

11 May 2012

To the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in Iran

The approaching anniversary of the illegal arrest and imprisonment of the former members of the Yárán and the co-workers of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) is a reminder of the persecution endured by those beloved friends and other selfless believers in the Cradle of the Faith. Four years have passed since the imprisonment of the former members of the Yárán. Fierce opposition to the peaceful struggle of the Bahá'í youth for access to higher education continues unabated, and those who served the Institute remain imprisoned for no reason other than that they strove to advance the cause of education and promote knowledge and learning.

Although the magnitude of these inequities has elicited expressions of sympathy from informed observers throughout the world, the relentless persecution of the Bahá'í community nevertheless continues to intensify, and the scope of the appalling and inhumane oppression has been broadened to include children and youth. The world recently witnessed, with shock and dismay, how a two-year-old was sent to prison in the company of his mother and endured several days in confinement with her. A teacher mercilessly beat and then burned the hand of an innocent child at school for not taking part in congregational prayers. Government agents forcibly entered a home, violently breaking down a door and, before the terrified eyes of a seven-year-old child and his teen-aged sister, arrested their mother.

At a time when Bahá'ís continue to be denied employment in the public sector, many of those working in the private sector are seeing their workplaces attacked, searched, or closed on spurious pretexts. Bahá'í school teachers and university professors who are denied public employment are also being debarred from offering private tuition, with the excuse that this affords them opportunities to teach the Faith. The services rendered by Bahá'ís to society, and even their everyday activities, are labelled as “plotting against national security”. The ominous scope of this appalling hatred and enmity extends even to the dead. Not only do systematic and persistent attacks on Bahá'í cemeteries and the destruction of graves continue, but in certain regions the believers are even denied the right to bury their dead according to Bahá'í rites. Felling the trees painstakingly cultivated in these cemeteries is another way of showing disrespect towards the departed and of bringing psychological pressure to bear upon the believers. Bahá'ís are forbidden to place flowers on the graves of their loved ones, since this too is deemed to be teaching their Faith. How astonishing that even defenceless animals raised on a farm owned by a Bahá'í are not spared the cruelty of the hate-mongers.

The same hostility and repression to which the Bahá'í community is subjected is also directed in various ways against a broad spectrum of the other citizens of the country, citizens whose only crime is to seek freedom and to aspire to a just and equitable society.

In the face of such patent violations of human rights, governments and nations—large and small—continue to defend the rights of the Bahá'ís of Iran and of the other beleaguered citizens of that land. The United Nations, major international human rights organizations, agencies of government and civil society, parliaments, universities, promoters of justice, lawyers, judges, professors, philosophers, diplomats, statesmen, and authorities in many countries, as well as prominent personalities—including Muslim politicians, whether from the East or the West—have condemned these persecutions in resolutions, reports, and official statements and have called for their cessation. The recent actions taken by ordinary citizens around the world are also noteworthy. As examples, one may cite the gatherings held in twelve major cities across the world to mark the ten thousand days the seven former members of the Yárán have collectively spent in

prison and the march of tens of thousands of Brazilians in defence of freedom of religion and in protest against human rights violations, including those suffered by the Bahá'ís of Iran.

Among the noble people of Iran, artists have also joined the ranks of other fair-minded, impartial, and enlightened thinkers in defending the civil rights of the Bahá'ís. It is noteworthy that the persistence of these injustices, which had earlier led many fair-minded people to break their silence concerning the violation of the civil rights of the Bahá'ís and to declare their support for those rights, has now also aroused their curiosity and led them to wonder at the reason for the intensification of the hostility against the Bahá'í community. With the increasing awareness among Iranians of the constructive role that Bahá'ís have played in the development and prosperity of their homeland, the countless obstacles that have been placed in the path of your participation in building a progressive Iran are gradually being removed, and precious opportunities are opening up before you.

The attacks directed against Bahá'ís and other citizens in Iran are in reality the result of adherence to outdated beliefs and principles and obsolete customs and traditions, whose direct and baleful influence can be perceived in every aspect of life in that land. An atmosphere of ignorant fanaticism and superstition has been imposed upon the country and the credibility of faith and religion has been gravely damaged. The aspirations of the youth are ignored; spirituality and moral values have, notwithstanding the innate nobility of character of Iranian people, been marginalized; corruption and decay have permeated many aspects of society; honesty and truthfulness have been abandoned in the arena of leadership, where falsehood and deception hold sway; the ties of solidarity and trust, so critical to the survival and advancement of a vibrant and dynamic society, have become frayed; the foundations of social order have been undermined; and a terrifying maelstrom of turmoil and trouble has engulfed all. This pitiful state calls to mind the weighty statement of Bahá'u'lláh: "We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy."

Despite these trying circumstances, you, the seekers of the Kingdom, have not allowed the dire adversities of this world to dismay you, and with the assistance of the Most Great Name have remained steadfast in the Covenant and Testament of God. You are committed to the pursuit of your glorious and altruistic goals and are assured of their ultimate realization. You know of a certainty that the present age is one of momentous change and fundamental transformation. The world's outworn order is disintegrating and, amidst the resultant chaos and disruption, the cells of the body of a new Order are developing in the matrix of the world. You have no doubt studied our Ridván 2012 message and have gained a greater appreciation of the new signs of the pervading influence that this mighty Cause is exerting on the very fabric of society throughout the world. Observe with what abounding zeal and faith the devoted followers of the Blessed Beauty, in particular the youth, are labouring in the furthest corners of the world. With the help of their friends, co-workers, neighbours, and relatives, they aim to create in cities and villages an environment in which a spiritually based world civilization is destined to flourish. Consider how they are fostering communities that herald a new life and give hope to the entire world. Armed, then, with your unshakable faith and trusting in the boundless bestowals of the Almighty, persist in your devoted services, and call ever to mind the consoling words of the beloved Guardian assuring the self-sacrificing servants of the Ancient Beauty that there is a mysterious power in the Cause of God which enables it to rise above every test and trial, to derive strength from persecution, to draw vitality from hardship, and to win new supporters out of oppression.

We offer fervent supplications in the Holy Shrines on your behalf.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

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