

[AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

13 May 2018

To the long-suffering followers of Bahá'u'lláh  
in the sacred land of Iran

The magnificent gathering in the Holy Land of delegates from 166 countries, for the purpose of participating in the Twelfth International Bahá'í Convention and electing the members of the Universal House of Justice, was concluded with the celebration of the Twelfth Day of the Festival of Ridván in the precincts of Bahá'u'lláh's exalted Shrine. More than fifteen hundred delegates participated in the election. Among the distinct features of this Convention, which not only added to its beauty and charm but also generated an ineffable degree of joy and enthusiasm among all participants, were the presence of a record number of National Spiritual Assemblies and delegates and the participation of some National Assemblies for the first time, including one of the oldest Assemblies in the Bahá'í world. At the opening session of the Convention, in language brimming with affection and love, the Chairperson acknowledged the absence of the representatives of the sorely tested friends in the Cradle of the Faith and, having expressed the gratitude of Bahá'ís throughout the globe for your sacrifices, which for many years have been a source of inspiration for the followers of the Blessed Beauty throughout the planet, recalled the vital contributions you have made to the advancement of the Cause of God. During another session, in the name of the patient believers in Iran, representatives of the nations of the Pacific region, joined by all those present, chanted in stirring tones these blessed words of Bahá'u'lláh: "Should they attempt to conceal His light on the continent, He will assuredly rear His head in the midmost heart of the ocean and, raising His voice, proclaim: 'I am the lifegiver of the world!'" They thus reinforced the bonds of affection and solidarity between the friends assembled at the Convention and the believers in Iran. The spiritual and jubilant atmosphere, the richness of experiences, and the palpable unity of thought that characterized the consultations were signs of the growing capacity of Bahá'í communities throughout the world to contribute to the establishment of the civilization envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh. The beauty and grandeur of the concept of unity in diversity illumined the eyes and captured the hearts. The opening verses of a poem by Varqá, the martyr, chanted during the commemoration of the Ninth Day of Ridván held in the Haram-i-Aqdas, were expressive of the feeling shared by all participants:

How wondrous the banquet of reunion in this snow-white Spot! Would that all were here!  
What joy, what ecstasy in this banquet, our lot! Would that all were here!

The reason that the Bahá'ís of Iran were deprived from participating in this spiritual Convention is well known to the people of the world. The dissemination of bigotry, calumny, and mistrust by certain authorities as a means of advancing their own malicious designs has entangled the people of Iran, you among them, in countless problems. Even though six of the seven former members of the Yárán, after enduring ten years of cruel imprisonment, have, with heads held high, returned to their families and to the constructive environment of the Bahá'í

community, and have rejoined their loyal fellow citizens who have set their hopes on the future glory of Iran, yet the continued tyrannical incarceration of other wronged believers is a clear indication of an ongoing animosity that is both one-sided and unfounded. These friends, purely because of their spiritual beliefs, languish behind the bars of enmity and hatred. Of course, all Bahá'ís in Iran, young and old, schoolchildren and students, athletes and artists, manufacturers and farmers, shopkeepers and labourers, have always been and are still affected by various forms of oppression and injustice. However, praised be God that you are adorned with the mantle of faith and firmness in the Covenant; possess a broad vision, according to which service to one's country and fellow beings is the source of true happiness and eternal progress; and are well aware that the spiritual transformation of the world and the spiritual growth of humanity require time and self-sacrifice. Render thanks then to God that, as clearly demonstrated in the documentary film, *A Widening Embrace*, the fruit of the seed of your faithfulness is now apparent in every region of the world.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]