

APPLYING FOR A YEAR OF PATIENCE

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE REQUIREMENTS

A couple experiencing difficulties in their marriage, and who are considering requesting the setting of a Year of Patience, are urged to take the following steps:

- Approach their Local Spiritual Assembly and ask to consult in confidence. If there is no Local Assembly in the locality, contact the National Spiritual Assembly who will find the nearest Local Assembly. The Local Spiritual Assembly will usually appoint a committee of representatives (usually two individuals) to liaise with the couple and oversee the Year of Patience.
- The couple should be aware that their first responsibility during the Year of Patience is to work towards a reconciliation, especially if they have children. Representatives of the Local Assembly will no doubt wish to explore this with them.
- The couple should be aware that the Year of Patience requires them to live in separate accommodation (not just different rooms in the same house) and this may require considerable consultation and planning on their part to arrange it. If the person moving out from the marital home is a Bahá'í, he or she should inform the National Assembly of his/her new address by writing to nsa@bahai.org.uk.
- During the Year of Patience the couple should not have marital relations, nor stay the night in the same accommodation – if they do, the Year is negated.
- Should the Year of Patience be completed with no reconciliation, the couple may proceed with a civil divorce, so that their divorce is recognised in law. The civil divorce should not be long delayed after the Year of Patience is complete.
- In certain circumstances, especially where children are involved, it may be wise for the couple to seek legal advice before the end of the Year of Patience.

... it is more within the spirit of Bahá'í Law for Bahá'ís to postpone the initiation of civil proceedings, (if the law of the country requires a civil divorce) until the end of the year of waiting. However, if such postponement gives rise to inequity or to a legal prejudice against the possibility of a civil divorce, it is, of course, permissible for the civil proceedings to be initiated during the year of waiting.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly,
20 June 1977

- A Bahá'í divorce is not finalised until the couple have completed the Year of Patience, overseen by a Spiritual Assembly, and have received their civil divorce Decree Absolute. A copy of this document should be shared with the overseeing Spiritual Assembly.
- The Local Assembly will then record the Bahá'í divorce in its Minutes and produce a letter for the two parties confirming the finalisation of the Bahá'í divorce. The divorce is not finalised until such time as this is done. The letter should be kept safely as proof

of the divorce if needed in future. (There is no such thing as a Bahá'í divorce certificate.)

- For more detailed guidance, the following documents are available and can be sent to couples on request.

Preserving Bahá'í Marriages (a memorandum and compilation from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice)

Reconciliation and Divorce (guidance notes for Local Spiritual Assemblies, which includes answers to a wide range of questions concerning Bahá'í divorce)