

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

28 January 1966

To National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

From time to time questions have arisen about the application of the law of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas on the observance of Bahá'í Holy Days. As you know, the recognition of Bahá'í Holy Days in at least ninety-five countries of the world is an important and highly significant objective of the Nine Year Plan, and is directly linked with the recognition of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh by the civil authorities as an independent religion enjoying its own rights and privileges.

The attainment of this objective will be facilitated and enhanced if the friends, motivated by their own realization of the importance of the laws of Bahá'u'lláh, are obedient to them. For the guidance of believers we repeat the instructions of the beloved Guardian:

He wishes also to stress the fact that, according to our Bahá'í laws, work is forbidden on our nine Holy Days. Believers who have independent businesses or shops should refrain from working on these days. Those who are in government employ should, on religious grounds, make an effort to be excused from work; all believers, whoever their employers, should do likewise. If the government, or other employers, refuse to grant them these days off, they are not required to forfeit their employment, but they should make every effort to have the independent status of their Faith recognized and their right to hold their own religious Holy Days acknowledged.

(From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the American National Spiritual Assembly, dated 7 July 1947—*Bahá'í News*, No. 198, page 3)

This distinction between institutions that are under full or partial Bahá'í control is of a fundamental importance. Institutions that are entirely managed by Bahá'ís are, for reasons that are only too obvious, under the obligation of enforcing all the laws and ordinances of the Faith, especially those whose observance constitutes a matter of conscience. There is no reason, no justification whatever, that they should act otherwise ... The point which should be always remembered is that the issue in question is essentially a matter of conscience, and as such is of a binding effect upon all believers....

(From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the American National Spiritual Assembly, dated 2 October 1935—*Bahá'í News*, No. 97, page 9)

In addition, steps should be taken to have Bahá'í children excused, on religious grounds, from attending school on Bahá'í Holy Days wherever possible. The Guardian has said:

Regarding children: at fifteen a Bahá'í is of age as far as keeping the laws of the Aqdas is concerned—prayer, fasting, etc. But children under fifteen should certainly observe the Bahá'í Holy Days, and not go to school, if this can be arranged, on these nine days.

(From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the American National Spiritual Assembly, dated 25 October 1947)

National Assemblies should give this subject their careful consideration, and should provide ways and means for bringing this matter to the attention of the believers under their jurisdiction so that, as a matter of conscience, the mass of believers will uphold these laws and observe them.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

