

The Universal House of Justice

12 January 2004

To the Iranian believers living outside Iran

Dearly loved Friends,

You will by now have had an opportunity to read our general letter of 26 November 2003 addressed to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh residing in the Cradle of the Faith. The subject has profound implications for those of you who live elsewhere in the world, implications that call for your prayerful reflection.

Although abuses of various kinds continue to limit what the friends in Iran can accomplish and unpredictable dangers could still lie ahead, the organized campaign to destroy the Cause there has clearly failed. “The enemies of God”, Bahá'u'lláh asserts, “seek by oppression to extinguish the Light, heedless of the fact that the Hand of Divine power transmutes their oppression into oil that increases the brightness of the Lamp.” For the victory so far won, the Bahá'í world can thank the interaction of two moral forces. The first has been the heroism of the Iranian believers themselves and their steadfast refusal to compromise their faith in the face of the worst abuses their enemies could inflict on them. The second has been the determination of National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world to mobilize international protest, attract the attention of influential media, and ensure that the crimes committed against their brothers and sisters in Iran became an established issue in the ongoing indictment by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights of Iran's violation of universally accepted standards.

Parallel with the operation of these forces was an intensive programme implemented in the 1980s to rescue thousands of Iranian refugees who had either been in danger of being singled out for attack or had been stranded without valid passports in lands where they were serving as pioneers. Many of you were the beneficiaries of this highly successful undertaking, and many of you have repaid the national Bahá'í communities who welcomed you by throwing yourselves eagerly into the teaching work. In country after country, your achievements—and those of your sons and daughters—have been vital to the advancement of the Cause.

In Iran, the community of your fellow believers will increasingly be able to turn its attention to the role it is destined to play in the country's regeneration, as envisioned in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá cited in our general letter: “Iran shall become a focal centre of divine splendours. ... although now destitute and despondent, she will obtain abundant grace, achieve distinction and find abiding honour”. Such a contribution will call on all of the capacities, spiritual, moral, and practical, that have been tested in the crucible of suffering.

It would be unthinkable for so noble a struggle to be handicapped by unwisdom on the part of believers outside Iran. It is clear that the enemies of the Faith, having failed to destroy it through violence, now cling to the hope of reducing its influence by encouraging Bahá'í emigration. We call on Iranian Bahá'ís throughout the world to exercise the utmost self-discipline in their communications with their fellow believers in the Cradle of the Faith, to refrain from any suggestions that might undermine, however inadvertently, the historic enterprise Bahá'u'lláh has set in motion. To urge that any of the friends in Iran who have withstood the trials of these recent years should now consider abandoning the field for the ephemeral advantages of life in other lands would be a grave disservice to the Cause of God.

Under present circumstances, visits to Iran should be made only in cases of genuine necessity and after all reasonable precautions have been taken. Some among you may find yourselves facing urgent family or other reasons to make such return visits. In doing so, you will have to ensure that you have properly discharged whatever obligations you have assumed, as refugees, to the government of your country of residence. In certain cases, you will be able to consider the

possibility of remaining in Iran and putting the skills and resources you have earned abroad at the service of the efforts of the community where the Faith was born. Whether such returns are of brief or longer term, however, you should take the utmost care to avoid ostentatious material displays or inappropriate conversation that would create additional tests for friends who have already sustained far more than their share of trials.

The believers in Iran, whom Bahá'u'lláh has raised, nurtured, and prepared for His Purpose, represent a resource of the Cause—not only in Iran but globally—whose potentialities it is impossible today to properly appreciate. They are the pride of the Bahá'í world and a source of joy to our hearts. We are confident that, when you who live in other parts of the world reflect on the issues discussed here, you will resolve to do everything you can to reinforce and encourage the commitment of the company of heroic souls in the Cradle of the Faith on whose steadfastness so much continues to depend.

Our prayers will be offered on your behalf in the Holy Shrines.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]