

[AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

5 March 2009

To the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith

Dearly loved Friends,

In recent weeks, world attention has been focused more intently than ever before on the wave of persecution engulfing the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in Iran. The spurious character of the charges levelled against the seven members of the Yárán, the injustice of the treatment meted out to other innocent Bahá'í prisoners, and the prolongation of the repression of the community of the Most Great Name are increasingly the subject of public discussion and debate. The resolve and steadfastness you have exhibited and the extraordinary powers of concentration you have shown in carrying forward your day-to-day affairs, in discharging your spiritual duties and in serving your country, together with the dignity you have manifested and the constructive resilience of spirit you have evinced in the face of countless hardships—these have won you widespread admiration.

The Prosecutor General of Iran has recently declared illegal the existence of the Yárán and the Khádimín. This is an astonishing assertion, given that, for some twenty years, government agencies have had regular contact with them and have been aware of their activities. From the confines of prison, the members of the Yárán have made clear their view that, if indeed the government no longer considers acceptable present arrangements for administering the affairs of the Bahá'í community, it would pose no major obstacle to bring these arrangements to a close. In so doing, the community would, they have emphasized, demonstrate once again its goodwill to the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as it has done heretofore.

We find the decision of the Yárán to be both wise and appropriate under the circumstances. In view of the current imprisonment of these trusted ones of God, who have served with such ability and discernment their spiritual brothers and sisters in their homeland, responsibility for implementing this decision now rests on the Khádimín across the country. These dearly cherished souls have, in turn, demonstrated exemplary self-sacrifice in the path of service to the Cause of God. Knowing full well their skill and resourcefulness, we are confident that they will bring their work to a close in a suitable manner, taking into account all necessary considerations. That the Yárán and the Khádimín have ceased their collective functioning will not, we are certain, unduly concern the beleaguered Bahá'í community of Iran. You, the much-loved and sorely tried friends in the Cradle of the Faith of God, valiant knights in the arena of servitude and fidelity, will draw on the power inherent in unity and mutual support and, aided by divine confirmations, will find appropriate ways of managing your spiritual and social affairs and engaging in service to your nation and its citizens. The illustrious record of your community over one hundred and sixty-five years can but reinforce this conviction.

In collaboration with the agencies of the United Nations, as well as human rights activists and progressive thinkers everywhere, National Spiritual Assemblies spanning the globe are striving with renewed vigour to defend the rights you have been so long denied. The Bahá'í International Community addressed an open letter on 4 March 2009 to the Prosecutor General, setting out certain fundamental points in response to his announcement. During these blessed days of the Fast, your fellow believers throughout the world hold you especially in their prayers and, conscious of the spiritual forces released through your courage and sacrifice, are sparing no effort to ensure the advancement of the Cause of God and the promotion of the well-being and prosperity of humankind. In the Holy Shrines we offer supplications on your behalf and, with utmost fervour and devotion, beseech the Abhá

Beauty that He may bestow justice and fairness upon clerics and rulers alike and that the day of your emancipation from the fetters of baseless prejudice and long-standing oppression may be hastened.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]