
Chapter 14

The End of My Rope!

It was Day 26, Saturday April 30th, and things were not getting any better. Therefore, we spoke to my friend Nader #2 who happened to be the brother of one of my friends in the USA. He is a well known and respected individual by many people in Tehran and that is why I will not mention his last name. Incidentally, Nader #2 was the one who introduced me to this Judge earlier. I asked him to speak with the Judge about my situation one more time since I was not getting anywhere. He finally called me back at 11:30pm to tell me that I should go back to the base and ask to speak with Admiral Farzaneh, because he had the authority to make things work.

I always got up in the morning with a small ray of hope that something good was going to happen that day, but by the end of the day I seemed to always hit a brick wall. But I tried not to get too discouraged, remembering that God was with me.

The next day, Nader and I left Karaj at 6:30am and arrived at the base at 9:30am. At the gate, everyone knew us and called us by our name without looking at any identification card.

“Whom do you want to see today?” The guard asked. (Sometimes they would phone the person we wanted to see.)

“Admiral Farzaneh!” we answered. He looked at us and repeated, “Admiral Farzaneh! I cannot call him” (talking to himself.) So, he gave us a pass to go inside.

We were really getting tired of going and coming so many times. The base was so large, and we had to walk to the offices on foot. It took us at least 15-25 minutes of walking uphill to get to some of the offices. They did not allow cars on the base unless you worked there. That day Nader was having problems with his breathing and heart rate and I could feel his frustration. So, I hitch-hiked a car in order to get us closer to the buildings we needed to go to.

The Admiral was not in his office but was expected to be back at 4:00 pm, so we requested from his office manager, Mr. Jafar, to meet with the Admiral that afternoon when he came in. He made a note and invited us to check back with him later that afternoon.

In order not to have to go all the way back to Karaj, I called my aunt who lived in Tehran and asked her if we could stay there until 3:30pm. She was more than happy to welcome us to come spend our time there at her house. She even went to the trouble of fixing us lunch.

At 3:30pm, we called the office of the Admiral and spoke with Mr. Jafar again, but he told us that the Admiral could not see us at that time and made another appointment for the following day at 9am.

My aunt insisted for us to stay at her house that night which was wonderful for us. She also asked if after our business at the base the next day was done, we could take her to Karaj with us. Of course we told her we would be glad to. That evening the three of us decided to walk to a shopping mall for a couple of hours. I saw many beautiful

items I wished to buy as souvenirs, but that was only a wish because I could not afford to misuse any money in case I needed it for other unexpected expenses. Then we went to a fast food restaurant and ordered a chicken sandwich, fries and drink. It was different from home cooking though, yet delicious! My aunt paid for all of us.

The next day, Sunday, we arrived at the base at 8:30am and went straight to the Admiral's office. His office manager was a different person that day! He wanted to know the nature of our business and who had sent us. Then, he asked us to write down our request on paper and after reviewing, he would direct us as to what to do next. Obviously, the Judge had not spoken with the Admiral about our situation as I had wished. Therefore, he did not know who we were, and as a result, he was not interested in speaking with us.

As we started writing our request on paper, the office manager went inside and spoke with the Admiral. Thankfully he agreed to see us. Nader and I went into his office, but he would not allow Nader to stay. I introduced myself and mentioned the judge who told us to come and see him. He was already on the phone talking with someone else, and after he hung up, he told me I would need to go see Admiral Vahmani who was over the Education Department. He would do whatever was lawful for us.

Admiral Farzaneh was not interested in talking with me at all and when I mentioned the name of the judge again, he immediately said that it was not any of his business and would not allow me to ask any questions. I thanked him and left his office to see Admiral Vahmani at the next building.

Admiral Vahmani received us well, listened to what we had to say, and made a few phone calls. He called Col. Mirshekar, but he was not there. He called General Ghots and talked to him via cellular phone since he was not in his office, and at last he spoke with Col. Ansari.

Col. Ansari told him that the Navy gave us a break by cutting down a lot of my educational expenses, and their hands were tied in regard to the conversion of the money from Rial to Dollar since it was an order from the leader of the country himself.

