

The Universal House of Justice

Department of the Secretariat

26 February 1979

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Recent events in Iran have focused the attention of the world's news media on that country, and the Bahá'ís and the Bahá'í Faith have been mentioned frequently. Our enemies have spread many misleading statements and calumnies through the media.

Already in the United States the prompt reaction of Local Spiritual Assemblies and the National Spiritual Assembly to an attack on the Faith made during a national television program has resulted in the greatest publicity for the Cause for many years.

The friends are urged through their National and Local Assemblies, and individually, and without in any way criticizing or confronting editors and program directors, to offer articles, letters to editors, statements to radio and television producers and to take occasional advertisements. All these should be linked to any mention of the Faith, particularly though not necessarily a misleading one, and should be solely concerned with repudiating falsehoods and giving the truth about the Faith, not indulging in argument or complaint.

The Universal House of Justice is aware of a pattern in the false statements being circulated about the Faith and sends the following information to enable the friends everywhere to take action whenever the opportunity arises.

The allegations against us are mainly that in Iran the Bahá'ís have been political supporters of the previous regime, that one of the Prime Ministers and some Ministers have been Bahá'ís, and that even the head of SAVAK (the Iranian Secret Police) and other of its high-ranking officers have been members of the Bahá'í Faith. The Bahá'ís are also accused of being against Islam and of supporting causes which are hostile to Muslim nations.

It is obvious that these allegations are entirely unfounded. The established nonpolitical nature of the Faith, as well as the principle that whoever among the friends participates in partisan politics or becomes a member of a political party is expelled from the Bahá'í community, support this. These false accusations by the enemies of the Cause are being deliberately spread for two main reasons: one, to discredit their political opponents who have been or are in power by associating them with the Faith; and two, to incite further hatred of the fanatical sections of the population against the Bahá'ís.

During the previous regime, when a one-party system, Rastakhiz, was in force in Iran and the people were induced and often compelled to become members of it, the Bahá'ís of Iran were perhaps the only community who, on the grounds of their religious beliefs, firmly refused to join this party. They declared that although, as an act of faith, they are loyal to the government of the country in which they reside, they cannot accept membership in any political party. Threats of the consequences of such refusal did not deter the Bahá'ís from standing firm in their conviction.

Regarding the false allegation that Mr. Abbas Hoveida, the ex-Prime Minister of Iran, was a Bahá'í, the facts are that his grandfather was a Bahá'í at the time of Bahá'u'lláh and his father was also a member of the Faith for some time. However, because the latter accepted a political assignment in the foreign ministry of Iran, he was expelled from the Bahá'í community. Mr. Hoveida himself never became a Bahá'í, and asserted that he was a Muslim. In fact, during his term of office, he created many difficulties for the Bahá'í community in order to counter the accusations of his alleged affiliation with the Faith. It was during his regime that many Bahá'ís

were dismissed from their administrative posts in the government because of their Faith, and an anti-Bahá'í bias was fostered in respect of employment.

There was another Minister, Mansour Rouhani, whose father was a Bahá'í and mother a Muslim, but he was not, nor had ever been a Bahá'í. Further, some years ago, a Bahá'í accepted a cabinet post just for a brief time, and he was promptly expelled from the Bahá'í community.

It should be categorically denied and refuted that General Nasiri, the late head of SAVAK, as well as his assistants, were ever Bahá'ís, and it can be stated that their organization was responsible for the dismissal of many of the friends from government offices in Iran.

It is true that Bahá'ís must show loyalty to their respective governments, and it is also true that a number of the friends in Iran, while demonstrating this principle, as well as rectitude of conduct and trustworthiness, became known for these qualities and obtained high-ranking, nonpolitical, financial, and administrative positions in the government. However, loyalty and obedience to the government has never meant that the Bahá'ís agreed with or promoted political principles and policies.

Another principle of the Faith may be cited, namely, that Bahá'ís are forbidden to deny their Faith, even if their very lives are at stake. It is an historical fact that thousands of martyrs, given the choice to deny their faith so that their lives would be spared, refused to do so and proclaimed their faith openly, suffering the consequences. Therefore the public should know that whoever denies that he is a Bahá'í cannot be a member of the Bahá'í community.

In Iran the officially recognized religious minorities are the adherents of the Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian Faiths, although the Bahá'ís outnumber them all. The enemies of the Cause in Iran consider the Bahá'ís as heretical, a “sect,” “cult,” or similar group. This is because the Muslims, unlike Bahá'ís who believe in progressive and continuous divine revelation, believe that no prophet will appear after Muḥammad. Therefore, whenever Bahá'ís are referred to as a sect or group, the friends should try to remove this misunderstanding and proclaim the independent nature of the Faith to the non-Bahá'í public.

The Bahá'ís are also accused of being against Islam, whereas it is easy to explain to the public that we believe that all religions of the past, including Islam, are divine in origin and are revered and respected by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. Indeed, the Author of this Revelation Himself states this fact time and time again in His Writings.

One of the excuses given by Muslims for hostility to the Faith is the location of our world administrative center in Israel; in the conflict between some Islamic nations and Israel, the Bahá'ís have been accused of being Zionists. It should be made clear that Bahá'ís, who believe in the oneness of humanity and who do not show enmity to any nation, people or creed, cannot take sides in any political controversy. As promoters of genuine love and proclaimers of the unity of mankind, taking sides in such disputes would be diametrically opposed to their religious beliefs. It can be explained, whenever necessary, that Bahá'u'lláh was sent, in 1868, as a Prisoner to the Holy Land by the Ottoman Emperor. For the remainder of His life He was a Prisoner and Exile, and He subsequently passed away near 'Akká in 1892. The holiest Shrines of the Bahá'í Faith, around which its world administrative center has been established, are situated in the Holy Land because of events which occurred more than half a century before the establishment of Israel and other countries in this part of the world as independent nations. Holy Shrines of the Muslims, Christians and Jews are also located in the Holy Land. Therefore, it is simple enmity to attack the Bahá'í Faith on the basis of the geographical location of its World Center.

The Universal House of Justice has requested us to bring these facts to your attention so that you may use them whenever necessary in refuting falsehoods and in answering questions and writing articles and letters to the press.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Department of the Secretariat

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