

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

15 June 1979

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Further to the letter of the House of Justice to you of May 23rd, the situation in Persia continues to be a cause for deep concern and the friends and Holy Places in the country are in serious danger. We have been directed by the House of Justice to inform you of the following developments in the Cradle of our Faith.

1. An order has been issued by the authorities requiring the Umaná Company to cease functioning under its Bahá'í manager and to operate henceforth under a new non-Bahá'í management. This company holds on behalf of the Bahá'í community all the properties of the Faith, including the Holy Places. This step is ominous in its implications as it forebodes total confiscation of all our properties, including Bahá'í cemeteries. A similar step has been taken in respect to the Bahá'í hospital in Tehran, known as the Mitháqíyyih Hospital.
2. As a result of the recent disturbances, local revolutionary committees in Iran have instigated, in rural areas, the looting of the homes of several hundred Bahá'í families and the deprivation of their means of livelihood. Although a partial restitution of these properties has taken place, adequate compensation for the losses sustained by the Bahá'ís has yet to be made.
3. Efforts are made to silence the religious conscience of the Bahá'ís, as they are threatened with dismissal from their jobs and loss of their retirement allowances if they refuse to recant their Faith.
4. Shirkat-i-Nawnahálán, a commercial company of sixty years' standing, in which over 15,000 Bahá'ís have shares and investments, is occupied, its assets frozen, and its staff prevented from work, and denied their salaries. This action contradicts public proclamations of the new regime as well as accepted international standards.
5. The proposed drafts of the new constitution as published in the press recognize three religious minorities but omit mention of the Bahá'ís, in spite of the fact that they are the largest religious minority in the country.
6. The true aims and principles of the Faith are being maliciously misrepresented by a group of fanatical Shi'ah fundamentalists, established over twenty years ago, and one of whose chief aims has been and is to harass the Bahá'í community in Iran. This group is presently spreading false allegations against the Bahá'ís, unjustly accusing them of being enemies of Islam, agents of Zionism and political tools of the previous regime. Such allegations have aroused the passions of uninformed mobs, and created misunderstandings with the authorities. As the Bahá'ís are not a recognized entity in Iran, they have no opportunity to deny or disprove these false accusations....

One of the Persian friends has also written to the House of Justice a eulogy of the spirit of his fellow-believers at this moment of deep agitation and turmoil in the Cradle of our Faith. A copy of extracts from his letter is enclosed.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

Extracts from a Report of One of the Friends from Persia

The enemies of the Faith, filled with hatred and cruelty, have once again attacked the wronged and homeless believers and the Bahá'í properties. They are truly the return of their bloodthirsty predecessors. The friends have encountered such persecution and have manifested such courage and steadfastness that in every detail they have become the return of the martyrs and the heroes of the Cause of God. The events of history have become alive once again and are reoccurring. No day passes without the shedding of tears of blood and the anguish of hearts. The news of sad events, like a weighty hammer continually descends upon the Bahá'ís. No pen is able to describe the degree of afflictions and difficulties inflicted upon these wronged believers.

About 2,000 men, women, children and youth have sought refuge in the mountains and deserts and live in tents. They have spent many cold and rainy days in the caves of the mountains. Many are injured with broken arms and legs. The small children have lost their ability to talk, having been frightened so much because of the incidents, and the milk of the nursing mothers has dried up. These believers, without having any means of livelihood, pass their days with utmost difficulty and are banished from place to place.

When the believers, hungry and grief-stricken, had gathered together in the wilderness, the enemies sent them chilaw-kabáb (kabáb with rice) to win their hearts. But those beloved ones did not accept the food and returned it. It is easy to say or write these words, but the bearing of these afflictions is only possible through the power of God. Those few who have denied their faith have escaped to Isfahan, crying and lamenting that they were threatened with the raping of the women of their households. They sit and cry for hours saying they did not know what else to do.

