

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

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5 February 2015
18 Sulṭán 171 B.E.

To the Bahá'í community of the United Kingdom

Dearly loved Friends,

Many of you will already be aware of *Education Is Not a Crime*, an innovative new campaign designed to show support for all those denied access to higher education in Iran—including Bahá'ís—and to remind the world of the unjust imprisonment of the courageous educators and administrators who, through the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education (BIHE), attempted to provide a workable alternative. The campaign revolves around two elements: an interactive, multimedia website (at <https://educationisnotacrime.me>) and a powerful new film, *To Light a Candle*, both produced by Off Centre Productions, a company owned by the noted Iranian-Canadian journalist, filmmaker, and human rights activist Maziar Bahari.

The campaign will culminate in “Education Is Not a Crime Day” on 27 February 2015. As part of the campaign, members of the public are encouraged to host screenings of *To Light a Candle* on or around that date. The film, a 55-minute documentary, presents a compelling case for the Bahá'ís of Iran and their resilient response—in the creation of the BIHE—to the cruel deprivations they continue to endure at the hands of the Iranian Government.

Should you so wish, and if local resources permit, the friends are encouraged to consider organising screenings of the film. This could take the form of a campus screening organised by a Bahá'í society at university or even a small, informal screening organised for friends and neighbours in a private home. If any community or individual would like to organise a screening (preferably in consultation with the Local Spiritual Assembly) however large or small, please contact the Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs on 02070197780 or opa@bahai.org.uk to inform it of your plans and arrange for online access to the film. We hope that the film's focus on the resilience of the Iranian Bahá'í community and their determined efforts to contribute constructively to society despite bitter oppression will naturally lead to a variety of elevated conversations amongst those whom you invite to view the film.

Further, to help increase public awareness of the gross injustice of this case beyond the venues where screenings will be offered, the campaign's interactive website (<https://educationisnotacrime.me>) has been created. The site provides a rich background of information about the persecution of Iran's Bahá'ís and creative ways for supporters to make their views known. For example, individuals are invited to upload their own videos making it known to the Iranian government how the denial of education to Bahá'í youth and others hurts the development of the Iranian nation (no equipment more elaborate than a smart phone is needed, and the mobile version of the website makes uploading easy). Please note that should you wish to

upload a video, it is not necessary to mention your membership in the Bahá'í community in your statement of support. Your statement will be equally valid without mention of personal religious affiliation and should not be supplemented with that information unless there is a compelling reason to do so (for example if you have a family connection with the BIHE prisoners). Needless to say, the tone of your statement should be respectful, and it should state facts, express your opinion on the impact of those facts, and avoid pejoratives. A sampling of videos capturing the reactions of individuals to a few screenings of *To Light a Candle* that have already taken place is available on the website.

Please feel free to visit the website to explore ways in which you and your community could participate. Other forms of support, including use of social media, are also suggested on the website and are an integral part of the campaign; indeed, the campaign is already active on Twitter and Facebook (to join the conversation, you can follow and “like” the campaign’s pages, and use its official hashtag, #educationisnotacrime). In addition, you may wish to sign up to the campaign newsletter for updates.

Though time is short, we are confident that those members of the UK Bahá'í community who wish to do so will make a wonderful contribution to the *Education Is Not a Crime* campaign. *To Light a Candle* and the wider campaign are yet further powerful additions to the extraordinary set of films, statements, and gestures that have recently been made by influential Iranians—none of them Bahá'ís—to bring attention to the indignities and injustices that have year after year been heaped upon our sisters and brothers in Faith. We have every reason to feel encouraged that this remarkable development is part of a larger process that will inevitably result in their full emancipation and recognition as a legitimate religious community in the land of their Faith’s birth.

For your convenience, please find below a summary of the campaign links:

- Campaign’s website: <https://educationisnotacrime.me>
- Mobile site for uploading videos: <https://educationisnotacrime.me/upload-mobile>
- Campaign’s Twitter: <https://twitter.com/eduisnotacrime>
- Campaign’s Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/educationisnotacrime>
- Sign up for the newsletter: <http://educationisnotacrime.us4.list-manage.com/subscribe/post?u=07eaeaa0910b48b7191e9a3ea&id=f27e707053>

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

National Spiritual Assembly



Patrick O'Mara,
Secretary

cc. All Local Spiritual Assemblies and Groups