

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

October 1963

To the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the World

Fellow believers in the Cause of God,

Six years ago when nearing the midway point of the Ten Year Crusade, the Bahá'í World found itself abruptly deprived of the guiding hand of its beloved Guardian. The anguish which then seized our hearts, far from paralyzing the progress of the Cause, stiffened our resolve and fired our zeal to complete the tasks which God, through His Chosen Branch, had laid upon us. The august institution of the Hands of the Cause of God which he had, but recently, in compliance with the instructions of the Master's Will, raised up, kept the people of this Cause faithfully to the path which had been shown to us by the pen of divine guidance, and brought us not only to the triumphal conclusion of that Crusade but to the culminating point of the construction of the framework of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order.

In March 1930 Shoghi Effendi wrote that Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá had "in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as Their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world." After long and prayerful consultation, the House of Justice, as the friends have already been informed, found that there is no way in which it can legislate for a second Guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi. The Universal House of Justice has therefore begun, in humble obedience to the Will of God, and strengthened by daily prayer in the Holy Shrines, to undertake the heavy tasks laid upon it. In the words of our beloved Guardian it "will guide, organize and unify the affairs of the Movement throughout the world" and "will have to consider afresh the whole situation, and lay down the principle which shall direct, so long as it deems advisable, the affairs of the Cause."

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh is unbroken, its all-encompassing power inviolate. The two unique features which distinguish it from all religious covenants of the past are unchanged and operative. The revealed Word, in its original purity, amplified by the divinely guided interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, remains immutable, unadulterated by any man-made creeds or dogmas, unwarrantable inferences or unauthorized interpretations. The channel of divine guidance, providing flexibility in all the affairs of mankind, remains open through that Institution which was founded by Bahá'u'lláh and endowed by Him with supreme authority and unfailing guidance, and of which the Master wrote: "Unto this body all things must be referred." How clearly we can see the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's assertion: "The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation. Storms of human strife are powerless to undermine its basis, nor will men's fanciful theories succeed in damaging its structure."

As the significance of the Cause of God continues in the years ahead to become more clearly apparent to the eyes of men, a great responsibility to watch over its security rests upon all of its institutions. The Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, charged in the sacred Texts with the specific duties of protecting and propagating the Faith, has a particularly vital responsibility to discharge. In their capacity as protectors of the Faith, the Hands will continue to take action to expel Covenant-breakers and to reinstate those who sincerely repent, subject in each instance to the approval of the Universal House of Justice. Exercising their function of propagating the Faith, the Hands of the Cause will inspire, advise and assist the National Spiritual Assemblies in the

work as they did in the time of our beloved Shoghi Effendi, assisted by the members of their Auxiliary Boards who will continue to fulfill those functions outlined for them by him.

We stand now upon the threshold of the second epoch of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, with the outposts of the Cause established in the remotest corners of the earth, and having already witnessed the beginnings of that entry into the Faith by troops promised by the Master Himself. The foundation of the Kingdom has been securely laid, the framework has been raised. The friends must now consolidate these achievements, safeguard their institutions and gather the peoples and kindreds of the world into the Ark which the Hand of God has built.

Next Ridván will be launched the second of those world-encircling enterprises destined in the course of time to carry the Word of God to every human soul. The Standard-Bearers of this Nine Year Plan are the Hands of the Cause of God. The responsibility for directing the work will rest upon the shoulders of the National Spiritual Assemblies, the generals of the Army of Light, under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice.

As the first step inaugurating this great undertaking we rejoice to announce the formation next Ridván of nineteen National Spiritual Assemblies, resulting in the dissolution of six of the existing Regional National Spiritual Assemblies, and bringing the total number of these pillars of the Universal House of Justice to sixty-nine. The National and Regional National Assemblies now to be formed are:

1. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of North West Africa, with its seat in Tunis, comprising Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Spanish Sahara, Rio de Oro, Mauritania, the Canary Is., and Madeira.
2. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of West Africa, with its seat in Monrovia, comprising Liberia, Sénégal, Gambia, Portuguese Guinea, Guinée, Sierra Leone, Mali, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast and Cape Verde Is.
3. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of West Central Africa, with its seat in Victoria, comprising Cameroon, Spanish Guinea, St. Thomas I., Fernando Po I., Corisco I., Nigeria, Niger, Dahomey, Togo, and Ghana.
4. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Uganda and Central Africa, with its seat in Kampala, comprising Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Republic of the Congo (Ex-Belgian), the Congo Republic (Ex-French), Central African Republic, Gabon and Chad.
5. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Kenya, with its seat in Nairobi.
6. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, with its seat in Dar-es-Salaam, comprising Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Mafia I., and Pemba I.
7. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South Central Africa, with its seat in Salisbury, comprising Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland.
8. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South and West Africa, with its seat in Johannesburg, comprising Angola, Southwest Africa, South Africa, Zululand, Eswatini, Basutoland, Mozambique and St. Helena.
9. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Indian Ocean, with its seat in Port Louis, comprising Mauritius, the Malagasy Republic, Réunion I., Seychelles Is., Comoro Is., and the Chagos Archipelago.

10. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Hawaiian Islands, with its seat in Honolulu.
11. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the South Pacific Ocean, with its seat in Suva, comprising the Gilbert and Ellice Is., Nauru I., Fiji, Samoa Is., Tonga Is., and Cook Is.
12. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the South West Pacific Ocean, with its seat in Honiara, comprising the Solomon Is., New Hebrides Is., New Caledonia and Loyalty Is.
13. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of North East Asia, with its seat in Tokyo, comprising Japan, Formosa, Hong Kong and Macau.
14. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Korea, with its seat in Seoul.
15. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Malaysia, with its seat in Kuala Lumpur, comprising Malaya, Singapore, Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak.
16. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Indonesia, with its seat in Djakarta, comprising Indonesia, the Mentawai Is., Portuguese Timor and West Irian.
17. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Vietnam, with its seat in Saigon, and having jurisdiction over the Bahá'ís of Cambodia.
18. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Thailand, with its seat in Bangkok, and having jurisdiction over the Bahá'ís of Laos.
19. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Philippines, with its seat in Manila.

The detailed goals of the Plan, which will include sixty-nine national plans, have yet to be announced, but they must be such as to develop still further the World Center of the Faith and the work of its institutions; to consolidate those territories which have already been opened to the Faith; to bring God's healing Message to many more of the peoples and territories of the world including all the unopened territories of the Ten Year Crusade and all the remaining independent states of the planet; and to achieve worldwide proclamation of the Faith to mark the Centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's Proclamation to the kings and rulers in 1867–1868.

In the spring of 1968 the next election for the Universal House of Justice will take place.

Beloved friends, the Cause of God, guarded and nurtured since its inception by God's Messengers, by the Center of His Covenant and by His Sign on earth, now enters a new epoch, the third of the Formative Age. It must now grow rapidly in size, increase its spiritual cohesion and executive ability, develop its institutions and extend its influence into all strata of society. We, its members, must, by constant study of the life-giving Word, and by dedicated service, deepen in spiritual understanding and show to the world a mature, responsible, fundamentally assured and happy way of life, far removed from the passions, prejudices and distractions of present day society. Relying upon God alone, we can promote His Cause and establish His Kingdom on earth. Only thus can we prove our love for Those Who brought this new day into being. Only thus can we prove the truth of Their Divine Mission and demonstrate how valid was Their Sacrifice.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]