

## ENOCH OLINGA: Facing Challenges with Joy

“Like sunshine bursting through the clouds . . .” is how one friend described Enoch Olinga. Though he faced terrible problems in his life, his joyfulness and faith inspired people around the world.

Enoch was born a member of the Teso tribe in Uganda, Africa, in 1926. After school, he joined the military, then returned to Uganda at age 20 and worked as a translator.

When Enoch got married, he and his wife, Eunice, started a family. But Enoch was unhappy with life. He drank alcohol heavily, which caused him to lose his job.

### A New Day

Around 1951, Enoch met a prominent Bahá'í named 'Alí Nakhjavání. After asking many questions about the Faith, Enoch became the first Bahá'í from the Teso tribe. He immediately gave up alcohol, and his transformation so impressed his wife that she also joined the Faith!

Enoch read every Bahá'í book he could get. He longed to travel and share what he had learned. He moved to what is now Cameroon, where he was the only Bahá'í. As he enthusiastically shared his beliefs, many joined the Faith.

When he was 30, Enoch went to the Bahá'í holy places in Haifa, Israel, and met Shoghi Effendi, who led the Faith at the time.



Enoch Olinga was the youngest Hand of the Cause of God, appointed at age 31. He was also named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, a title honoring some who brought the Bahá'í Faith to a new area of the world.

Shoghi Effendi's guidance inspired him profoundly. Enoch said, "Having visited and prayed in the Blessed Shrines . . . I am sure a new day has dawned upon me!" Later that year, Shoghi Effendi named Enoch a Hand of the Cause of God.\* Shoghi Effendi passed away soon after, which deeply grieved Enoch and Bahá'ís around the world.

### "Radiant Spirit"

Enoch continued to face difficulties, including a troubled marriage and divorce. But he stayed positive. He often asked others, "Are you happy?" His hearty laughter lifted

people's spirits. Other Bahá'ís would save funny stories to tell Enoch when they gathered, just so they could hear him laugh.

For many years, Enoch traveled, inspiring Bahá'ís around the globe. But in 1977, an unjust government in Uganda banned many organizations, including the Bahá'í Faith. A civil war began, and Enoch returned to Uganda to help the Bahá'ís.

One evening in 1979, Enoch stayed on the property of the Bahá'í House of Worship near Kampala and prayed all night as the area was bombarded. The Temple was unharmed, and the next day it was announced that the government had been defeated.

Violence continued, however, and random killings were common. Tragically, in 1979, Enoch, his second wife, Elizabeth, and three of his children were killed by unknown gunmen. The news spread, and hundreds of people lined the streets for the funeral procession.

The Universal House of Justice, the international Bahá'í governing body, cabled to the Bahá'ís "WITH GRIEF-STRICKEN HEARTS". They praised Enoch's "RADIANT SPIRIT HIS UNWAVERING FAITH HIS ALL-EMBRACING LOVE" and asked Bahá'ís to honor his "IMPERISHABLE MEMORY".