



## 3rd Khordad (May 24) and Liberation of Khorramshahr: A Turning Point in the History of Islamic Iran

The third day of the Iranian month of Khordad (coinciding with 24 May 1982) is one of the most prominent manifestations of Allah's blessings upon the people of Iran and one of the most important and beautiful days of the Islamic Revolution. On this day, the resilient city of Khorramshahr, which had been occupied by the enemy since November 25, 1980, was taken back by Islamic combatants after 578 days (19 months) and the flag of

Islam was hoisted over the Grand Mosque, and the destroyed bridge of this city.

The liberation of the southern Iranian city of Khorramshahr was the outcome of unity and empathy among the Iranian people and combatants during the Iraqi imposed war on Iran.

Following the invasion of Iran by the forces of the Baathist regime of Iraq on September 22, 1980, Saddam Hussein's Baath regime,

which was under the illusion that the Iranians who were living in border areas will not stand against the invasion, began to face severe resistance by the people of these areas who proved their loyalty to their home country.

The brave people of Khorramshahr put up an epoch-making resistance for 35 days, almost empty-handedly, before the invading Iraqi forces, with their sophisticated weapons, could capture this city on

October 25, 1980.

Following its capture, the Iranian city of Khorramshahr remained under Iraqi control until April 1982, when the brave Iranian combatants carried out the great Beit-ul-Moghaddas Operation in three phases to recapture the province of Khuzestan. The initial phase of the Beit-ul-Moghaddas Operation, also known as the “Khorramshahr Liberation Operation” took place from 24 April to 12 May 1982 and consisted of approximately 70,000 Iranian Army troops and Revolutionary Guards, who succeeded in pushing the Iraqi forces out of the Ahvaz–Susangerd area. The Iraqis withdrew to Khorramshahr and, on 20 May, launched a vigorous but unsuccessful counterattack against the Iranians. The Islamic combatants of Iran then launched an all-out assault on Khorramshahr and overran two Iraqi defensive lines in the Pol-e Nau and Shalamchek regions. The Iranians concentrated near the Arvand Rud waterway, besieged Khorramshahr, and recaptured the city on 24 May 1982, after two days of intense and bloody fighting.

Some of the objectives envisaged for the Beit-ul-Moghaddas Operation included:

Expelling the invading forces beyond the international borders,

Demonstrating the superiority of the political, military, and social power of the Islamic Republic of Iran over Iraq and its supporters in the region,

Destroying the invading forces in the area between the west of Karun and the borderline, and

Liberating the city Khorramshahr from the occupation of the aggressors.

The successful retaking of the city was part of Iran’s Operation Beit al-

Moqaddas is perceived as a turning point in the war and the liberation of the city, which also came to be known as Khounin-Shahr (lit. the City of Blood) - due to the sacrifices made by the people of this city and the outstanding bravery of the Iranian Islamic combatants, is annually celebrated in Iran on 24 May.

In the course of retaking Khorramshahr, the Iranian combatants managed to:

Liberate 5400 square kilometers of the territory of the Islamic country, including Khorramshahr, and secure the safety of 180 kilometers of the border line

Take 19 thousand Iraqi soldiers as prisoners of war. 16 thousand Iraqi soldiers were also killed in this battle

Destroy 60 Iraqi warplanes, 3 helicopters, 418 tanks and personnel carriers, 30 artillery cannons, and 49 vehicles.

Capture a helicopter, 105 tanks and personnel carriers, and 56 vehicles.

After this operation, Saddam Hussein was so shocked and infuriated by the defeat of the Iraqi army and by the fact that the Iranians had managed to push liberate Khorramshahr that he executed several of his top generals.

Three days after the liberation of Khorramshahr, calls were made by a number of countries, which were supporting the Baathist Iraqi regime all through, for a United Nations-mandated ceasefire in this imposed war on Iran.

The liberation of Khorramshahr played a key role in later political and military developments, which altered regional equations and showed that Iran is a new power in the West Asia region.

In a message on the occasion of

the liberation of Khorramshahr, the late Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, said that the Almighty God had extended assistance in liberating the Iranian border port city from the occupation of enemy’s forces.

The liberation of Khorramshahr was so important that the Western media were forced to acknowledge the big achievement by the Iranians. Financial Times reported that Iraq’s defeat in Khorramshahr and the captivity of thousands of Iraqi soldiers by the Iranian forces was a catastrophic defeat and humiliation for the Iraqi army. The French newspaper Libération wrote that following the retaking of Khorramshahr, the US, Europe, and certain Arab states proposed some initiatives to terminate the Iraqi imposed war on Iran.

The liberation of Khorramshahr is the subject of a number of war-time films, such as 1982’s *Another Growth* by Homayun Purmand, the Pasdaran Army (Revolutionary Guard) Television Unit’s 1983 documentary *Recapturing Khorramshahr*, and Kiumarth Monazzah’s *Forty Witnesses – The Second Narrative: Liberation of Khorramshahr* (1983).

A popular sad Persian song, “Mammad Naboodi” meaning “Mammad (Mohammad) you were not there to see the city liberated”, by Gholam Koveitipoor, is about Mohammad Jahanara, the Revolutionary Guard commander who was one of the last few Iranians to leave Khorramshahr when it fell to the Iraqis. He went on to fight in the Siege of Abadan and lead Iranian forces to recapture Khorramshahr; but he died on 24 May, in a plane crash, before the actual liberation of the city.