

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

6 October 1998

To selected National Spiritual Assemblies

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to provide you with the following update on recent developments in Iran.

A new, two-pronged assault was launched against the Iranian Bahá'í community during the last week. One was aimed at stultifying academic educational activities among the Bahá'ís; the other was a further attempt at destabilizing Bahá'í families.

More than 36 faculty members of the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) were reported to have been arrested between 29 September and 3 October in cities across the country. It is understood that most of these have now been released, but that five in Tabriz and two in Tehran remain in custody. The arrests were carried out by officers of the Iranian Government's intelligence agency, the Ministry of Information, and also involved the seizure of textbooks, scientific papers and documentary records, some 70 computers, and items of furniture useful to students, including tables and benches. Those arrested were asked to sign a document declaring that BIHE had ceased to exist as of 29 September and undertaking that they would no longer cooperate with it. The detainees refused to sign any such declaration.

Raids on more than 500 Bahá'í homes added to the harassment suffered by Bahá'ís throughout Iran at the hands of intelligence officers. When queried about the seizure of personal household effects like television sets and pieces of furniture, these officers claimed that they had been authorized by the Attorney-General to take anything they wished.

The wave of arrests and harassment bears the marks of a centrally orchestrated campaign intended to lend impetus to the declared policy of the Iranian Government to nullify the Bahá'í community and force its members to convert to Islam. This policy became widely known in 1993 when it was accidentally revealed that the Iranian Supreme Revolutionary Council had earlier adopted a position on "the Bahá'í question" in a secret document dated 25 February 1991 and signed by Ayatollah Khamenei. The document contained such declarations as the following:

The Government's dealings with them must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked.

They must be expelled from universities, either in the admission process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Bahá'ís.

A plan must be devised to confront and destroy their cultural roots outside the country.

Deny them employment if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís.

Deny them any position of influence, such as in the educational sector, etc.

It is evident that the Iranian Government has worked at various means to achieve these ends; among them are the banning of the administrative institutions of the Faith, the disruption of the moral education classes for Bahá'í children and young people, the economic strangulation of the Bahá'ís through such means as the dismissal of Bahá'í employees, the denial of pensions and the confiscation of properties, and the prohibition of Bahá'í youth from entering institutions of higher learning in Iran. The recent attacks by Iranian authorities can be viewed as effecting only a part of this policy.

Department of the Secretariat

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