As I was explaining my side of the story and how I decided to stay in the USA, not coming back to Iran to serve in the Navy, Nader whispered to the Admiral that I was telling him the truth. Admiral Vahmani said, "I know that he is, for I received my education in Italy. People from the west do not usually lie. We are the liars. It is sad, but true. We lie as if we drink water and do not even realize it. We are used to this manner of conversation."

Admiral Vahmani told us that it was not important why I chose to stay in the USA. What the Navy was interested in was for me to pay back the money spent for me, and that the amount of money was correct and perhaps the Navy had spent maybe even more than that. He continued by saying that when he had his education in Italy, the cost was about the same or even more.

We questioned him regarding the two departments, personnel and budget; that they were not cooperating with each other. In addition, there was not any law written concerning this conversion of the money from Rial to US dollars at the rate of thirty years ago. That is why we were

there seeking help. Finally, he said that Col. Ansari indicated that the order was from the leader of the country, and if that is the case, no one can question his authority. The matter would have to be resolved in the Personnel Department. So we left there without any result or change in our situation.

I called two of my friends, Hassan and Mohsen, who live in the USA and asked them about the money we used to get paid while we were at the Citadel, as I did not remember the amount. According to Mohsen, it was two or three hundred dollars a month as part of our salary. We used that money to take care of our expenses since we had no other means when we were off school. That amount may have gone up to five or six hundred dollars by the end of our school. But Hassan who came later and with a different group, said they got paid even more. We used the money to live on during the summer or when the school was closed. We did not have any other means of survival and that was part of our salary while we were employed by them.

Hassan went back to Iran after graduating from the Citadel, which happened in the early years of the revolution. He then served in the Navy for two weeks when Banisadr, the new president of Iran announced that they had too many people in the military and was allowing anyone who wished to resign from the military to do so without any penalty. Hassan jumped at the opportunity, resigned from the Navy, and left the country for the USA. His airplane had just taken off when the announcement came of the war between Iran and Iraq, in September of 1980.

Hassan gave me his sister's phone number, Naheed, who happened to be a lawyer and lived in Tehran. She had helped

his brother Hassan and was familiar with some of the issues pertaining to the Navy. Therefore, that evening we went to see her at her house and I shared my problems with her. She treated me like a brother and we talked about our families, friends, and what she had done for Hassan during the time when he was getting out. Then, she told me the same thing Admiral Vahmani was telling me, that if the order was coming from the leader of the country, then no one could change it. However, if they were misusing the order for a different case wrongly, then we could complain to the high court. But unfortunately, it would take more time. If I paid what they wanted, I could still complain to the high court; but whether I got my money back would be doubtful.

We were trying to knock on every possible door for some possible answers to my dilemma, but it seemed as if every door led to a dead-end. Frankly, I did not know what God had in store for me; nevertheless, I did not lose my hope in Him. I knew that He was going to do something. As a result, I was trying to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and the opportunities that might come my way.

From there we went to see my friend Nader #2 to see if we could get one more appointment with the Judge and to ask him more advice as to what to do next, and if I had any other options left at all.

The next day we met with the Judge at his office. We explained to him our new discovery about the fact that the leader of the country may have ordered the conversion of money on someone else's case file which was similar to mine; as a result, they used this as the legal precedent for the same decision on my case. The Judge listened carefully and told us if that was the case, his hands were tied too. But

before we jumped to any conclusion, he wanted to see this particular file first. He called downstairs and had the file delivered. Nader and I waited almost an hour while he read the file. He finally finished and called us back into his office. This is what he told us:

- No decisions had been made so far on this case.
- The Navy has requested a clarification as to what to do concerning the conversion of the money. They are still waiting for the answer and so far, after one year no decisions have been made.
- The assistant to the court responded to the military before the court handed down its decision, by a letter quoting Mr. Khatami, the supreme leader of the country.
- Mr. Khatami had given his own opinion about the issues concerned but he did not issue any orders
- The Navy is following a letter rather than a lawful order.

The Judge suggested that since the Navy was not willing to cooperate and was trying to force me to accept their terms and conditions, I would need to go to the courthouse and file a complaint against their decision. He gave us the name of a person in the inspection department of the courthouse and told us to offer them collateral, and the \$4,330 they had previously requested. If the law is passed in their favor, then you will arrange to pay them on a monthly basis. However, if the law did not pass, then you would get your collateral back, everyone would be happy, and the case would be resolved.

