

10 May 2013

To the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in Iran

Dearly loved Friends,

The arrival in the Holy Land of over a thousand delegates representing Bahá'í national communities throughout the world to attend the Eleventh International Bahá'í Convention was characterized by such enthusiasm and majesty as to bring tears of joy. The gathering of these servants of Bahá'u'lláh—men and women from different ethnic and racial backgrounds—reflected the diversity of the human race itself, demonstrated a new phase in the penetration of the Faith in local communities and among multitudinous peoples of all continents, and told of the confirmations of the Concourse on high and the results of the untiring efforts of the followers of the Blessed Beauty to build the Kingdom of God on earth. The election of the members of the Universal House of Justice took place in an atmosphere of purity, spirituality, amity, and love, devoid of the corruption often associated with elections in this material world. In each of the sessions, in the course of the consultations about the worldwide accomplishments of the Bahá'í community, the discernible effects of the spiritual forces released by your sacrifices were evident. A beautiful bouquet of roses kept the memory of the beloved friends in the Cradle of the Faith ever fresh in everyone's mind. On the second day of the Convention, having listened to expressions of your earnest love for the Blessed Beauty and your dedication to the progress of His Cause, a group of delegates from Africa sang an inspiring song as a tribute to you. As the delegates visited the Holy Shrines, they offered heartfelt prayers on your behalf, and throughout the Convention, their remembrance of you evoked in their hearts these sentiments expressed by the Master: "Gathered in fellowship are we, in the holy court are we, dwellers of Paradise are we; would that thou wert here, would that thou wert here!"

The convocation of this International Convention occurred near the fifth anniversary of the imprisonment of the former members of the Yárán, who served the Bahá'ís of Iran by managing the affairs of the community, and the second year of the arrest of those friends who had been selflessly engaged in teaching useful arts and sciences to Bahá'í youth who, on instruction of the authorities, have been deprived of higher education because of their beliefs. The imposition of these regrettable restrictions is emblematic of the oppression and injustice inflicted upon all the Bahá'ís of Iran, a persecution without any justification that has intensified over the past twelve months, encompassing even young infants and the frail elderly. This hostility, born of ignorance and prejudice, also affects many other brave people of that country and is responsible for the incarceration of some of the most outstanding and capable citizens of that land on baseless pretexts. The perpetrators of this tyranny, oblivious to the good pleasure of God and the welfare of the people, appear to have no concern for the harmful social, economic, psychological, and spiritual consequences of their actions for their homeland and noble countrymen.

Hatred and prejudice blind the inner eye and impair judgement. The futile aim of the authorities in intensifying the persecutions is to demoralize the Bahá'ís and to quench the divinely kindled flame. They are, however, heedless of the fact that no matter how strong the storm of enmity, it will never extinguish the lamp lit by the Hand of Divine Power; on the contrary, the stronger the forces of opposition, the more they will stoke the fire of the love of God in receptive hearts. These uninformed oppressors, not obtaining the desired results from their wide-ranging attacks, now also resort to other means of exerting pressure and coercion. They join forces with the traditional enemies of the Faith, imagining that by sowing the seeds of doubt in the hearts of the friends, they can foment dissension and discord within the community. When they see that your discourse on community building attracts and influences your friends, acquaintances, and neighbours, they desperately resort to circulating distortions of the truth and

spreading fallacious arguments, hoping that by stirring up false controversies over matters of religious doctrine, they will, as they did in the past, be able to replace constructive and purposeful discussions with disputation and contention.

However, everyone, even the oppressors, admits that, notwithstanding the intensity of the hardships and the innumerable obstacles placed in your way, you are as firm and steadfast as a rock in facing adversity, for you consider it a bounty to bear trials and tribulations in the path of God. You know that, in the words of the Centre of the Covenant, “the pure souls have never been concerned with their own rest and comfort. Nay, rather, they have relinquished the sweet nectar and accepted the vicious sting so that all peoples may be illumined.” You pursue your path with patience and calm and hold before your eyes these words of the beloved Master: “For ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, captivity is like unto freedom and the prison-cell a heavenly mansion. The bondage of chains and fetters is as pleasant as a stroll among flowers in a luminous garden. The lowly mat is as a lofty throne, and the depths of the pit even as the heights of the celestial realm.” Moreover, you know well that establishing the Kingdom of God in this turbulent world is no easy task. It requires unshakeable faith, complete reliance on God, high endeavour, an indomitable spirit, constant striving, and infinite patience and long-suffering. You are aware of God’s method and look upon your efforts as seeds sown by the divine Husbandman in His field. Cultivating and gathering the crop require hard work, time, patience, and sacrifice, but through the bounties of God, an abundant harvest is assured. You remain confident that just as the seed, which through the outpourings of the rain and the exertions of the gardener gradually grows into a mighty and fruitful tree, so too your selfless efforts and the labours of other Bahá’ís around the globe—vividly apparent at the Convention—will, at the appointed time, through the blessings of the Abhá Beauty, yield wondrous fruits; hearts will be enlightened, this darksome earth illumined, and the oneness of humanity ultimately realized.

Praised be God that you, valiant labourers in the field of servitude, have excelled in the arena of faith and service and drawn words of praise and admiration from friend and stranger alike. We supplicate in the Holy Shrines that divine confirmations may surround each and every one of you.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]