

## THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

6 March 1977

To National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The establishment and strong growth of Local Spiritual Assemblies is one of the most fundamental requirements for the spread of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, the development of Bahá'í community life and the emergence of a transformed society. This theme has been made one of the central goals of the Five Year Plan, and National Spiritual Assemblies, aided by their committees, have been making strenuous efforts to establish new Local Spiritual Assemblies and to consolidate those which have lapsed or are in need of strengthening.

Already a number of specific steps have been taken by the Universal House of Justice to assist National Spiritual Assemblies towards the attainment of these objectives. The most far-reaching of these steps is the authority given to members of the Auxiliary Boards to appoint assistants whose primary aim is to stimulate and assist the believers to bring into being and to consolidate Local Spiritual Assemblies in all localities where nine or more Bahá'ís reside, and to advise and assist these Assemblies in the performance of their God-given duties. The effects of the appointment of assistants by Auxiliary Board members are beginning to appear and will undoubtedly bear more and more fruit as the months pass.

Nevertheless, it is of concern to the Universal House of Justice that, in spite of the efforts of the National Spiritual Assemblies and the Auxiliary Boards and of all the believers who are laboring in the field, there are many areas in which there are communities of nine or more believers who are left, for year after year, without the blessing of the divine institution of a Local Spiritual Assembly. This is a phenomenon of the present stage of the spread of the Faith where there has been a rapid acceptance of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh by people who, because of factors such as illiteracy, unfamiliarity with the concepts of Bahá'í administration, or an attitude to the calendar and the passage of time that is different from that of city-dwellers, fail to reelect their Spiritual Assemblies on the First Day of Riḍván. National Assemblies are striving to send pioneers and traveling teachers to deepen such believers in their understanding of the teachings and administrative principles of the Faith, but often the localities in which they dwell are remote from the other friends or difficult to reach, and there are, in any case, too few well-grounded believers who can be sent on such projects.

Not wishing such communities to be deprived of the bounty and experience of having Local Spiritual Assemblies, we have decided that, in such cases, when the local friends fail to elect their Spiritual Assembly on the First Day of Riḍván, they should do so on any subsequent day of the Riḍván Festival. This is not a general permission to all Local Spiritual Assemblies; it is intended only for those which are affected by factors such as those mentioned above, and it is for your Assembly to decide the areas or Assemblies in your country to which it will apply. The aim is still to so consolidate all communities that they will elect their Assemblies regularly on the First Day of Riḍván.

It is hoped that this decision will do much to help you consolidate the communities throughout your area of jurisdiction. It does not change the permission given at the beginning of the Five Year Plan for new Assemblies, being formed for the first time, to be formed at any time during the year.

We shall supplicate the Blessed Perfection to reinforce with the Hosts of Heaven every effort you make towards this vital objective.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]