

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

November 1964

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Beloved Friends,

Once again the World Center of our Faith has been the scene of historic events, affecting profoundly the immediate prosecution of the Nine Year Plan and the future development of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The occasion was the gathering in the Holy Land, for a period of fourteen days, of the Hands of the Cause of God to discuss their vital responsibilities, and particularly as Standard-Bearers of the Nine Year Plan.

The Universal House of Justice took advantage of this opportunity not only to receive the advice, opinions and views of the Hands on the progress of the Nine Year Plan but to consult them on the highly important goal announced at Riḍván 1964 under World Center Goals as "Development of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, in consultation with the body of the Hands of the Cause, with a view to the extension into the future of its appointed functions of protection and propagation."

It was apparent that the elucidation of this vital goal, affecting as it does the relationship of the Hands of the Cause of God to all other institutions of the Cause, was imperative to the prosecution of the all-important teaching work and the development of the Bahá'í World Order.

Accordingly, the Universal House of Justice gave its full attention to this matter and, after study of the sacred texts and hearing the views of the Hands of the Cause themselves, has arrived at the following decisions:

There is no way to appoint, or to legislate to make it possible to appoint, Hands of the Cause of God.

Responsibility for decisions on matters of general policy affecting the Institution of the Hands of the Cause, which was formerly exercised by the beloved Guardian, now devolves upon the Universal House of Justice as the supreme and central institution of the Faith to which all must turn.

It is with great joy that we are able to share with you the initial steps now taken to attain the goal.

The assignment of the Hands to various continents remains unchanged but, in order to expedite the work, the continents of Asia and the Western Hemisphere will each be divided into zones for the day-to-day work of the Hands, one or more Hands being responsible for each zone. Asia will consist of two zones: the Middle East comprising the countries from and including Pakistan westwards and also Asiatic U.S.S.R.; and South and East Asia comprising the remainder of the continent. The Western Hemisphere will consist of three zones: North America, Central America (including Mexico) and the Antilles, and South America. The Hawaiian Islands will be in the Australasian continental area, as listed in the recently issued statistical summary.

The number of members of the Auxiliary Boards for the propagation of the Faith will be increased in every continent, raising the total number of Auxiliary Board members in Africa from eighteen to twenty-seven; in Asia from fourteen to thirty-six; in Australasia from four to nine; in Europe from eighteen to twenty-seven; and in the Western Hemisphere from eighteen to thirty-six.

The Hands of the Cause in each continent are called upon to appoint one or more members of their Auxiliary Boards to act in an executive capacity on behalf of and in the name of each Hand, thereby assisting him in carrying out his work.

The exalted rank and specific functions of the Hands of the Cause of God make it inappropriate for them to be elected or appointed to administrative institutions, or to be elected as delegates to national conventions. Furthermore, it is their desire and the desire of the House of Justice that they be free to devote their entire energies to the vitally important duties conferred upon them in the Holy Writings. The importance of close collaboration between the Hands of the Cause and National Spiritual Assemblies cannot be overstressed, and a separate communication is being addressed to National Assemblies on this subject, supplementing guidance given in earlier letters.

We anticipate announcing at Riḍván 1965 plans for Oceanic and Intercontinental Conferences, an overall plan for worldwide proclamation of the Faith during 1967–68, the centenary year of the revelation of the Súriy-i-Mulúk, involving cooperation of National and Local Assemblies throughout the world, and conditions of entry for a competition for the design of the Mashriqu'l-Adhikár of Panama.

Teaching the masses is the greatest challenge now facing the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. No work is more important than that of carrying His Message with utmost speed to the bewildered and thirsting peoples of a spiritually parched world. Now, as the Hands return to their various continents, reinforced by a wider and more efficient organization of their work, we are confident that the whole Bahá'í world will, with rising enthusiasm and ever-increasing success, press forward with the teaching work, greatly increase the flow of pioneers, more widely participate in the financial support of the work of the Cause and add rapidly to the list of goals already accomplished.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]