

The Loyal General

A Narrative of the Life and Memories of Late
Major General Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad
Chief of the joint staff of the Army

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Dedicated to martyr Bakhshali Nazeri, the only martyr of Mir-Alilou village, environs of Meshgin Shahr; and all martyrs of Ardabil province

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Introduction

Martyrdom is the height of man in the sky of refinement and exaltation of human talents; On the one hand, the perfection of discontinuity from trade and commerce is related to the essence of oneness, and on the other hand, spending one's life in the path of the proud life of the revelation and purification in the path of rational human life and the beauty of martyrdom is in its comprehensiveness.

The martyrs are "Akis al-Nas" in the sense that they did not sell their lives except at the price of Ferdows, and did not give a chance to "Zaman", which is the dominant destructive ruler, and rose up against it. The publication of books about the lives of the martyrs is an identity document and signs that should not be lost. The martyrs of the army interpreted with their blood the inherent identity and the main function of the army of the Islamic Republic of Iran. They showed that the army is always on the scene and in the forefront in defending the religious and national values of this border and region, and its forces are

active, aware and committed to the covenant they made with their God and to the end against aggression and aggression. Aliens defend this land and water and create epics with their own blood.

What is certain is that what we saw and what happened to us during the time of the Holy Defence should be considered as unique and prominent pieces of the history of the past and the promised promise of the future; In fact, the miracle of the exceptional success of this generation has been that God's will is that their short life is the embodiment of the peak of humanity in the past and the future.

The mysterious past of Ashura and Karbala and the promised future of reappearance, in this unique piece of history, created a huge exhibition of the truth of creation and the essence of worship, whose spectators hugged the knee of silence for thousands of years and wiped their faces. They will be the charmers and seekers.

At no point in the history of several thousand years of Iran has Iranian national, patriotic and religious values been crystallized as much as during the period of holy defence. The values of sacred defence, in addition to having a certain variety and subtlety, also have a special stability and stability, and this is due to the unique features of the era of sacred defence.

The existing human being is a forgetfulness that if

he does not review what he had in the past history, he will forget it, and the more he studies the past records, the more those issues will be repeated and fixed in his mind. In the case of the sacred defence, there are also circumstances that if we distance ourselves from it and do not write or read about it, it will be gradually forgotten.

Eight years of holy defence was the season of maturity and prosperity of a generation that would not have achieved this flourishing and fertility without breathing and attending this event.

In today's world of the technology boom and in times when geographical borders gradually lose their meaning within the new structure of knowledge and fundamental transformation in human life and every country's national authority manifests in its cultural aspect, it demands a realistic and strategic approach to guard cultural values. As such, the poisonous global union of gold, power, and hypocrisy will attack all calls and flags of freedom throughout the world.

In the meantime, it is the duty of all who think about justice and freedom and believe in the great ideals of prophets to defend the culture of resistance and piety, whatever it takes.

Brigadier General Doctor Qumars Heidary
Commander of ground force army of Islamic republic of Iran

Publisher's note

It is still fascinating to hear memories from the major figures about the Islamic revolution and Iran-Iraq war after successively 42 and 32 years have passed since they occurred. The fascinations might be due to the ups and downs of the events or in the thirst for gaining more knowledge about the Islamic revolution and the war or even it might be because of choosing memoir's genre to narrate the even. Whatever the reason is, today's generation still would like to know more about the Islamic Revolution and the war, as well as their events and major figures and with the publication of each work in this field, it seems that a part of the hidden images of war that have taken form in the mind of the audience and is left in obscurity becomes clear.

During the last years, we have either heard or read countless memoirs of major figures in the imposed war. At times, we have heard these memories from

the ones who were among the major figures of the Islamic Revolution and the holy defense.

Studying these works reveals that there are still significant figures who for some reason have kept their secrets regarding the Islamic Revolution and the holy defense and today for several reasons the most important of which is a sense of responsibility before history and prevention from historical distortion they reveal some of the secrets and talk about the unheard events.

