá'ís in Isfahan. April 25, 1930.*

## **Challenging times**

It may be difficult for us to truly appreciate the many challenges she faced and overcame.

She experienced recurring bouts of illness. Her often painful physical ailments caused by long-term cancer left her greatly weakened, and she was prone to other health issues. When told to rest, she would reply, "I do not rest here. I rest in action, and my most perfect rest and joy would be to teach."

Travel was not easy in those days. Nowadays, we can journey across a continent or even the world in relative comfort and speed. For Martha Root, her trips were seldom as smooth. A number of times, she suffered the wrath of a stormy ocean passage and had to remain in her room, afflicted by seasickness. Other times, she sat huddled on a mule's back or in a carriage rumbling over rocky roads. While cars became more common over time, the roads they drove over were often bumpy and rough.

She was constantly moving from place to place, having given up long before the idea of having a home of her own. Instead, home was wherever she unpacked her suitcases. She was not a wealthy woman and had to rely on a small amount of funds to do the work, purchase tickets, and pay for food and lodging.

Her days were long, full of writing articles, giving talks and interviews, and corresponding through handwritten letters with her ever-growing network of friends and contacts.

In the twenty-first century, a woman can travel alone to most places in the world. Back then though, in Martha Root's time, traveling as a single woman without an escort or companion was universally frowned upon. Women did not travel much, and if they did, they had someone else with them, usually a male relative or husband.

Despite these significant challenges, Martha Root was determined to share the Bahá'í message. She placed her reliance in God and traveled until the day she died. Even as she lay dying from her illness, she refused to neglect her teaching work and other commitments. Perhaps this is why Shoghi Effendi stated in a talk given to pilgrims, "Martha Root is a hero and a saint."





*Photograph of Hands of the Cause of God Martha Root and Agnes Alexander. Japan.*



## An inspiration

In a letter written to the Bahá'ís of Iran, Shoghi Effendi referred to Martha Root as "...the Leader of men and women teachers... this unique believer with an astonishing power and matchless courage and constancy..."

Upon her passing, Shoghi Effendi cabled the following message:

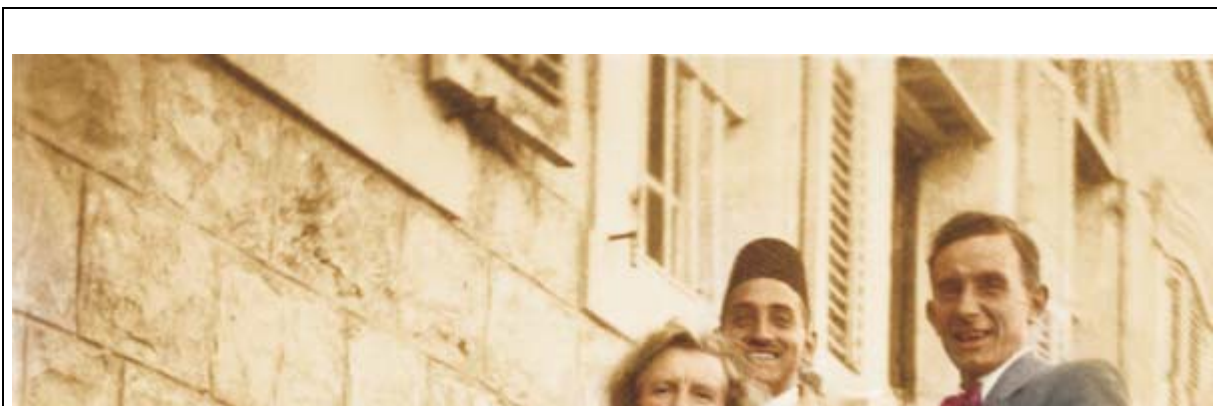
“POSTERITY WILL ESTABLISH HER AS FOREMOST HAND WHICH ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S WILL HAS RAISED UP FIRST BAHÁ’Í CENTURY. PRESENT GENERATION HER FELLOW-BELIEVERS RECOGNIZE HER FIRST FINEST FRUIT FORMATIVE AGE FAITH BAHÁ’U’LLÁH HAS AS YET PRODUCED.”

As to her passing from this world into the next, Shoghi Effendi described it in these awe-inspiring words:

“The Concourse on High received her with the shouts: *‘Welcome O Glory of Teachers! Well done, well done, O Thou who hast sacrificed thine all in thine attraction to the Kingdom...’*”

He reminds us that Martha Root is “... a source of continued inspiration to the present-day and future generations of Bahá’í teachers, to whom she will indeed ever be the very embodiment of those teaching qualities which only a few Bahá’í teachers, whether in the East or the West, can claim to have attained.”

May we all be inspired!





*Martha Root in Haifa with fellow pilgrims, 1925.*

Hand of the Cause of God Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir

by **Tarrant Mahony**







*Hand of the Cause of God Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir.*

### **A life of service**

Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir was born into a dedicated Bahá'í family on 4 April, 1923, in Tehran, Iran. His family's home was a center of Bahá'í activity, and he grew up listening to distinguished Bahá'ís teaching the Faith to seekers. From childhood, Rahmatu'lláh dreamt of the day that he could do the same. His future father-in-law, Hand of the Cause of God Mr. Furútan, said that even as a young boy Rahmatu'lláh “constantly asked me questions about the Faith and brought his non-Bahá'í friends to the firesides where I spoke.”

As he grew older, Rahmatu'lláh's love for the Faith also grew. An energetic teenager, he had many friends, and his enthusiasm for the Faith influenced them. He spent most of his time helping to organize Bahá'í activities, although he did not try to conduct them himself. Rather, he encouraged others to serve while he remained in the background. His mother said that she always had to prepare extra food as her son very rarely came home without bringing his friends.





*Portrait Picture of the Hand of the Cause of God Rahmatu'lláh  
Muhájir.*

At the age of sixteen, Rahmatu'lláh began traveling around Iran to visit as many Bahá'í Holy Places as he could. He went to every site visited

by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and every city where a “Dawn-Breaker” had been martyred. Friends who joined him in these travels remember how they would arrive late at night at the place where they were to stay, exhausted after a long day’s hiking and climbing. While the others wished to sleep, Rahmatu'lláh continued to read about the history of the Faith into the early hours of the morning.

