

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

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When replying please

refer to: SRL-21522

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6 Masá'il 169 B.E.

To all believers in the United Kingdom

Dearly loved Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly wishes to share with you some guidance on the subject of the nomination of believers for public honours in the UK.

Some time ago the National Spiritual Assembly sought the guidance of the House of Justice with respect to the attitude that institutions should adopt towards the honours system and whether it was appropriate to engage in the process. Its reason for enquiring was that the Assembly was unsure as to the spiritual principles that should govern a Bahá'í institution's relationship to the nomination process. One anxiety was that the public honours system highlights individuals in a way that does not seem consonant with the Bahá'í spirit of selfless service and, indeed, it is impossible to properly measure the contribution of one individual versus another. The following response was received from the Universal House of Justice in a letter dated 10 August 2011:

In connection with honours in the United Kingdom, the House of Justice feels that, for the time being, it would not be appropriate for Bahá'í institutions to be involved in nominating individuals—be they Bahá'ís or not—or supporting nominations made by others. This is not to suggest that there are not many admirable individuals who are rendering service to the Cause, and more generally to humanity, whose various contributions to society are highly praiseworthy. Rather, as you mention in your letter, Bahá'ís view service as something to be undertaken selflessly, without expectation of reward or public recognition, and it would not be seemly for a Bahá'í institution to press for a particular individual to be recognized for his or her good deeds.

The House of Justice further commented:

Of course, while Bahá'ís do not seek to receive honours, if a believer is offered such recognition, he or she may graciously accept it.

Whilst this guidance specifically concerns the involvement of Bahá'í institutions in the nomination process, the National Spiritual Assembly is of the view that, as it highlights a spiritual principle that is relevant to individuals, it has certain application in the relationship that individual believers have with the nomination process. As any service undertaken by a Bahá'í, whether within the community or without, is offered “selflessly, without the expectation of reward or public recognition”, the National Assembly is of the view that it would not be in the spirit of this guidance for one Bahá'í to promote a fellow believer so that his or her good deeds are recognized.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

National Spiritual Assembly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick O'Mara'. The signature is stylized with a large loop at the top and several horizontal strokes below it.

Patrick O'Mara,
Secretary