This is only a glimpse into one incident. Every day, from every corner, there is another cry of grief. The Ḥazíratu'l-Quds of Abádih, where the heads of the early martyrs of the Faith have been buried, has been leveled to the dust. Many other Ḥazíratu'l-Quds have been destroyed. The number of Bahá'ís in prisons for one reason or another has increased to 20. Many have been discharged from their jobs. Many have lost their retirement allowances. The Ministry of Education has officially sent a circular that those Bahá'ís who do not deny their faith should be immediately discharged.

Facing these difficulties, in the midst of the darkness of this oppression and tyranny, are the illumined faces of the National Spiritual Assembly members: the sources of hope. Truly they are angels of God; no, more exalted. Every minute of their lives deserves the reward of a martyr, and each one of them, the reward of a thousand martyrs. They are the personification of steadfastness, courage, and sacrifice, with nothing but the service of the Cause in their hearts and souls. Whenever I looked upon the faces of these illumined and beloved ones in the meetings of the Assembly, my tears would uncontrollably pour from my eyes.

There are many such examples amongst the Auxiliary Board members, members of the Assemblies and the youth. Truly, the new creations of God are beyond our imaginations. Unless one witnesses such events in person, the extent of the sacrifice and steadfastness that these friends have manifested cannot be comprehended.

Whenever I witnessed what befell these believers, the words of God would find meaning in front of my eyes. I had looked up the meaning of these words in the dictionaries, but I did not know that in addition to their obvious meaning they describe, or better even, create new realities.

Now that the tempest of trials and afflictions has encircled the community of the beloved ones, the believers who have remained behind and who steadfastly and firmly are bearing the burden of this storm, only can sing the eternal epic of the second century of the Faith. Truly, all of them are the children and descendants of those who watered the tree of the Faith with their pure blood. This tree is still bearing fruit, is still growing! What a glory! What a glory!

There is so much to say and tell, but the mental anguish is so severe, the conditions are so dark and confused, and the outpouring of the difficulties so abundant that my tongue is not able to utter a word and my mind is bewildered. I can only cry. May my soul be sacrificed for the faithful followers of Bahá'u'lláh who have created the greatest epic in the history of the second century of this new Day. One of the guards who had gone to the house of one of the friends had told her that he could not believe the forbearance and patience of the Bahá'ís and had asked how we could ever do it!

These are events to remember. Whenever the bloodthirsty enemies or others have returned a part of the looted belongings of the Bahá'ís, they have refused to accept them, crying that they will not take back what they have given in the path of God. One of the friends ... lost absolutely everything, and refusing the help of the Assembly on the grounds that there were many more needy than he, started to work as a laborer to make a living for his family. He could not bring himself to accept any help whatever from non-Bahá'ís, or to tell of his situation to friends. A friend related that when he saw him, he was so touched that his knees could no more bear the weight of his body.

And yet another story. A believer who had incurred a loss of Rls. 170,000,000, wrote on the questionnaire form of the Assembly that he did not need any help! When everything is gone with the wind, only faith remains.

At present thousands of friends in Iran have lost everything, or have lost their jobs and are meeting their expenses by the sale of their belongings. And then there are those who are fleeing from one place to another and in grave danger. This is only the beginning of the journey of love, and its end is not known.

For five months the National Spiritual Assembly has been meeting at least three or four times a week, for about six to eight continuous hours each time, and devotes 90 per cent of its time to discussion of urgent matters relating to the situation.

The staff of the Nawnahálán Company have not received their salaries for three months now and about 40 families are affected by this situation. Many other families who had given whatever they had to the Nawnahálán Company and were dependent on the interest received to pay for their expenses, are left without any income. All petitions and complaints have remained unanswered. Whatever was lost is lost and nothing has been recovered.

God willing, I will write a book instead of a letter and present it to you so that perhaps a drop of this ocean of difficulties may be recorded. The request of this servant and every one of the believers is to express our servitude and beseech the House of Justice for its prayers in the Holy Shrines. From whomever I asked whether they had any special request to be conveyed to you, I was told to beg for your prayers that God may give them the power and worthiness to accept and bear the difficulties.