After graduating from high school, he began to encourage his fellow youth to take a year off from studies in order to serve the Faith full time. He believed that a year in the life of an eighteen-year old was only significant if it was spent in service to the Faith. A youth could always go back later to his or her studies, often with a clearer and more mature understanding of the importance of education, but he or she could never recapture the opportunity to serve.

In 1944, he followed his own advice. Although he had been admitted to medical school at the University of Tehran, he left his studies to serve for two years in a city in Azerbaijan.

After two years, he returned to medical school where he graduated with honors. In his college years, he spent as much time as possible participating in Bahá'í activities. Friends warned him to pay more attention to his classes, but he would smile and say, “Don’t worry, Bahá'u'lláh will take better care of my studies.”



*Hand of the Cause of God Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir with his wife Iran and daughter Gisu.*

### **The countenance of the beloved Guardian**

Dr. Muhájir married Iran Furútan in 1951. Soon after, he and his young wife had the blessing of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. They arrived in 1953, just as the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, was launching the Ten Year Crusade.

The purpose of the Ten Year Crusade was to establish the Faith in every part of the world, in accordance with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. When the Guardian talked about the goals of the Crusade, his enthusiasm and spiritual energy created in others a burning desire to arise and serve. Speaking with Dr. Muhájir, the Guardian emphasized

the receptivity of the people in Southeast Asia and radiated with joy when he talked about the Ten Year Plan goals in the Indonesian islands.

Having the bounty of praying at the Holy Shrines increased Dr. Muhájir's love for the Guardian a thousand-fold. In the guest book in the Mansion of Bahji, he wrote: "I offer humble thanks to the Threshold of the Beloved, who granted me the immense bounty to behold the beauty of the Báb, the majesty of Bahá'u'lláh, and the kindness and hospitality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the countenance of the beloved Guardian."

Dr. Muhájir prayed for hours at the Shrines, begging Bahá'u'lláh to make him worthy to offer some small service in His path. How he longed to be able to fulfill the wishes of his beloved Guardian! His prayers were soon confirmed in the most extraordinary manner.

### **Determined to assist his Lord**

One of the goals of the Ten Year Global Crusade was the Mentawai Islands, a small group of islands off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. The goal had been assigned to Australia, but no one was able to go. Dr. Muhájir wrote to the Continental Pioneering Committee for Asia, volunteering to go anywhere. He and his wife were ready to go as soon as needed, and the climate and living conditions did not matter at all.

Shortly thereafter, they received the news that they were asked to go to the Mentawai Islands. They accepted immediately, even though they had absolutely no idea where this was, or what kind of place the Mentawai Islands were.



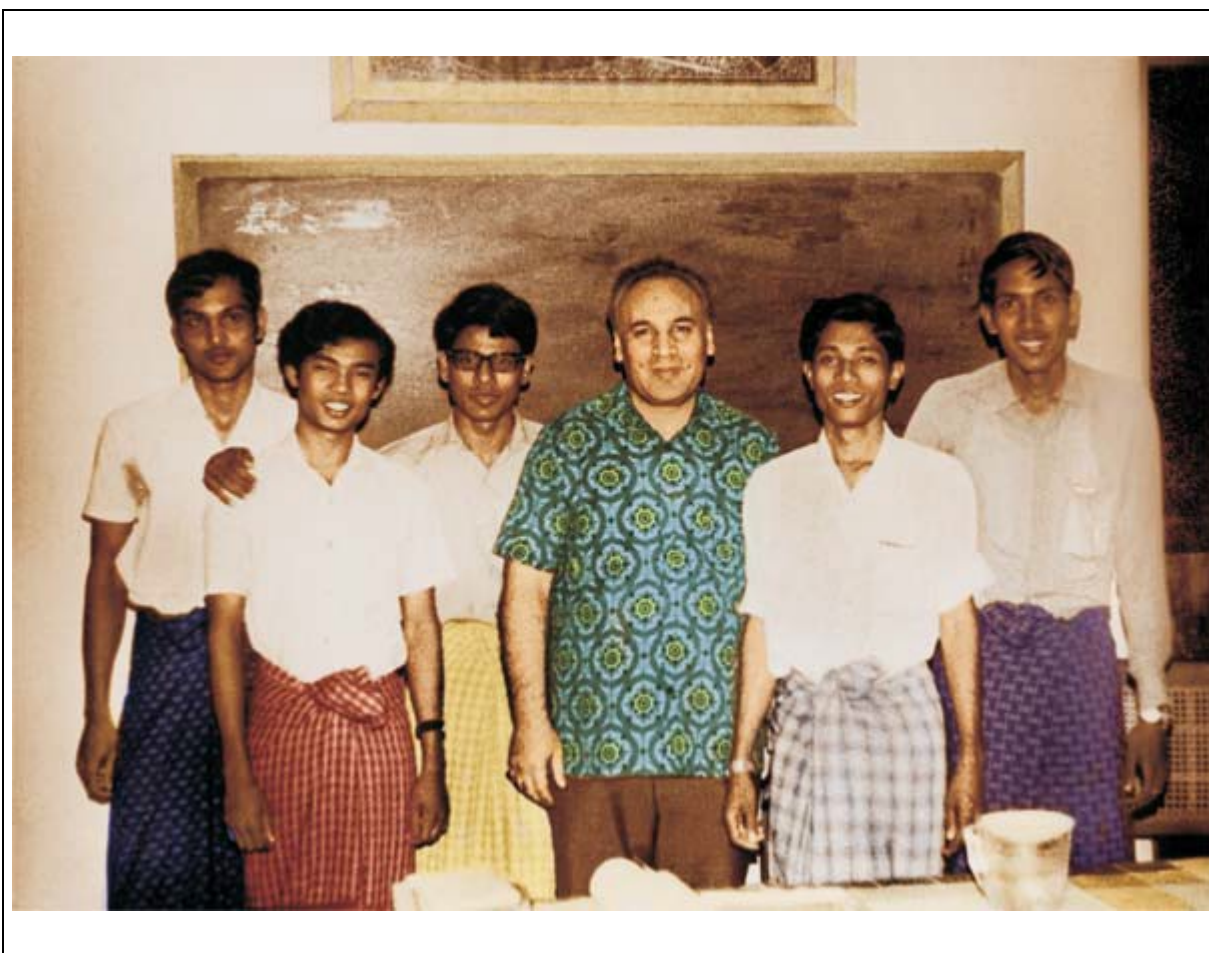


*Hands of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga and Rahmatu'lláh  
Muhájir. Haifa, Israel. 1973.*

Dr. Muhájir shared with the International Goals Committee in Tehran their intention to pioneer to the Mentawais. However, that committee advised them not to go, saying that they were too young, inexperienced, and without the means of support in an unknown foreign land.

