

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

14 December 1998

To selected National Spiritual Assemblies

This message is to bring you up to date on the situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran. All those known to have been arrested in connection with the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) have been released, with the exception of the following friends in Isfahan, who were arrested in early October and are understood to be still detained:

Mr. Ziaullah Mirzapanah Mr. Farzad Khajeh
Dr. Sina Hakiman Mr. Habibullah Ferdosian

The authorities called upon many of those arrested in relation to the BIHE to sign a statement committing themselves to cease serving in this institution and not to associate with it in the future. All refused to sign, since the operation of the Institute contravenes no law of the country. One of the effects of these widespread raids and arrests in Iran was to bring about a rededication among many of the friends there to their commitment to provide educational opportunities for the young Bahá'ís who have been so callously denied access to the higher education facilities in the country of their birth.

The BIHE has resumed its activities for the new academic year, although its functioning is still hampered by the loss of equipment, especially computers, which it suffered in the raids, equipment that has not been returned. The announcement by the Friends in Iran inviting the Bahá'í students to resume their studies was made throughout the country at a recent Nineteen Day Feast. There has been no reaction from the Government as yet.

In September 1996 we were informed that the final year of high school had been designated a pre-university year, and that Bahá'í students had been barred from attending it. This restriction brought with it a number of disadvantages to those affected, such as limiting their access to many employment opportunities and making it difficult for them to obtain a driving license. We are pleased to be able to report that this discrimination against Bahá'í youth appears to have come to an end very recently, and they are now able to register for the pre-university year in the high schools. It remains to be seen whether they will be awarded the certificate for successful completion of the year. The Friends in Iran feel that international pressure on the Government of Iran is likely to have been instrumental in bringing this about...

At the same time ... the harassment and intimidation of the Bahá'ís in that country has in no way abated, and flurries of arrests continue to occur. Often those arrested are released after a short time. Typical are the cases of three friends—Mr. Derakhshan Fanaiyan, Mrs. Minu Zamani (Fanaiyan) and Mr. Hossain Mazlumi-Nosratabad—who were arrested in the town of Damavand on 17 October; information has just been received that they have been released... they are very much part of the pattern of harassment. For example, five friends engaged in teaching Bahá'í children's classes were recently arrested in the tribal area of Boyer Ahmadi-ye in western central Iran; further arrests are reported to have taken place during the last two weeks of November in Tankabon and Sari, in the region north of Tehran, and four friends are believed to have been detained . . .

You will have received our email of 1 December enclosing the statement of the lawyer who appealed on behalf of the convicted friends in Mashhad, Mr. Sirius Zabihi-Moghaddam, Mr. Hedayat Kashefi-Najafabadi and Mr. Ataollah Hamid-Nasirizadeh. Nothing further is known of their situation as yet. It should also be remembered that four other Bahá'ís remain condemned to death in Iran, two—Mr. Musa Talebi and Mr. Zabihullah Mahrami—for apostasy, and two—Mr. Kayvan

Khalajabadi and Mr. Behnam Mithaqi—for Bahá'í activities. They were condemned some years ago, and their ultimate fate is still uncertain...

The Universal House of Justice deeply appreciates your continuing efforts on behalf of these and all the Bahá'ís in Iran who steadfastly bear sufferings out of loyalty to the Blessed Beauty.

Department of the Secretariat

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