The Loyal General is a narrative of the life and memoirs of the late major general Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad and his roles in the course of the revolution and the holy defense. I sincerely thank the supports of brigadier general Dr. Qumars Heidary, commander of the army's ground force, second brigadier general Davoud Kazemi, head of the veterans of the army organization, and everyone who did lots of honest efforts to prepare and print this work and hope that the audience will enjoy it.

Dr. Mohsen Sadegh Nia

Forewords

I heard the name of major general Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad for the first time when I was a teenager. Back then, hearing such names did not catch my attention; then in 1999, when I started to work as a war/holy defense¹ activist, I saw his name and read about Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad in works related to the Islamic revolution and holy defense; I was really interested to get to know about Zahir Nejad's Personality. The more I read works regarding war, the more I became enthusiastic to know about Zahir Nejad's personality. However, unfortunately, since there were no comprehensive works and documentaries about him, his personality remained a mystery to me.

When I was offered to write a book about late Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad in November of this year, all that enthusiasm to know about Zahir Nejad returned

¹ Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988

and I wholeheartedly accepted it and started to research about him. I only found a book called *Sarbaz-e Vatan*¹, a fictional biography of his life, when I reviewed published works in the field of the Iran-Iraq war. Even by referring to the Veterans of the Army organization and Retired Military Personnel Club as well as his friends and comrades, I could not find any information regarding his family.

With all the missing information, I felt a heavier responsibility and started to surf and search among the publications and archives of military documents and organizations, and to some extent, I could find precious information about his life and his prominent role in the country's west and north-west battles as the division no. 64 commander and as the ground force commander as well as chief of the joint staff of IRI army and write them down although short and concisely.

In this book, whose title is based on the supreme leader's speech on October 31st, 1999 for the graduate students of Imam Ali military academy that read: "We will never forget martyr Sayad Shirazi and the loyal general Zahir Nejad who tried his best in any possible field from the start of the revolution until his death. The nation will not forget; several texts regarding late

¹ The country's soldier

Zahir Nejad have been published whose titles are *Who was Major General Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad?*, *How Zahir Nejad was Chosen as the Urmia Division no. 64 Commander*, *Urmia Division no. 64 Actions under the Command of Colonel Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad*, *Gendarmerie and Ground Force Commander* as well as his various positions from the chief of staff, head of military consultants of the commander in chief of all forces, in the framework of his comrades and friends and publications interviews with Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad have been recorded.

Also, for the readers to get to know more about major general Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad, documents and pictures available in documents center archives and publications have been included in this book.

I am beholding to God's grace for writing this book, but it is noteworthy to thank my dear and respected friend Mohsen Sadegh Nia, the editor of Sooreh Sabz institute of art and culture who has helped me throughout this project and delivered his scientific assistance incessantly.

I will realize the real importance and value of this book if the respected reader delivers their reviews and suggestion to me through the publications after reading this book and help me present a more accurate and exact history so that God forbid I will not

owe anything to the Islamic revolution, Holy Defense and their history unintentionally and ignorantly and will not leave an inaccurate report for the future generations.

Amir Mohammad Abbas Nejad

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Who was Major General Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad?

Just after the victory of the Islamic revolution and overthrow of the king, some high-rank officers who have supported the people's activities throughout the revolution and were military experts were invited to the army by the IR authorities to serve there again. Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad was among these military officers. He was born in 1924 in Ardabil. His father was Ishmael and his mother was Zuleikha.

After passing primary and high schools and receiving a diploma in mathematics major, he was recruited by the army in 1942 and while continuing his education successfully, he passed military ranks simultaneously and entered the military academy in 1951. He graduated from the military academy in 1954 and then became an expert officer after passing other military courses such as introductory infantry,

professional infantry, commandership course, committee, and so on.