Since Dr. Muhájir had a well-paying job as a doctor at a prestigious hospital in Isfahan, the committee suggested they stay for now and go somewhere else later when they had more resources and experience. It was logical and well-meaning advice — but Dr. Muhájir was never one to be dissuaded from service to the Faith. He immediately requested a meeting with the National Spiritual Assembly which approved the young couple's pioneering plans and offered its prayers for their success.

Before the meeting with the National Assembly, Dr. Muhájir had a dream of Bahá'u'lláh. In it, the Blessed Beauty was walking in the streets of Tehran, carrying a very large, rolled carpet on His shoulders. Dr. Muhájir silently went behind Him and took up one end of the carpet. Bahá'u'lláh turned, smiled, and expressed His delight that the young man was helping Him with His burden.



*Hand of the Cause of God Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir with friends during his last visit to Mandalay Burma. 7 March, 1973.*

### **Knight of Bahá'u'lláh**

Friends and family advised Dr. Muhájir to buy roundtrip tickets, but he instead bought one-way tickets to Jakarta. He believed that Bahá'u'lláh would open all the doors. He felt that round-trip tickets would give a sense of security and make them want to leave at the first difficulty or discomfort. He knew there would be challenges, but he believed that patience and perseverance would bring their own rewards. He wanted his pioneering post to be his home.

Having finally arrived in Jakarta after a long and difficult flight via Karachi and Bangkok, Dr. Muhájir wasted no time in achieving his purpose. The very next morning, he went to the Ministry of Health to

seek work that would provide a visa. As it happened, there was a shortage of doctors in Indonesia! The Deputy Minister of Health happily offered him a comfortable job as a government physician in a coastal resort city, complete with house, servants, car and driver.

But the city was a few hundred miles from the Mentawai Islands. Dr. Muhájir asked if he could go to those islands instead. The Minister was not even aware of the existence of the Mentawais and thought he was joking. By the end of the day, however, Dr. Muhájir had a three-year contract to be the Mentawai Islands' first government doctor. It was undoubtedly a miracle of Bahá'u'lláh.

Dr. Muhájir's first experience of entry by troops was gained while serving the indigenous people of the Mentawais. He had to travel by canoe and then bushwhack his way through the jungles to reach the villages where the natives lived. He served them as a doctor and quickly learned the tribal language so he could share with them the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

On one of these trips, he shared the message of the Faith with a man named Amata Sinanga. Amata Sinanga explained that the Mentawai natives never accepted anything unless it was done collectively with the approval of the village elders. When they arrived in his village, Amata Sinanga called a meeting of the elders and asked the 'Doctor' to talk to them about the Faith.

After a few hours, they took a vote. All agreed that what they had heard was good. Amata Sinanga became the first Bahá'í of the Mentawai Islands. He and the other twenty-four elders formed the core of a community that numbered in the thousands within a few years.

The services of Dr. Muhájir earned the gratitude and praise of Shoghi Effendi who referred to him as a "true pioneer". In his 1957 Ridván message to the Bahá'í world, the Guardian wrote:

"A special tribute, I feel, should be paid...to the heroic band of pioneers, and particularly to the company of the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, who, as a result of their indomitable spirit, courage, steadfastness, and self-abnegation, have achieved in the course of four brief years, in so many of the virgin territories newly opened to His Faith, a measure of success far exceeding the most sanguine expectations... To Uganda, opened on the eve of the Global Crusade,



where the number of the avowed adherents of the Faith has now passed the eleven hundred mark...must now be added Mentawai Islands, where adult Bahá'ís now number over eleven hundred..."

Dr. Muhájir's teaching trips to the villages required trekking in jungles, wading through marshes, and traveling by canoe over rivers and oceans, often done in burning heat and heavy rain. He frequently returned home exhausted after weeks or even months away, his clothes soaked in blood from the bites of leeches that still clung to his body.

Whenever his wife expressed her concern, he simply said it was God's gift as the blood-letting prevented him from getting high blood pressure. For him, the joy of bringing the healing message of Bahá'u'lláh to the pure-hearted people of the Mentawais far exceeded the hardships and sacrifices involved.





*Hand of the Cause of God Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir with pilgrims at the Pilgrim House, Haifa, Israel. May 1972.*

Many years later, Hand of the Cause of God ‘Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánúm asked Dr. Muhájir to share with her his experiences in the Mentawai Islands. He described among other things how the natives wore virtually no clothes and were covered head to foot in tattoos. ‘Amatu’l-Bahá asked if he had told them to put on clothes.

“Of course not,” was his answer, “I did not go there to tell them what to do. I went there to tell them about Bahá’u’lláh.”

### **His life changed forever**

Dr. Muhájir loved the people of the Mentawai Islands intensely. He might have remained there for a lifetime had it not been for the events

of late autumn 1957. In October of that year, the Guardian appointed Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir as a Hand of the Cause of God.

Upon hearing the news, he shut himself in a room for hours and wept constantly. It took him two days of continuous prayer before he could emerge, pale and looking ill, to cable his obedience to the beloved Guardian.

Within a month came more dramatic news. Before Dr. Muhájir had a chance to come to terms with the burden of responsibility placed upon his shoulders, the Bahá'í world received the devastating news of the passing of the beloved Guardian.

According to his wife: "That day changed his life and manner forever. His overflowing humour gave way to a quiet gentleness. The smile so well remembered by his friends was now accompanied by a deep sadness in his eyes. His exuberant optimism gave way to contemplative hope. ... The passing of the Guardian had transformed him into another personality. To the outside world he appeared calm and relaxed, but inwardly he never overcame the loss of the Guardian."