I was happy with the answers and the assessment of the Judge. We went home with renewed hope that tomorrow was going to be a better day. I was constantly praying and asking God to show me a sign that He was with me in my efforts, and when something good like this happened, I could not help but think that God was in it.

I communicated all these events with my wife in the USA via email and phone calls and told her the good news. She was constantly praying for me and shared my situation with my brothers and sisters in Christ located in several States and asked for special prayer for me.

The next day, May 4th, was full of hope and excitement! I asked my Mom and Dad to get ready to go to the courthouse and to bring the title to their house which they had wholeheartedly offered to me several times to use if needed for collateral. Hopefully this would be our final trip to the courthouse.

You often hear that parents disown their children if they leave Islam for another religion, but not mine. They loved us unconditionally and my feeling toward them was the same.

At any rate, Nader and I went inside ahead of my parents to see the Judge while Ali parked the car and waited in the reception area along with my parents until we came for them.

The Judge sent us to the office of Mr. Sharifee, one of the inspectors, and he asked us to write a letter of complaint and bring it in to his office. I wrote and rewrote the letter and finally gave it to them.

Mr. Sharifee was busy at the time but someone else assisted us. He told us to come back the following week after the inspectors reviewed and investigated the complaint. Then they would let us know what to do next. We were prepared to finish the job that day and insisted on staying until everything was done, but the office manager said that there was no way they would do anything that day. So, we left there at 11:30am with disappointment.

The whole idea was for me to talk to one particular person to get the job done, but no one was specific or clear about who that person was and as a result we ended up talking with the wrong person.

I was angry for dragging my parents there, and very angry for the false hope. I was also disappointed for giving false hope to my wife. My Dad told me not to “count your chickens before they hatch” in this country, because things never go smooth. On our way going home we stopped at an outdoor restaurant, relaxed, ordered kabob and rice, and tried to enjoy the rest of the evening for the sake of my parents.

The offices were closed for the next two days and when we called on Saturday to check on our complaint letter, we learned that the persons in charge in that office were on some kind of mission trip and they would be back on Monday, May 9th.

Day 46th

It was Monday, May 9, at 8:00 in the morning. Nader and I left home, picked up Ali from his house and headed toward Tehran to the military courthouse to follow-up on our complaint from the week before. Mr. Sharifee was busy in a

conference room. We sat in his office until about 11:30. We finally got tired of sitting there not knowing if we were ever going to talk to him or not, so I spoke to one of his office workers about my case. He went into the conference room and obtained our file from Mr. Sharifee and directed us to another room where two inspector Judges were sitting. They were Mr. Ahmadi and Mr. Razavi.

Mr. Ahmadi was short, a bit fat, and almost bald. Mr. Razavi on the other hand was a bit tall and thinner, with a beard, but half bald. They asked Nader and Ali to stay outside of the room while they were going to converse with me. I told them that my Farsi language was not so great, and might not be able to communicate well with them. They insisted that it was okay and they understood me. Then they asked me about the problem or concern that I had.

I started to explain to them what happened when Mr. Ahmadi interrupted and told me that I was in the wrong place and needed to go elsewhere for my case. The question about the file number came up that was attached to my file. I told them that Nader had that information and requested to allow him to come in with the file number and other information because I could not explain it well. So they allowed Nader to come in.

Nader explained my situation in more detail as to what took place and where we had been. Mr. Ahmadi was convinced that we should go to the office of Mr. Montazari, the assistant to the courthouse. Then he asked, "Who told you to come here?"

We told him a particular Judge who knew about my situation and had directed us to them for help. Mr. Ahmadi said, "Well the Judge knows his book." We suggested that

he call the judge if he needed more information. We realized later that it was a mistake on our part to let them know who the judge was, for he did not appreciate us getting him involved. He was only our advisor and guide, hoping to direct me to someone who would help to resolve my problem. I regretted what happened because later on he expressed his disappointment about us using his name. I just wished that he had been more clear about that, but we learned to be more careful in the future!

