

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

17 October 1979

To National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to send you the attached material...

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

IRANIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES OUTSIDE IRAN HAVE APPARENTLY ADOPTED A UNIFORM STAND IN THEIR REPLIES TO APPEALS BEING MADE ON BEHALF OF THE IRANIAN BAHÁ'ÍS. THEY SAY THAT BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN, UNLIKE BAHÁ'ÍS ELSEWHERE, HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN POLITICS, CONSPIRED WITH AND WERE FAVORED AND SUPPORTED BY THE PREVIOUS REGIME, AND WERE PROMINENT MEMBERS OF SAVAK. IN SUPPORT OF THESE STATEMENTS THESE OFFICIALS NAME AS BAHÁ'ÍS: FORMER PRIME MINISTER ABBAS AMIR HOVEIDA, A FORMER MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE MANSOUR ROUHANI, A SAVAK SENIOR OFFICER PARVIZ SABETI, AND THE PHYSICIAN TO THE SHAH DR. AYADI.

THE FACTS ARE THAT HOVEIDA'S GRANDFATHER WAS A BAHÁ'Í, HIS FATHER WAS EXPELLED FROM THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY BECAUSE HE BECAME INVOLVED IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY, AND HOVEIDA HIMSELF WAS NEVER A BAHÁ'Í. ROUHANI'S FATHER WAS A BAHÁ'Í, HIS MOTHER A DEVOUT MUSLIM, BUT ROUHANI WAS NEVER A BAHÁ'Í. SABETI'S PARENTS WERE BAHÁ'ÍS, AND THEY REGISTERED HIM IN THE COMMUNITY AS A BAHÁ'Í CHILD. HOWEVER, WHEN HE CAME OF AGE HE DID NOT HIMSELF REGISTER AS A BAHÁ'Í AND NEVER BECAME A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY. UNLIKE CHILDREN OF OTHER RELIGIONS, BAHÁ'Í CHILDREN DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY INHERIT THE FAITH OF THEIR PARENTS. WHEN THEY COME OF AGE THEY MUST OF THEIR OWN VOLITION EXPRESS THEIR BELIEF IN BAHÁ'U'LLÁH AND HIS TEACHINGS. DR. AYADI, HOWEVER, IS A BAHÁ'Í. HE HELD TWO POSITIONS: ONE AS DIRECTOR OF THE ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE, THE OTHER AS PRIVATE PHYSICIAN OF THE COURT. NEITHER OF THESE TWO POSITIONS WAS REGARDED BY THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY AS POLITICAL IN NATURE.

ALTHOUGH SOME BAHÁ'ÍS WITH UNIQUE QUALIFICATIONS WERE PLACED IN POSITIONS OF TRUST BECAUSE OF THEIR ABILITY AND INTEGRITY, IT IS NOT TRUE TO SAY THAT BAHÁ'ÍS WERE FAVORED BY THE PREVIOUS REGIME. ON THE CONTRARY, THEY WERE DENIED CIVIL RIGHTS, SUCH AS PERMISSION TO REGISTER THEIR BAHÁ'Í MARRIAGES, PRIVILEGE TO HOLD BAHÁ'Í RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENTS IN NAME OF BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY, AND FREEDOM TO PUBLISH BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE OR ESTABLISH BAHÁ'Í SCHOOLS (INDEED DURING THE REIGN OF MUHAMMAD REZA SHAH'S FATHER, OVER THIRTY BAHÁ'Í SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WERE PERMANENTLY CLOSED). MANY OF RANK AND FILE OF BAHÁ'ÍS WERE DENIED JOBS AND SOMETIMES EVEN THEIR RIGHTS TO PENSIONS BECAUSE OF THEIR REFUSAL TO DENY THEIR FAITH.

AS TO THE ALLEGED ROLE OF BAHÁ'ÍS IN SAVAK, THIS IS LIKEWISE UNTRUE. FOR EXAMPLE, IN JANUARY 1979, THROUGH THE MACHINATIONS OF SAVAK, AN ORDER WAS GIVEN TO SYSTEMATICALLY LOOT AND BURN OR OTHERWISE DESTROY HUNDREDS OF HOMES OF BAHÁ'ÍS. THIS IS A FACT ATTESTED TO BY MUSLIM CLERICS BELONGING TO THE PRESENT REGIME WHO, DURING THAT PERIOD OF TERROR AND VIOLENCE AGAINST THE

BAHÁ'ÍS, WERE AMONG THE FIRST TO TRY TO DISSUADE THE MOBS FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE SAVAK PLAN, SINCE THE CLERGY KNEW THAT THE AIM OF THIS PLAN WAS TO GIVE EXCUSE TO SAVAK TO DISCREDIT AND SUPPRESS THEM.

SUMMARIZING THE FOREGOING—IT IS FEARED THAT THE PRESENT REGIME, AS INDICATED BY THE SIMILARITY OF THE STATEMENTS BEING GIVEN OUT BY IRANIAN DIPLOMATIC AGENCIES, IS ATTEMPTING TO JUSTIFY ACTIONS BEING TAKEN AGAINST THE BAHÁ'ÍS BY ASSERTING THAT THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IS NOT A RELIGION BUT A POLITICAL PARTY, AND THAT THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY SUPPORTED THE PREVIOUS REGIME AND THEREBY BECAME POWERFUL AND WEALTHY. THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER CAN BE FOUND IN THE BAHÁ'Í PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE OF COMPLETE ABSTENTION FROM PARTICIPATION IN PARTISAN POLITICS WHICH WAS DEMONSTRATED IN IRAN IN 1975 WHEN BAHÁ'ÍS EVEN IN THE FACE OF THREATS REFUSED TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE RASTAKHIZ PARTY PROMOTED BY THE PREVIOUS REGIME. IN ONE CASE WHEN A BAHÁ'Í ACCEPTED A CABINET POST UNDER DURESS HE WAS DEPRIVED OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY. AS TO THE ALLEGATION THAT THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY REAPED FINANCIAL REWARD BECAUSE OF ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PREVIOUS REGIME THE FACT IS THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF IRANIAN BAHÁ'ÍS ARE OF THE POORER CLASSES LIVING IN VILLAGES. FEW ARE WEALTHY, AND AMONG THEM A NUMBER WERE BUSINESSMEN WHO PROVIDED FACILITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT OF THOUSANDS OF WORKERS. THE FEW WHO RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY ARE BEING ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION AND OTHER OFFENSES SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE. IT IS AN INJUSTICE TO HOLD ANY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ILL-DOINGS OF ANY ONE OF ITS MEMBERS WHO FAILS TO REFLECT THE PRINCIPLES PROMULGATED BY THAT RELIGION.

AS THE NEW CONSTITUTION MAKES NO REFERENCE TO THE BAHÁ'ÍS, WAYS AND MEANS SHOULD BE SOUGHT TO EXTEND TO THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY PROTECTION OF ITS INTERESTS, AND TO ENSURE FOR ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS BASIC CIVIL RIGHTS THUS AVOIDING FRICTION AND FRUSTRATION IN SUCH OFT-RECURRING PERSONAL PROBLEMS RELATED TO REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGES AND BIRTHS, EMPLOYMENT, TRAVELING DOCUMENTS, ETC.

UNLESS THESE DISABILITIES CURRENTLY AFFLICTING IRAN'S LARGEST RELIGIOUS MINORITY ARE REMEDIED, FANATICAL ELEMENTS WILL BE GIVEN FREE REIN TO REPEATEDLY RESORT TO MOB VIOLENCE AGAINST THE BAHÁ'ÍS, EMBARRASSING THE GOVERNMENT AND PREVENTING HOPED-FOR PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY IN THAT COUNTRY....

ONE OF THE OFT-REPEATED ACCUSATIONS AGAINST BAHÁ'ÍS IS THAT THEY ARE ENEMIES OF ISLAM. THIS CHARGE ASSUMES NOW NEW PROPORTIONS AS MANY RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES IN NEW CONSTITUTION APPLY ONLY IF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES CONCERNED ARE NOT REGARDED AS ANTI-ISLAMIC. HENCE OFFICIAL BRANDING BAHÁ'Í FAITH AS ANTI-ISLAMIC MAY BE CONVENIENT DEVICE TO DENY BAHÁ'ÍS ESSENTIAL HUMAN RIGHTS. FURTHERMORE, SOMETIMES DISTINCTION IS MADE BETWEEN BAHÁ'Í FAITH AND OTHER RELIGIONS BY STATING THAT OUR FAITH APPEARED AFTER ISLAM AND THEREFORE IS NOT CONSIDERED BY MUSLIMS AS A RELIGION ENTITLED TO RIGHTS OF OTHER RELIGIONS. SUCH THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES SHOULD NOT BE CAUSE DENIAL CIVIL RIGHTS. SAME SITUATION APPLIES TO MUSLIMS WHO RESIDE IN CHRISTIAN COUNTRIES, AND ENJOY FULL RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS.

REGARDING PROPERTIES HELD BY UMANÁ COMPANY: THESE PROPERTIES CONSIST PRIMARILY OF BAHÁ'Í HOLY AND HISTORICAL SITES HELD IN TRUST BY IRANIAN BAHÁ'ÍS ON BEHALF THEIR CORELIGIONISTS THROUGHOUT WORLD AS WELL AS PROPERTIES OF PURELY RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE SUCH AS TEMPLE LAND, COMMUNITY CENTERS AND

CEMETERIES AND MANY OF THESE HAVE BEEN IN BAHÁ'Í POSSESSION FOR OVER A CENTURY.

REGARDING NAWNAHÁLÁN: THIS COMPANY WAS FOUNDED PRIOR TO RULE PAHLAVI DYNASTY. OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF FIFTEEN THOUSAND BAHÁ'ÍS WHO HAVE SHARES AND INVESTMENTS IN COMPANY ARE NOT OF WEALTHY CLASS, AND DEPEND FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD ON INCOME THEY WERE DERIVING FROM THEIR ASSETS IN THE COMPANY....