As a Hand of the Cause, Dr. Muhájir was called to London for the funeral of the Guardian. Immediately thereafter, the Hands of the Cause met in Haifa.

They understood the grave danger facing the Cause of God. Without Shoghi Effendi, the "Sign of God on Earth", they were deprived of infallible guidance. The Bahá'ís needed to win all the goals of the Guardian's Crusade and elect the Universal House of Justice. Only then would the Bahá'í world again have an unerring source of divine guidance.

Thus, the Hands of the Cause committed themselves to make any and every sacrifice necessary to ensure the accomplishment of every goal of the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade. That commitment was crowned with success when the Universal House of Justice was elected in 1963.

When Dr. Muhájir returned to Indonesia, another event happened that highlighted the importance of his new role as a Hand of the Cause of God. An International Bahá'í Conference was to be held in Jakarta in 1958. As per the guidance of the Guardian, Dr. Muhájir advised the

friends to be cautious. Islamic fundamentalism was rising in the country, and he told the friends to avoid any publicity.

However, while he was on a teaching trip in Java, several other friends felt that the Conference was an opportunity to proclaim the Faith. They began an extensive media campaign in newspapers, radio and on TV. Soon, this publicity awakened opposition to the Faith. The permit for the Conference was revoked, and within a few years the Faith itself was banned in Indonesia.

The wisdom of Dr. Muhájir's advice was clear, but so was the need for his presence among the friends. His role in protecting and propagating the Faith as a Hand of the Cause of God outweighed his role as a pioneer. Sadly, but with a clear vision, the Muhájirs left the Mentawai Islands for a broader field of service.

### **The power of movement and action**

For the next twenty years, until his untimely death in 1979, Dr. Muhájir traveled on an almost continual basis. The dramatic expansion of the Bahá'í community in country after country during this period often benefited from Dr. Muhájir's endeavors.



*Hand of the Cause of God Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir with the first National Spiritual Assembly of Togo.*

India was a dramatic example of his impact. When he first visited, India had less than one thousand Bahá'ís living in a handful of communities. Twenty years later, it had thousands of communities, and over one million Bahá'ís. Throughout that period, Dr. Muhájir was closely involved in all aspects of the teaching and administrative activities in the Bahá'í world. In particular, he drew the attention of the friends to the importance of teaching the tribal and indigenous peoples of the world. He himself frequently led teaching teams to open new areas.

Dr. Muhájir shared his thoughts with a group of youth in Malaysia:  
“For the Faith to spread around the world, the greatest power is the power of movement and action. Only when we are a part of this movement will the bounty of Bahá’u’lláh be with us. Prayer is essential but simply sitting at home and saying prayers when one has the ability to move is not enough. We must move. Sincerity and action are the two qualities needed for success in the promotion of the Faith.”

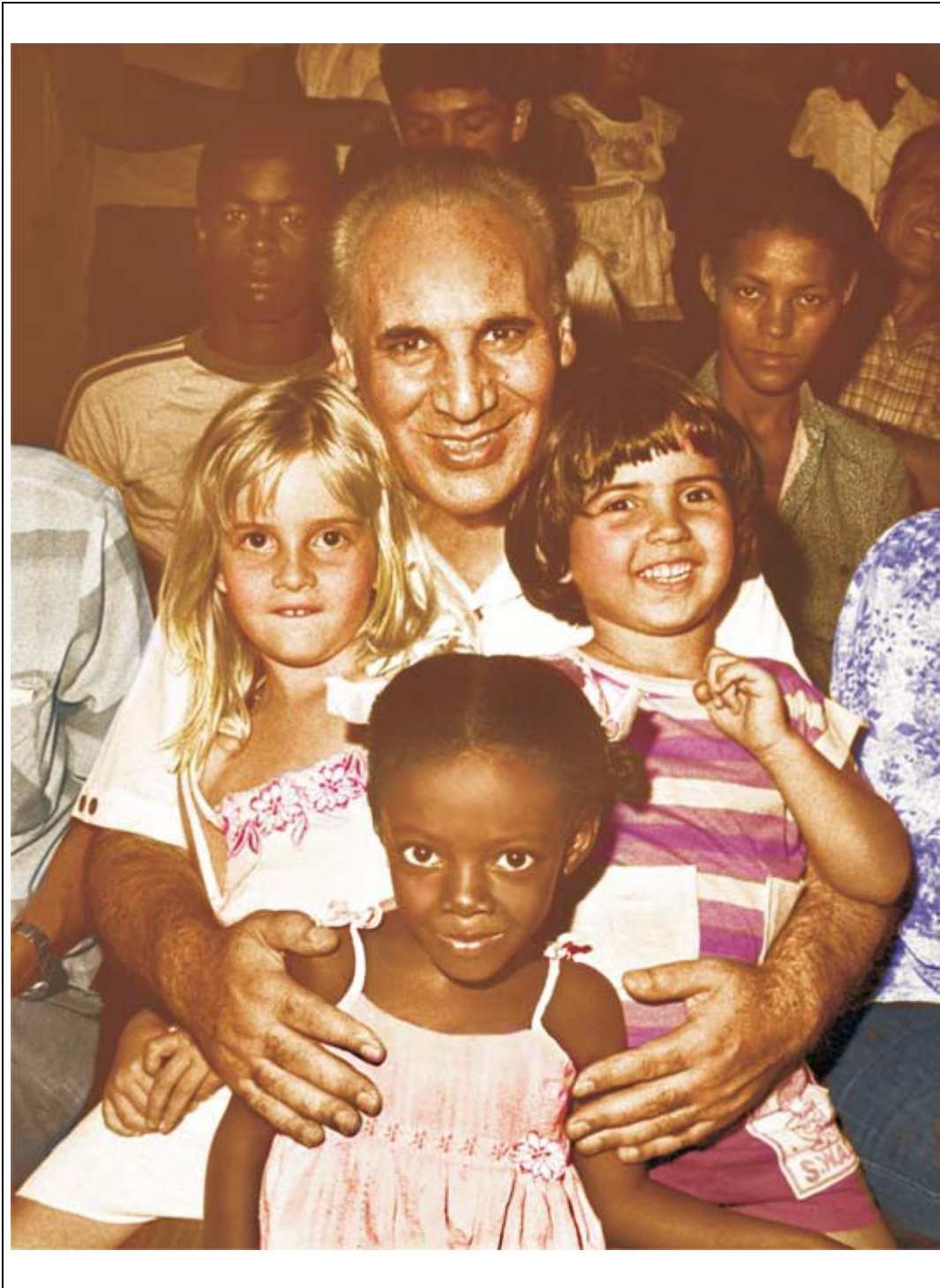




*Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir with Mazco Kucel, a Bahá'í from Mexico,  
1977.*

Perhaps the life of Dr. Muhájir can best be understood as a whole-hearted response to the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

“O that I could travel, even though on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of ‘Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá’ in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans, promote the divine teachings! This, alas, I cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may achieve it.”



