

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

18 August 1997

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

It is with much sadness that the Universal House of Justice has received the disturbing news that two more believers in Iran have been killed because of their Faith. While you may share this information with your community, no action should be taken at this time to publicize it in the media.

Mr. Masha'llah Enayati (*Mashá'lláh 'Ináyatí*), a 63-year-old Bahá'í resident of Tíhrán, who was well known for having constantly taught the Faith in a bold and zealous manner, died on 4 July 1997 after being severely beaten while in custody. During a visit to his native village of Ardistán to attend the meeting held to commemorate the anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, Mr. Enayati was arrested in circumstances which are not clear. He was taken to prison in Isfahán, where he was severely beaten on all parts of the body. It appears that he was held in prison for about a week before being taken to a hospital. His daughter, who lives in Australia, was in Iran at the time and visited her father in the hospital, where he was still under armed guard, though it was only a minor matter for which he had been arrested. She witnessed the effects of the beating, including visible bruising all over his body and especially on his hands, which were black from his injuries. She reports that he was in good health before his arrest. Mr. Enayati passed away in the hospital. The Friends in Iran have added that Mr. Enayati's death certificate is worded in a most unusual way, suggesting that the doctor may himself have been under threat and thereby pressured to falsify the certificate. Under "cause of death" is entered, "Will be known later," in the handwriting of the doctor.

Mr. Shahram Reza'i (*Shahrám Ridá'i*), a young Bahá'í man who was serving as a conscript in the army near the city of Rasht, was shot in the head by his weapons training officer on 6 July 1997 and died the following day. In court the officer claimed that the shooting was an accident. He was released after a few days, once the court established that the man killed was a Bahá'í. The court excused the officer of paying the blood-money normally required in such instances, ordering him to pay just the cost of the three bullets used to kill Mr. Reza'i. The Friends in Iran have no doubt that this was a case of deliberate murder and predicted before the "trial" that the officer would be released, since this has been so in other similar cases. We understand that Mr. Reza'i is the seventh Bahá'í undertaking compulsory army duties to have been killed by colleagues or officers.

Below is the provisional translation of the text of a letter written on behalf of the House of Justice for transmission to Iran:

The Universal House of Justice was grieved by the news of the sad events which engulfed the two lovers of the Abhá Beauty, *Shahrám Ridá'i* and *Mashá'lláh 'Ináyatí*. These two trod the path of truthfulness and fearlessness and never concealed their relationship with the world-embracing Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh; this resulted in fueling the fire of prejudice amongst heedless individuals, and finally in leading the two to the exalted station of martyrdom and the attainment of the presence of the Desired One.

Kindly inform the families of these dear ones of the heartfelt sympathy of the House of Justice and assure them of its prayers in the Holy Shrines for the two martyrs in the path of

God and also for those oppressed ones who survive them.

The willful killing of Mr. Enayati and Mr. Reza'i, occurring without any justification whatsoever, illustrates how the persecution of the believers in Iran is continuing to take place in various ways ...

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat