

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

24 September 1998

To selected National Spiritual Assemblies

The Universal House of Justice is pleased to notify you that it has been informed of the release from prison of Mr. Mansur Mehrabi (sometimes referred to as Mehrabkhani), who was arrested in Birjand, Khurasan, on 19 May 1997. The number of Bahá'ís now known to be in prison in Iran by reason of their Faith is thirteen.

The House of Justice has, however, received more disquieting news from Iran. In Bujnurd, northern Khurasan, three friends, Mrs. Nahid Sabeti, Mr. Manouchehr Sharifi and Mr. Hushmand Sanani, were arrested last week for participating in Bahá'í "Family Life" gatherings. After spending six days in prison, they were released, having been given suspended sentences of five years' imprisonment. The Friends in Iran feel that this use of suspended sentences is a new tactic devised by the Ministry of Information (Intelligence) to prevent Bahá'ís from participating in monthly religious gatherings. It is a threatening device, and the Bahá'ís in Iran are fearful that it may be extended to other parts of the country if allowed to go unchallenged. As has been the recent practice of the Government of Iran, no written documentation relating to the arrest or punishment of the friends has been provided to them.

The House of Justice has also been informed that another three Bahá'í homes in Yazd and one in Ardakan have been confiscated because their owners were members of the Bahá'í community. It may be noted that, despite the efforts of the governments of some countries to bring influence to bear on the Government of Iran, the hardship meted out to the Bahá'ís of Iran continues unabated, and in places like Yazd the confiscation of Bahá'í houses and properties is routinely pursued.

Department of the Secretariat