*Hand of the Cause of God in Bahia, Lauro de Fretas, Brazil 1979.*

**Seated with the friends, relaxed and laughing**

On 29 December 1979, the Hand of the Cause Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir passed away while attending a teaching conference in Ecuador. Years earlier, his wife had expressed her concern about the many flights he took on airplanes of questionable quality, and the high risk of a fatal accident. He calmed her worries away and said he was quite certain that his death would come when he was seated with the friends, relaxed and laughing.

True enough, on the final morning of his earthly life, he spoke briefly to the pioneer conference. He was happy and joking with his dear friends, surrounded by many of the indigenous Bahá'ís of Ecuador and devoted pioneers whom he loved so much. Then, he quietly left the room, "smiling as if he might have seen someone he wanted to greet." When it became clear to the friends that he was not well, a doctor was called. To the nervous doctor, he said, "Don't be afraid. Death is nothing to be afraid of." Shortly thereafter, he several times uttered, "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá." And then, he was gone.

Upon his passing, the Universal House of Justice sent a cable to the Bahá'í world lamenting Dr. Muhájir's "untimely passing":

PROFOUNDLY LAMENT UNTIMELY PASSING ... BELOVED  
HAND CAUSE RAHMATU'LLÁH MUHÁJIR ... UNSTINTED  
UNRESTRAINED OUTPOURING OF PHYSICAL SPIRITUAL  
ENERGY BY ONE WHO OFFERED HIS ALL PATH SERVICE  
NOW CEASED ... POSTERITY WILL RECORD HIS DEVOTED  
SERVICES YOUTHFUL YEARS CRADLE FAITH HIS  
SUBSEQUENT UNIQUE EXPLOITS PIONEERING FIELD  
SOUTH-EAST ASIA WHERE HE WON ACCOLADE  
KNIGHTHOOD BAHÁ'U'LLÁH HIS CEASELESS EFFORTS  
OVER TWO DECADES SINCE HIS APPOINTMENT HAND  
CAUSE STIMULATING IN MANY LANDS EAST WEST  
PROCESS ENTRY BY TROOPS ... FRIENDS ALL CONTINENTS  
WHO MOURN THIS TRAGIC LOSS NOW SUDDENLY  
DEPRIVED COLLABORATION ONE WHO ENDEARED HIMSELF  
TO THEM THROUGH HIS GENTLENESS HIS LUMINOUS  
PERSONALITY HIS EXEMPLARY UNFLAGGING ZEAL HIS  
CREATIVE ENTHUSIASTIC APPROACH TO FULFILMENT  
ASSIGNED GOALS...





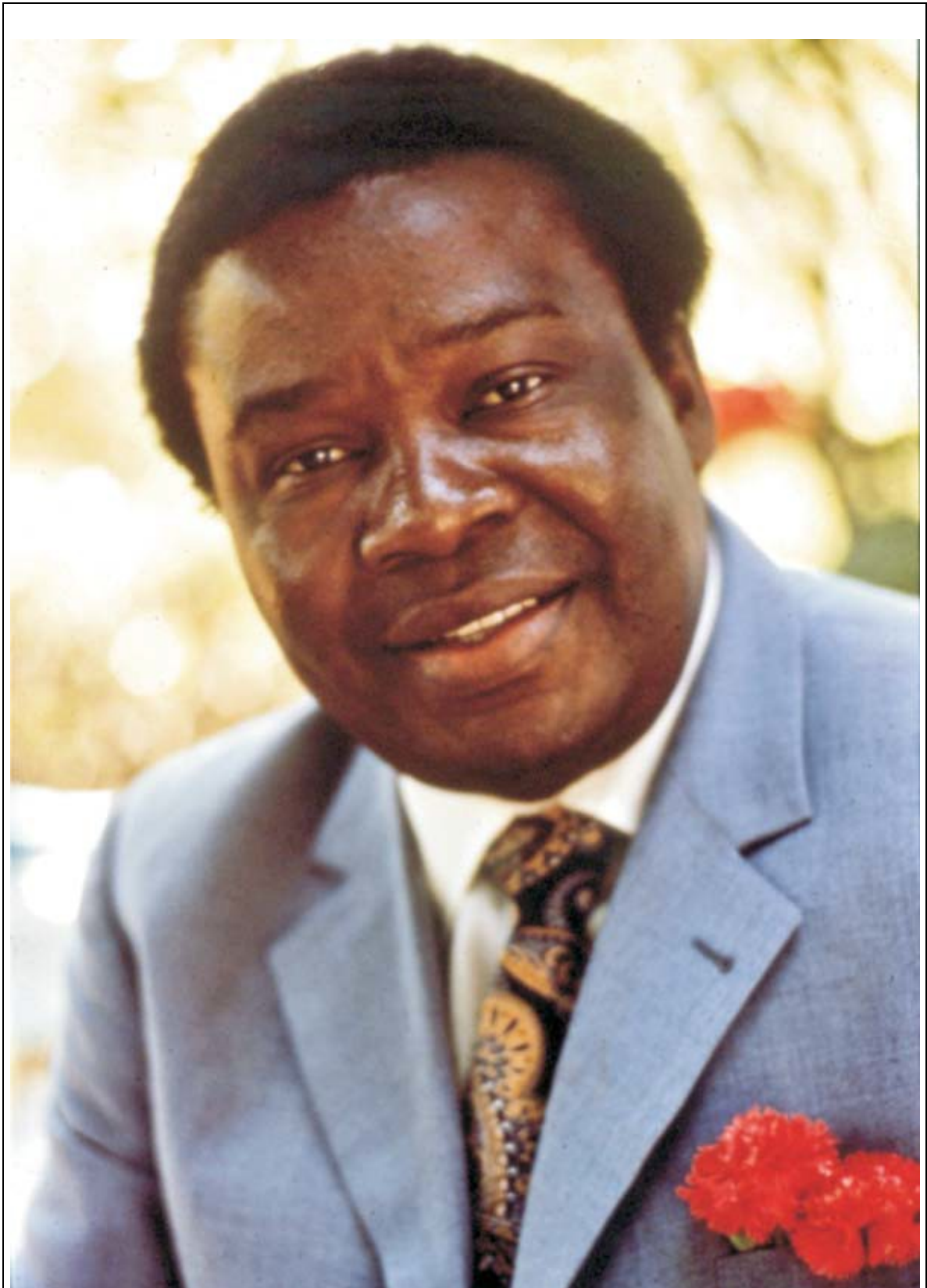
*Hand of the Cause of God Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir.*





# Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga

by **Elika Mahony**





*Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga.*

### **Father of Victories, Knight of Bahá'u'lláh**

“Like sunshine bursting through the clouds...” This is how one friend described Enoch Olinga. No doubt this captured the experience of many people who met this unique soul. His radiant personality endeared him to multitudes, and his services won him the praise of Shoghi Effendi. This short account tells the story of the one whom the Guardian designated “the Father of Victories”.



*Enoch Olinga as a young translator (around 1952).*

## **How Enoch Olinga became a Bahá'í**

Born on 24 June, 1926, Enoch Olinga came from a devout Christian family. He was the third Ugandan to accept Bahá'u'lláh and the first of the Teso tribe.

Enoch Olinga heard about the Faith in 1951 from a friend. This friend introduced him to 'Alí Nakhjavání who had pioneered to Uganda with his family and his parents-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Musa Banání.

Eager to learn more about the Bahá'í Faith, Enoch Olinga began attending the regular dawn meetings at the Banání home in Kampala. He later started to read extensively about the Faith and thus began a lifelong love of reading the Writings.

In February 1952, Mr. and Mrs. Banání went on pilgrimage. On behalf of the Bahá'í group in Kampala, they asked the beloved Guardian for prayers in the Holy Shrines at exactly the same time that the pioneers were holding a special meeting for all the local Africans who were interested in the Faith. Enoch Olinga was among those who attended the meeting that day in Kampala, but nothing happened! The pioneers felt discouraged.

Later that night, however, Enoch Olinga returned to the Banání home with many questions. Finally he asked, "How does one become a Bahá'í?" Early the following morning, he returned with a letter requesting to be accepted as a Bahá'í.

The Faith transformed his life in a very practical way. Before accepting the Faith, Enoch Olinga had been a somewhat disillusioned man and a heavy drinker. He even lost a good government job in spite of the fact that he was a gifted and brilliant translator. Upon becoming a Bahá'í, however, he quit drinking entirely. His personal transformation was so profound that his wife also accepted the Faith and became a Bahá'í.

### **Enoch Olinga and the beginning of mass teaching in Africa**

Very soon after he accepted the Faith, Enoch Olinga returned to his hometown of Tilling to share with his family and friends the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The interest was so great that when he returned to Kampala, it was agreed that 'Alí Nakhjavání would accompany him

back to Tilling. The people were curious to know who was the ‘white man’ who had taught Enoch this new Faith!

For the next several weeks, Enoch Olinga and ‘Alí Nakhjavání taught in the Teso district. During this time, over ninety people accepted the Faith, including Enoch’s own uncle who, like his nephew, became a staunch Bahá’í.

In 1952, the Local Assembly of Kampala was formed, and Enoch Olinga was now a member. Only eight months later, in the beginning of January 1953, the Guardian cabled the Bahá’í world:

REJOICE TO SHARE WITH BAHÁ’Í COMMUNITIES EAST WEST  
THRILLING REPORTS FEATS ACHIEVED HEROIC BAND  
PIONEERS LABOURING DIVERS WIDELY SCATTERED  
AFRICAN TERRITORIES PARTICULARLY UGANDA...

The Guardian compared these achievements with the rapid and dramatic teaching of the Faith by the Dawn-Breakers during the Heroic Age. The progress of the Faith in Uganda — and later in all of Africa — became one of the greatest sources of joy for Shoghi Effendi. Enoch Olinga spearheaded much of this growth.

### **A difficult journey to his pioneering post illumined by a dream of the Guardian**

Eighteen months after accepting the Faith, Enoch Olinga responded to the Guardian’s appeal for pioneers to open new African territories to the Faith.

On 27 August, 1953, together with ‘Alí and Violette Nakhjavání and two other new African Bahá’ís, he set out in a small Peugeot station wagon to cross the continent in order to bring the Faith to West Africa. The journey was long and difficult as the roads were poorly maintained, and their car was not equipped for such type of travel. They did not have much money and had almost no information about the route that lay ahead.

Their goal was the British Cameroons, more than three thousand kilometers away. Although they seemed unprepared in every material



way, they took with them spiritual strength. On the evening of their departure, they received a cable from their beloved Guardian that said, 'LOVING, FERVENT PRAYERS ACCOMPANYING YOU.'

One of the most challenging parts of the journey was going through the dense, tropical jungles of Gabon, an area plagued with disease-carrying insects. The car frequently got stuck and had to be lifted out of the mud. Finally, the car broke down altogether. Enoch Olinga volunteered to walk almost one hundred and thirty kilometers to get help from the next town.



*Hands of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga and Rahmatu'lláh  
Muhájir. Haifa, Israel. 1973.*

This required great courage as he had done little traveling in the bush and was entirely unfamiliar with this part of Africa. He feared the dangerous jungle animals and deadly snakes, yet he walked through the mud, through a severe rainstorm, and narrowly avoided elephants crashing through the jungle! After marching over fifty kilometers, Enoch was feverish, exhausted, frightened, and covered in mud. He cried out to himself, 'You fool! Why are you doing this?'