Zahir Nejad was appointed as the commander of platoon no.2 of the educational company no.2 Ardabil brigade no.3 with the rank of second lieutenant in 1955. In 1957, with the rank of the first lieutenant, he took the command of the artillery group of legion 8 of Maragheh division no. 3. He took the responsibility of one of the committee training groups in 1965 with the rank of captain and he became the assistant officer of office 3 (section of planning, operation, and education) in 1969 with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

He was encouraged by the army officials from a military perspective because of his success in all of his responsibilities and that led him to earn a third-grade medal in 1961 and a second-grade medal in 1970, but during these years, he was doubted from religious and political views and was under the surveillance of Shah government since he had been secretly supporting national struggles of people against Shah regime, which had intensified since 1950 and he joined Shah and USA opposition after the American coup de tat on August 19, 1953. Suspicion towards him resulted in the army committee of Shah informing his unit of service about his condition and since then the ministry of intelligence of Shah regime imposed several

limitations on him in a way that when he was supposed to be dispatched to the US to pass a specialized military course after an American major general visited his unit of service, office 2 of army prevented him from being dispatched by making excuses and finally convicted him of insulting the royal as well as supporting the Iranian people opposition against Shah regime.

After what happened, Zahir Nejad who saw it impossible to make any progress, participate in any important military courses, and could not tolerate the domination of foreign forces, especially American forces, over Iran's army, asked for retirement after 31 years of service with the rank of lieutenant colonel, and after his retirement, he started to work in a private company.

After the victory of the Islamic revolution, considering Zahir Nejad's support of Iranian people's revolutionary acts during the previous years and his expertise in military affairs, he was immediately summoned by the authorities to service and was appointed as the Urmia division no. 64 commander with the rank of colonel.

How Zahir Nejad was Appointed as the Urmia Division No. 64 Commander

Retired colonel sayyid Mohammad-Ali Sharifol Nasab tells the story of how Zahir Nejad was appointed as the Urmia division no. 64 commander: After the victory of the Islamic revolution, when lieutenant general Mohammad Vali Qarani settled in the joint staff, Reza Rahimi, Mohammad Salimi, Hassan Ali Forouzan, Yousef Kolahtouz, Hasan Agharab Parast, Abdollah Najafi, and I were the first team of military forces that came to the joint staff by the order of Revolution Council and formed a group.

I was a link between these military men and general Qarani. I remember when Kurdistan and Urmia were experiencing internal riots due to Komala and democrat parties sabotage and the Mashhad airport was prone to downfall, general Qarani announced that a commander is required for the Urmia division, so we introduced colonel Qasemal Zahir Nejad, who had retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel. General Qarani said, "Tell him to come here wherever he is."

It was 11 p.m. when Zahir Nejad arrived. General Qarani told him: "Kurdistan and the west of the country are not safe at all; this might affect West Azerbaijan as well. Considering the fact that you have

served in Urmia, I would like to appoint you as the commander of the Urmia division. The airplane is ready to take off now, go to Urmia and take control of the division.

Zahir Nejad said, "General! I served there many years ago and right now all of the forces are new faces, I might not know any of them."

- This country and this religion need you! You are the son of Islam and this land.

- Then just give me a short break so that I settle my accounts and fulfill my commitments with the company where I am currently working.

- Mr. Zahir Nejad! Pay attention! Islam and the country need you now!

- Yes! I'll just go home, pack my stuff, and come back tomorrow morning.

- I'm telling you the country needs you now; You are telling me that you are coming tomorrow?! You have to go right now!

- General! My daughter is home alone. I can't leave her like this!

At this moment, general Qarani called his driver and said, "Go to my house right now, pick up my wife and take her to Mr. Zahir Nejad's house so that my wife takes his daughter to my home."

He turned to colonel Zahir Nejad and said, "Mr.

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He turned to colonel Zahir Nejad and said, "Mr.

Zahir Nejad! Go to Urmia with the very first flight.” This conversation was between general Qarani, the first chief of the joint staff of the IRI army and colonel Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad, and Zahir Nejad set off to Urmia with the first flight.

Back then, southern parts of east Azerbaijan were the arena of counter-revolutionary forces and army garrisons were not immune to these forces' attacks. Colonel Zahir Nejad could bring back discipline and peace to this division thanks to his experience of formerly serving here. He could also apply army forces to organize voluntary forces and to train IRGC forces.