Mr. Ahmadi came to the conclusion that we must first see Mr. Montazari (since he was the one who issued the letter of suggestion on behalf of the leader of the country concerning the conversion of the money) to solve our problem. Perhaps his letter to the military was meant only for Mr. Hossaini (who's file number we had), and if he could not solve our problem, then I could come back to them for help. He felt that they did not want to step on someone else's toes. He picked up the phone to call his office, but Mr. Montazari was not in. He then told us that I should call him tomorrow after he conversed with Mr. Montazari.

In the back of my mind, I was beginning to visualize a long stay in Iran, perhaps forever! The thought of that was beginning to bother me greatly! I did not want to let anyone know how I felt. I needed to stay strong. I hinted to my wife that there were other means to leave the country but she did not like that idea at all, and asked me to promise her not to do anything dangerous that would bring harm to me. Nonetheless, there were risks involved no matter which road I decided to take. The thought of being locked up and away from my family and grandchildren was my worst nightmare and brought many tears to my eyes.

We left the courthouse and went to my aunt's house, ate lunch and brought her with us to Karaj. She was interested in buying a house for herself as an investment, and wanted it to be closer to my Mom's house also.

The next morning at 10am, we called Mr. Ahmadi. He said,

“Oh call me back in half an hour for I have not yet called Mr. Montazari”.

When I called him again, he answered, “Mr. Montazari is not in his office, but I spoke to some other workers there and they said the same thing that the Navy has been saying.”

Mr. Ahmadi had not read the file of Mr. Hossaini in order to understand the content of the file before making a decision. He was simply taking the words of someone else and making a decision based on that. When we were in his office the day before and talked about the conversion of the money, he was talking with more sense and making a comparison to the value of the ‘mehrie’ (money that a man agrees to pay his wife as part of the contract when they get married). In addition, he was saying that a mehrie of a woman, which the husband promised 30 years ago, might not have much value today. Therefore, the courts had decided to adjust it by some means that would be fair to both parties, and we agreed with his example, but not with the outrageous rate hike the Navy was planning to charge me.

When we went to see Mr. Ahmadi the following day, I asked him if we could use my Dad's house as collateral until the law prevails. I told him the judge suggested we come to him because he had the authority to exercise this action and

because the Navy could not lawfully accept any type of collateral. It had to be done through the court system.

Mr. Ahmadi then asked: “Do you have \$80,000 as collateral? As they want twice of what they are asking as payment.” I did not, of course!

Then he picked up the phone and asked for the file of Mr. Hossaini, to be sent to his office.

While we were waiting in his office he started having casual conversation with me. I do not know if he was joking or serious when he asked me, “why don’t you just stay here?”

I said, “I have my job, home and family waiting for me.”

“You can get a job and start a new family here.” He responded.

“I am already married.” I said.

“You can have another wife and stay here.” He suggested.

I thanked him for his suggestion and told him “No thanks, for I am satisfied with my marriage!”

He then asked me if I knew anyone in the USA such as a Senator or a Congressman. I jokingly said I knew lots of them! Then he redirected his questions toward atomic energy. I started to respond, but Nader’s foot touched mine as a signal not to go there. I stopped immediately. Later Nader told me that even joking might lead to the wrong assumption and they might hold you for the purpose of getting some useful information or on espionage charges!

A soldier brought in the file of Mr. Hossaini and gave it to Mr. Ahmadi. After studying the content of the file, he said, “Mr. Saiid, this is going to take time.”

How much time? I asked.

“I do not know,” he said.

“We have to have a meeting about this matter with many people and it may take weeks or months.”

Nader said, “He needs to go back home to his family and to his job, as he is going to lose his job if he does not go back soon.” but we could not get any promises from him. We thanked him and left.

I had called the Navy and spoke with Col. Ansari during the past week while we were trying to see if we could make some headway from another direction. Col. Ansari said that my new letter was ready and if I wanted to speed up the process, I should come there and be the mail carrier myself, otherwise he would have to do it through the mail system. (The offices were only a building apart from each other!).

The reason Col. Ansari was back on my case was perhaps because Admiral Vahmani spoke to him and asked him to do so, but I felt that the whole ordeal was to give me a run-around. However, at this time, I could not come to any conclusion as to why they were dragging their feet, plus I was trying to think positive and remain hopeful. I wanted to make things work out in order to continue my future trips to Iran. Then I was faced with another lie.