Shaken and weeping, he fell asleep and dreamed of his beloved Guardian. In his dream, Shoghi Effendi lifted and embraced Enoch, set him on his feet, and gave him consolation and assurance. When he awoke, Enoch was a different person. He was refreshed, calm, and determined to go through such hardship for his beloved Guardian, every day of his life if necessary!



*Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga.*

**Enoch Olinga, Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, Father of Victories**

After almost two months of dangerous and grueling travel, the Nakhjavánís and Enoch Olinga entered the British Cameroons on 15 October, 1953. They rushed to the post office to send a cable to the Guardian, informing him that British Cameroons was now opened by Enoch's arrival.

It was four in the afternoon, and the postmaster was closing up. 'Alí Nakhjavání begged him to re-open, which he did. Thus the cable was sent to the Guardian before the Holy Year ended that very night.

In response, Shoghi Effendi designated Enoch Olinga a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for being the first Bahá'í to settle in the Cameroons. Enoch Olinga remained there as a pioneer for the next ten years. By divine confirmation, he found a place to stay in the home of a young man named David Tanyi who soon became the first believer in the Cameroons.

Even though a relatively new Bahá'í, Enoch Olinga taught the Faith to hundreds of souls and was able to assist many to pioneer throughout West Africa. A number of Enoch Olinga's spiritual children pioneered to the unopened territories of Nigeria and Ghana, and no less than five became Knights of Bahá'u'lláh. In recognition of these most extraordinary accomplishments, the Guardian gave Enoch Olinga the title "Father of Victories". Referring to these achievements, the Guardian wrote:

'The manner in which the Faith has spread in Africa is truly remarkable, and overshadows the manner it has spread in other parts of the world. It indicates how glorious will be the future of the Faith in that great continent.'

### **Gazing upon the holy face of his Beloved Guardian**

Enoch Olinga longed to go on pilgrimage and to meet his beloved Guardian. His wish was granted in February 1957 when he became the first black African Bahá'í to make the pilgrimage.

Shoghi Effendi arranged for Enoch Olinga to stay in the Eastern pilgrim house, situated near the Shrine of the Báb. Thus Enoch had the privilege of walking in the gardens with the beloved Guardian and

listening to his words. In addition, Enoch Olinga had the blessing of visiting the Shrines with the Guardian and hearing him chant the Tablets of Visitation in his wonderfully melodious voice.

Later, Enoch Olinga recalled his impressions of Shoghi Effendi and described how the Guardian spoke with such majesty, and how he “walked like a king”. Enoch Olinga told his children that Shoghi Effendi was like a lion, but at the same time he was very gentle.





*Enoch Olinga with a group of people during his pilgrimage. Haifa, Israel. February 1957.*

He also said that before he had a chance to ask his questions, Shoghi Effendi had already answered them! The love showered upon him by Shoghi Effendi and the inspiring conversations profoundly affected Enoch Olinga's entire life. He went back to Africa enkindled, reassured, and more mature. He later wrote to Rúhíyyih Khánum, "Having visited and prayed in the Blessed Shrines, gazed on the holy face of our Guardian and heard his melodious voice, I am sure a new day has dawned upon me!"

### **Appointment as the youngest Hand of the Cause of God**

After his pilgrimage, Enoch Olinga returned to Uganda. While he was there, Mr. Banání received a cable in early October 1957 from Shoghi Effendi. The Guardian requested him to deliver to Enoch Olinga the text of the cable announcing his elevation to the rank of a Hand of the Cause.

When he read the message, Enoch Olinga prostrated himself flat on the floor, a mark in Africa of deep submission to one's Lord. At the time of his appointment, Enoch Olinga was thirty-one, making him the youngest Hand of the Cause. He had been a Bahá'í for only five years. Two days later, on 4 October, he cabled Shoghi Effendi:

BELOVED'S HOLY MESSAGE JUST RECEIVED BENUMBED  
MY FACULTIES. WITH MUCH SUBMISSIVENESS AND  
HUMBLENESS I ACCEPT DIVINE FAVOUR, FEEL DEEPLY  
GRATEFUL BELOVED'S SACRED WISHES FOR OUR  
PROGRESS. BESEECH HIS PRAYERS FOR CONFIRMATION  
GUIDANCE AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT.



*Hands of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga and Paul Haney with their wives Elizabeth Olinga and Helen Haney.*

A month later, on 4 November, 1957, the Bahá'í world received the terrible news of the passing of the Guardian. Although Enoch Olinga was unable to attend the beloved Guardian's funeral due to visa difficulties, he was able to join his fellow Hands at their first formal meeting. This "Conclave" was held immediately after Shoghi Effendi's passing in Bahjí, Israel, on 18 November, 1957. Together with the other Hands, Enoch Olinga dedicated himself to winning all the goals of the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade and to witnessing the achievement of the Guardian's greatest wish: the establishment of the Universal House of Justice.

### **Service during the Ministry of the Custodians, 1957-1963**



Enoch Olinga participated in all the Conclaves during the six year period between the passing of the beloved Guardian and the establishment of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. During these difficult times, the presence of Enoch Olinga brought great joy to the hearts of the other Hands of the Cause.

One of Enoch's endearing qualities was his laugh, a joyous and contagious laugh that brought welcome relief to the heavy burden of responsibilities of the Hands of the Cause. In fact, the other Hands often saved up funny stories so they could tell them to Enoch at the annual Conclave! Enoch Olinga would chuckle and then convulse with a laughter that would spread, and thereby lighten the hearts of the Hands of the Cause.

Ever since his pilgrimage, Enoch Olinga and Rúhíyyih Khánum had become close friends. During the Conclaves, some of the Hands of the Cause stayed in Bahjí while others returned for the night to Haifa. Enoch Olinga and Rúhíyyih Khánum were among those who always remained in Bahjí during the entire Conclave.

One night, there was a plague of snails devouring the gardens. Rúhíyyih Khánum insisted that the Hands come out and pick snails, giving them buckets and bowls to put them in.

In the bright moonlight, about eight of them started collecting snails down the borders in front of the Shrine. Eventually, everyone left to go to sleep. As Rúhíyyih Khánum herself wrote, "only faithful Enoch and I were still gathering snails!"