Jamshid' Haghgou, former governor of West Azerbaijan province, narrated those days as follows: ((Colonel Zahir Nejad was the commander of Urmia division no. 64 and made a lot of efforts to integrate the division. Back then, the Urmia garrison had been almost completely evacuated since most of its forces had quit their service to willingly join the revolution; Borders of the province were vulnerable and exposed. Zahir Nejad organized everyone, not by force but by words. He was a professional orator, a frank and candid person, and was a Quran Hafiz¹ as well; He was

¹ literally meaning "guardian" or "memorizer", depending on the context, is a term used by Muslims for someone who has completely memorized the Quran.

energetic and charismatic enough for the forces under his command. Consequently, he managed to organize and discipline division no. 64 again.

He was a disciplined and obedient army man and played a significant role in conquering the Mahabad garrison and settling the army in Oshnavieh¹, Jaldyan², and Pasveh³. He never compromised with the rioters, leftist groups, and parties but had a kind and friendly relationship with the heads of tribes. I accompanied him while settling the army units in Oshnavieh garrison. That was an exciting day for me.

It can be imagined what a heavy responsibility the province officials had in such a dangerous situation. During that time, there was fine coordination among the officials and army men of the province, almost everybody was aware of the sensitive and dangerous condition of the area with a sense of responsibility.

Once assailants exploded a military Rio of Urmia division no. 64 and martyred the soldiers inside it. Zahir Nejad sent a message to the democrats: "If you

¹ is a town in West Azerbaijan Province, Iran & the capital of Oshnavieh County.

² Jaldyan Garrison is a village and military installation in Lahijan-e Gharbi Rural District, Lajan District, Piranshahr County, West Azerbaijan Province, Iran.

³ is a village in Lahijan-e Sharqi Rural District, Lajan District, Piranshahr County, West Azerbaijan Province, Iran

surrender the people who are responsible for this explosion in the next 2 hours, that's fine. Otherwise, you will be in serious trouble. They did not surrender anyone and when the deadline ended, Zahir Nejad ordered to place a huge cannon on the heights overhanging the areas where counter-revolutionary forces were. The cannon would shoot every ten minutes and its projectile passed over the city and hit the facing hills.

Colonel Zahir Nejad, the commander of Urmia division no. 64, made a lot of efforts to renovate the organization of the army and to bring back the forces to the division garrison and he was in complete coordination with the state government regarding all of the affairs.

Urmia Imam Jom'a¹, Hujjat-al-Islam Haj Sheikh Qolamreza Hassani, also known as "Molla Hasani" said:

It was March 1979. A member of Chiani village, the environs of Naqadeh, informed me that Kurdistan democratic party tends to conquer Naqadeh. At first, I consulted the issue with the commander of Urmia division no.64 and explained the importance of the issue and the strategic position of Naqadeh to him.

¹ is the person who conducts the Friday prayer and preaches related sermons.

A few days passed, it was the end of Farvardin. A clergyman called Mr. Haj Mirza Ibrahim Moharari, who was one of Naqadeh clergymen and passed away a little while later, called me. I had already sent him some weapons and ammunitions and he had formed an armed group as well. He was an active clergyman. Moharrari said, "There is no clash yet, but the democratic forces have come and conquered most of the areas and mountains surrounding Naqadeh and we are under total siege."

Other evidence suggested that there is a big global conspiracy going on in the area and the enemy's ring of siege is being tightened at any moment. I talked to colonel Zahir Nejad again and said, "The issue of Naqadeh has reached a critical state and serious measures must be taken."

Zahir Nejad said, "What's your idea?"

I had already brought 1000 rifles from the Jaldyan garrison¹ and delivered them to Urmia division no. 64. This garrison used to be a training center and there were not a considerable number of weapons here, but

¹ Jaldyan garrison is on the corner of Urmia route to Piranshahr and Pasve garrison. From the strategic point of view, it acts as a connecting knot in that area and is of great significance, consequently, division no. 64 proceeded to reinforce Jaldyan garrison and the settling gendarmerie units there to improve tactical abilities and maintain its creativity.

