

[AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

12 May 2016

To the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in Iran

Eight years have passed since the imprisonment of the former members of the ad hoc group known as the Yárán, and five years since the arrests of a number of Bahá'ís who assisted with the work of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE). The arrests, the interrogations, and the imprisonments were in contravention not only of international standards, but also of the laws of the country. The result for the members of the Yárán was a verdict of twenty years' imprisonment, which was subsequently reduced to ten years; although some of the BIHE workers have been freed, some remain imprisoned, notwithstanding that even a single day of any one of these incarcerations has been, and continues to be, evident injustice.

Some imagined that this persecution would cause the believers to lose direction and hope, and that it would eventually cause the general weakening of the Bahá'í community. But you, the faithful followers of the Ancient Beauty, soon realized that the door to attending to your individual and collective affairs was open to you through consultation amongst families and in small groups. You, therefore, relying on the power of divine assistance, remained engaged in the field of service and managed your affairs, individuals with experience amongst you arose to assist others, and eager students and professors, with the full support of the community, continued their efforts to promote higher education; all in all, you did not allow the new challenges inflicted upon you to prevent you from pursuing your high aims and fulfilling your responsibilities as impelled by your conscience.

You of course know well that the purpose of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is to bring about a civilization that is neither of the East nor of the West, a civilization based on coherence between the material and the spiritual needs of humankind. You also know that recognizing Him marks the commencement of a commitment to dedicate one's personal and family life to contributing to the establishment of that civilization. You are well aware that the fulfilment of this goal is facilitated through the activities and the maturation of the three protagonists in the advancement of civilization: the individual, the community, and the institutions. Even as every living and active organism seeks to maintain its integrity and compensate for the loss of a part, when the darkness of injustice resulted in the closure of the Bahá'í administrative institutions in your land, you—both as a community and as individuals, the other two protagonists—sustained by the creative power of the Covenant, succeeded in compensating for this temporary loss.

So it is that individuals, with a positive attitude and in a posture of learning, endeavour through their own initiative to fulfil personal spiritual obligations and to carry out acts of Bahá'í service while encouraging and supporting others to do the same. Such individuals strive to make the promotion of moral principles, the advancement of the spiritual education of children and junior youth, and the multiplication of other community-building activities part of their daily lives. They seek to resolve various problems in their individual and collective lives

through a process of consultation while maintaining unity at all times. Despite unjust restrictions, they work diligently to earn their livelihoods and are in the forefront of humanitarian pursuits in collaboration with their fellow citizens. They endure persecutions with constructive resilience, refute baseless accusations with wisdom and courage, and, in seeking to secure their rights through recourse to the legal channels open to them, have become a source of inspiration for other oppressed people. Notwithstanding the numerous injustices cruelly inflicted upon them, they refuse to entertain thoughts of revenge or violence and do not accept the label of victim. On the contrary, they persevere in the pursuit of their exalted aspirations with exemplary detachment, unwavering effort, iron determination, and resolute faith.

The community, too, draws on everything within its power to augment its fruitful activities. As a dynamic and growing entity, it endeavours to create an environment in which the inner capacities of all of its members—whether new or veteran, men or women, young or old, urban or rural dwellers, and of whatever tribe or race throughout that land—flourish, and the ability to take counsel together, to make decisions, and to cooperate at the grassroots level is raised to new heights so that its members may serve more effectively towards the betterment of society. This community learns to read effectively the reality of its environment, to recognize existing opportunities, to utilize its resources, and to respond to present needs. It is committed to the promotion of an outward-looking culture in which all are harmoniously engaged in strengthening their capacities to fulfil the exalted aims of the Faith such as the promotion of peace, the fostering of unity in diversity, the liberation of humanity from the yoke of oppression, the advancement of social justice, the furtherance of social and economic development activities, and the participation in meaningful discourses of society. It sees the youth as capable of service to humanity and supports them so that, by becoming the embodiments of pure deeds and goodly conduct, they may draw on the assistance of spiritual forces and, through systematic action, hasten to the field of service. Everyone in such a community, like the members of one body, moves forward together, striving to ensure that all have access to sufficient material means to enable them to manage their daily affairs and render befitting service to the Cause.

Undoubtedly, the people of Bahá strongly believe in the eventual fulfilment of the aim of the Faith to ensure both the material and the spiritual prosperity of humanity. They are, however, also aware from their knowledge of divine exhortations that this is not an easy task and that the journey towards the attainment of this goal is a difficult one requiring years, nay centuries, of patience, constructive resilience, and a level of sacrifice that only the power of faith in the creative Word of God can instil in the human soul. The lovers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the world are working sacrificially, each facing the specific challenges in his or her particular country in fulfilling the objectives of the new Five Year Plan. Joyful news of these individual and collective efforts reaches the Bahá'í World Centre daily.

The share of the Bahá'ís of Iran in this process has from the inception of this Cause been a very special one. The history of the Cause in that land is brilliant. The Bahá'ís there, from the very beginnings of the Faith to this day, have sacrificed their lives, their wealth, their comfort, and their other worldly attachments. In the path of service to the Beloved, they have considered prison a palace, have accepted hardships as a bounty, and have responded to iniquity and oppression with patience and love. Though deprived of the freedom that their co-religionists in other countries enjoy, they all, whether in prison or not, contribute generously to

the fulfilment of the hopes of the Head of the Faith and the achievement of the goals of the Divine Plan.

Beloved friends, we convey to you our heartfelt greetings and assure you of our prayers in the Holy Shrines on your behalf. As you observe the wondrous fruits of your many sacrifices, such as the ever-growing eagerness of open-minded Iranians to learn about and accept the divine teachings, as well as the spaces that have been opened to you to collaborate with your compatriots towards the advancement of your homeland, you undoubtedly also look with hope and confidence to the vast array of bright possibilities that lie ahead and, with gratitude for these blessings, offer your humble thanks unto Him.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]