*Hands of the Cause of God in Bahjí, Israel. 1961 Circa.*

*Left to Right: Tarázu'lláh Samandarí; Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum; Enoch Olinga.*

*In the background: Paul Haney and Abu'l-Qásim Faizi.*

In April 1963, the first Bahá'í World Congress was held in London to celebrate the successful completion of the Guardian's Ten Year World Crusade, and the establishment of the Universal House of Justice. The Hands of the Cause asked Mr. Olinga to be the chairman of the opening session. How fitting it was to have Enoch Olinga's youthful, beaming face at that historic event, representative of the indigenous peoples of the world, and reflecting the tremendous victories won in Africa during the Ten Year Crusade!

### **“I am praying, what else can I do?”**

As a Hand of the Cause, Enoch Olinga traveled to all parts of Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Australasia, the Pacific Islands, the Americas, and Europe. During his lengthy travels, he was received by many heads of state and presidents. He touched and inspired the hearts of all those whom he met.

His travels were often full of challenges, and Enoch Olinga frequently had cause to rely upon prayer. Once, at the end of a long trip, he went to check in for his flight and was informed that his luggage was overweight. He was told that he would have to pay for excess baggage, but he did not have the money. The airline employee was firm: he must either pay or leave his luggage behind.

Hearing this, Enoch Olinga took out his prayer book and began to read a prayer to himself. The surprised lady asked, “What are you doing?” Enoch Olinga replied, “I am praying, what else can I do?” The lady was so surprised and confused by this response that she waved him and his baggage on with no extra payment!

### **‘Are you Happy?’ — a story of the Beloved Guardian’s advice**

Enoch Olinga often asked the friends, as did ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘Are you happy?’ He said the believers should be happy because they had been enabled by Bahá’u’lláh to recognize Him as the Lord of this Day. The beloved Guardian had told Enoch Olinga when he was in Haifa that, in the whole world, there are very few people who are happy. Only those who know and love God in this Day, and who bear the holy Name of the Manifestation of God for today, can be truly happy. When we love Him, we receive His bounties, grace and favors, and one of His heavenly bestowals is happiness.

Enoch Olinga further shared with the friends that the Guardian had said that the Bahá’ís must also be joyful, which is a higher station than that of happiness.





*Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga in the Bahá'í Centre.  
Shiraoi in Hokkaido, Japan December 1970.*

But to become joyful, the believers must become familiar with the Will of God revealed through Bahá'u'lláh. Once the Bahá'ís become familiar with the Will of God, they must obey it. It is obedience to the Will of God that makes us joyful. Thus, he said, the twin inseparable duties required of human beings — those of recognition and obedience — bring us happiness and joy.

### **His untimely death**

A terrible civil war started in Uganda in the 1970s. Violence, terrorism, and chaos were increasing all over the country. During this chaotic time, Enoch Olinga did everything he could to protect and comfort the

endangered Bahá'í community. In September 1977, the Faith was banned in Uganda, and the House of Worship closed.

Enoch Olinga was shocked by this development, saying, “No! No one can ban the Faith of God for good.” He wrote to the president, calling his attention to the nature and status of the Faith, and the respect it had always enjoyed in Uganda. Sadly, the situation did not change.

In March 1979, Enoch Olinga decided to drive from his native village Tilling to Kampala, a distance of some three hundred kilometers, in order to help the believers there. Enoch Olinga's uncle tried to persuade him to stay at home, noting the obvious dangers involved in driving to the capital at such a war-torn time.

But Enoch Olinga told his uncle that he was not afraid. He said how wonderful it was to die a true believer, that if the veil were lifted between this world and the next, we would all yearn to die. Even before the war broke out, Enoch Olinga had discovered that his name was on a list due for “elimination.” Despite this danger looming over him, he often said that he would never leave Uganda, and he would never run away.

After he arrived in Kampala, the situation in the country grew worse. One evening in April 1979, the area around the Bahá'í House of Worship was the site of intense fighting between government and rebel troops. Enoch Olinga spent the night praying on the Temple property while all around him war was raging. When daybreak came, the Temple was unharmed. Soon after, it was announced that the government had been defeated. The civil war was over.

Mr. Olinga and another believer then opened all nine doors of the Temple and offered prayers of thanksgiving to Bahá'u'lláh for His miraculous protection of the Temple. Enoch Olinga then cabled the Universal House of Justice, relaying the joyous news that the House of Worship in Kampala was once again open for the believers and their friends to come and worship.

Even after the civil war ended, however, violence and murder continued. Tragically, on 16 September, 1979, Enoch Olinga, his wife Elizabeth, and three of his children were killed by unknown gunmen. The news spread. Hundreds of people lined the streets for the funeral procession.

From this material world, Enoch winged his flight to the Concourse on High. What a joyous welcome he, the “Father of Victories”, must have received in the Abhá Kingdom!



*Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga with his wife Elizabeth.  
1979.*

“WITH GRIEF-STRICKEN HEARTS,” the Universal House of Justice sent a cable to the Bahá’í world to inform the friends worldwide of the passing of the “DEARLY LOVED GREATLY ADMIRER HAND CAUSE GOD ENOCH OLINGA. HIS RADIANT SPIRIT HIS UNWAVERING FAITH HIS ALL-EMBRACING LOVE HIS LEONINE AUDACITY IN THE TEACHING FIELD HIS TITLES KNIGHT BAHÁ’U’LLÁH FATHER VICTORIES CONFERRED BELOVED GUARDIAN ALL COMBINE DISTINGUISH HIM AS PREEMINENT MEMBER HIS RACE IN ANNALS FAITH AFRICAN CONTINENT. URGE FRIENDS EVERYWHERE HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERINGS BEFITTING TRIBUTE HIS IMPERISHABLE MEMORY. FERVENTLY PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS NOBLE SOUL...”

On 24 September, 1979, Enoch Olinga was laid to rest in the vicinity of the Mother Temple of Africa, next to the resting place of Musa Banání, his fellow Hand of the Cause of God. These two great souls had been spiritually connected from the day that Enoch Olinga became a Bahá’í in the Banani home in Kampala some twenty years previously. The resting place of the “Spiritual Conqueror of Africa” was thus joined to that of the “Father of Victories” for all time.





*Resting place of Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga.*



## Source Material

The following are the primary source materials used in researching these stories and are included for those interested in further reading.

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### **Enoch Olinga**

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