

[AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

13 May 2014

To the Bahá'ís of Iran

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

One more year has passed since the imprisonment of a group of your fellow believers, devoted and loyal citizens of your nation, who, although themselves suffering from the deprivation of their basic human rights, had set themselves the task of assisting their community to arrange its affairs, educate its children, aid its youth debarred from university, take care of its elderly, and live according to its own spiritual precepts—thus to promote a distinguished pattern of life and help to build a dynamic society. For these “crimes” they have been confined to prison. The rest of the Bahá'ís in that land also suffer grievously from the arrows of religious fanaticism and ignorance for their unbending commitment to the high principles by which they have chosen to live their lives, and some of them, too, are incarcerated in several cities. Despite this oppression, which is so well known to every fair-minded individual, those in authority brazenly deny the abuse of the basic rights of the Bahá'ís and peddle false accusations against you on the international stage and in the media. Yet with the growing awareness of the people of the world and of Iranians regarding the true intentions of the Bahá'ís, these denials and accusations are so widely recognized as untrue that those who utter them have, by their own actions, destroyed the credibility of all else they claim. As the poet states:

The tongue that is a stranger to the truth
Finds buyers nowhere for its wares.

A brief review of the past twelve months demonstrates a notable rise in the level of support for your rights. The calls raised in your defence by peoples and their governments in numerous countries over many years have elicited our warm appreciation. What is of special significance and deserves particular gratitude, however, is the chorus of brave voices that now, with mounting frequency, are raised by your own compatriots in difficult circumstances as they become increasingly aware of the magnitude of the injustice you suffer. Promoters of justice, artists, statesmen, thinkers, and other enlightened citizens of Iran—even prisoners of conscience from within their jail cells—are breaking their silence. This chorus for justice, which began first in the far-flung regions of the world and gradually attracted to itself the voices of Iranians outside their homeland, is now rising to new and unprecedented levels inside Iran. Beyond recognition of the injustice meted out to you, the enlightened minds of your fellow citizens are more and more attentive to the principles you espouse and live by, and which are the means for the rehabilitation of every society. Principles such as the sanctity of human dignity; the oneness of humankind irrespective of tribe, race, or belief; the equality of men and women; freedom from prejudice; commitment to knowledge and learning; the abolition of extremes of wealth

and poverty; the containment of greed; the harmony of faith and reason—these they increasingly recognize as essential for a progressive future.

Beloved friends: This awakening, this rising consciousness in your land, should not be underestimated. You know well that, for every reported statement of support for you and for these principles, there are many who voice the same sentiments in private and who are now, in light of the current circumstances, learning how to express their views openly and to join the cohort of those who defend your rights and labour for peaceful coexistence.

Consider how that spurious narrative, which the ailing minds of the prejudiced and the limited conceptions of the fanatics have concocted and for whose propagation they have, for 170 years, assiduously striven, has within just a few years become widely recognized to be utterly false. Not only that. This recognition has prompted your keenly alert compatriots to search for the motives for the unyielding insistence on purposely misrepresenting a spiritual movement that first rose up in Iran and today has won considerable acclaim the whole world over.

How pleased we are to see that, through the audacious and selfless deeds of individuals who seek progress for their homeland, the culture of peaceful coexistence among peoples and religions characteristic of the bygone traditions of your venerable nation is undergoing a renaissance. Among the instances of such efforts within Iran, in connection with the situation of your community, these stand out as some of the most notable: the public defence of the rights of Bahá'ís by prominent personalities inside the country; outstanding and respected individuals prompting the general population to show sympathy towards the Bahá'ís for their suffering; the championing of the rights of the Bahá'ís by some of the distinguished and lion-hearted women of that land; and the expressions of sympathy, both in public and private, on the part of certain senior Shí'ah clerics. However, the open call for coexistence among the religions by one senior Iranian cleric was so dramatic, its implications so profound, and its reach so extensive that it has won the appreciation and support of religious figures, including Muslim leaders in other lands. Some have even voiced their optimism that such thoughtful actions may make it possible to raise collective awareness about the root causes of religious prejudice—a social malady which today blights the lives of countless millions throughout the world. Such spiritual leaders, detached from earthly matters, are extolled in the Bahá'í Writings as “the bearers of God’s mercy” and “the tokens of His favour”; all sincere and pure souls who arise in service to humankind and promote the cause of universal peace are described in the same Writings as those who “shall erelong shine like unto a brilliant star from the horizon of humankind and illuminate the whole earth”.

Consider what is happening in the world. Darkness has so enveloped humankind—cruelty, oppression, prejudice—as to overwhelm the heart. But in every land, including your own, there are many individuals whose commitment to constructive principles, to love, to equity and fairness, and to a world-embracing vision, is so strong that they are motivated to sacrifice worldly advantage for the betterment of others and for a future in which justice will reign. In so doing, such souls evoke the admiration of others as they slowly, perhaps imperceptibly, but with undeniable effect, enlighten minds and create the environment necessary for the realization of unity in diversity. We thank God that you, followers of Bahá'u'lláh, are among those souls. You are enkindled with the light of faith, are committed to divine precepts, and, through lives devoted to Him Who is the Lifegiver of the world, are transforming human hearts. Keep, then, the flame of hope burning in your breasts and, with resolute commitment, continue in your path.

Oppression and injustice, which prosper in the darkness of falsehood and deceit, abhor the light of truth and honesty, for the rays of that light will ultimately penetrate the veils of prejudice and illuminate the path of equality and justice.

You have our heartfelt prayers, the abiding gratitude of your fellow believers, and the growing admiration of the peoples of the world.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]