G3 rifles, vz. 24, M1, light, and heavy rifles were kept there to train soldiers.

I said, "Provide me with the guns I had brought from Jaldyan garrison as well as some tanks, personnel carriers, and two Chinook helicopters so that I mobilize the voluntary forces and when necessary, set off to Naqadeh and resist against the invasion of democrat accomplices.

Mr. Zahir Nejad said, "I can't decide on this issue and I need to call general Qarani."

He called general Qarani and informed him about the condition of the area as well as my suggestion. Since he did not know me at all, Mr. Zahir Nejad introduced me to him while making compliments, and he agreed with the suggestion and ordered Zahir Nejad to provide me with all equipment that I needed. I collected about 1000 G3s, vz. 24s, M1s as well as two personnel carriers, and we set off to Naqadeh on April 19th.

After we arrived in Naqadeh, Mr. Zahir Nejad called me on the phone and said, "We are setting off to Naqadeh with some army forces and soon we will join you. When the forces arrived, they settled in different parts of the city. In a unanimous movement, colonel Zahir Nejad took measures to reconstruct the gendarmerie police station in Naqadeh and its

suburbs. After a while, the constabulary was opened in the city and all these measures helped establish constant discipline and security in Naqadeh and its suburbs.

Not long after the victory of the revolution, Urmia was engaged in a crisis and battles started in Serow located in the west of Urmia. Serow is the center of Sumay-ye Beradust District, including Beradust, North, and South Sumay, located on the border of Iran and Turkey. This area is the place of residence of Shakak and Sadat tribes. In the summer of 1979, this area turned into one of the critical areas of Iran and affected the city of Urmia.

As soon as Serow police station was established, they were informed that the gendarmerie company settled in Serow has been invaded and several IRGC and gendarmerie soldiers equipped with all the facilities have been besieged by democrat parties and their connection with the city has been completely cut off. As a result, on July 17, 1979, Urmia vicinities and the Serow border police station were the site of serious and destructive clashes. At first, it was not clear what actually happened since radio, TV, and newspapers each reflected the news in a different way, but later on, it turned out that the disbanded democratic party forces affiliated with Qasemlou and

Sanar Mamadi in Serow have unanimously revitalized and conspired, and they tend to attack Urmia from the border of Turkey in near future. Consequently, an emergency meeting was held in Urmia division no. 64 committee in which there were garrison and local gendarmerie station commanders. There were 2 suggestions in this meeting: First, no action must be taken and when they reached Urmia, we confront them in the area and inside the city. Secondly, before they start to move, they must be prevented from moving forward and their equipment must be annihilated; The second suggestion was accepted unanimously.

Urmia division no.64 immediately dispatched forces to the area. At the beginning of the clashes, some people and several military forces were martyred and some others were taken hostage by the Kurds. As the clashes intensified, a meeting was held in the state government in which colonel Zahir Nejad, Urmia division no. 64 commander, and the governor of West Azerbaijan attended and Urmia division no. 64 announced that to defend the Islamic revolution, they have entered the Urmia-Serow area and have scattered the infighters from the mountainous areas. Then colonel Zahir Nejad announced in an interview that some Kurd invaders have been killed and some

injured and the rest have fled; A lot of mortars, rifles, and bullets have been found where they were.

Peace and quiet did not last more than a few hours in the area as well as in Serow-Urmia road and armed men attacked Urmia once again. As the crisis continued, a military column from division no. 64 under the command of colonel Zahir Nejad took action along with guards and traveled through the Urmia-Serow route and returned security to the area again. Colonel Zahir Nejad, commander of Urmia division no. 64, took some actions to bring back peace and security to the critical areas of west and northwest that we will briefly review these measures in the following pages.

Urmia Division no. 64 Measures under the Command of Colonel Qasem-Ali Zahir Nejad