

1 October 2014

To the Bahá'ís of Iran

Papua New Guinea comprises a group of islands in the vast expanse of the waters of the Pacific, far, far away from the Cradle of the Faith. We recently learned that your sacrifices have so inspired the believers in that vibrant Bahá'í community in their highly energetic response to the exigencies of the Five Year Plan that a group of them are working to make a television programme to bring to the attention of their compatriots the suffering that their deeply cherished fellow believers in Iran endure because of their adherence to the Cause. In so many ways that extraordinary region, Australasia—where, before long, four Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will shine out as beacons of the light of divine guidance and as testaments to the magnificent response of its population to Bahá'u'lláh's call for unity and peace—is the embodiment of this emphatic promise by the Abhá Beauty regarding His Cause: “Should they attempt to conceal its light on the continent, it will assuredly rear its head in the midmost heart of the ocean, and, raising its voice, proclaim: ‘I am the life-giver of the world!’”

To be sure, there are those who wish to conceal this light—indeed to snuff it out—in the land where it was first kindled and shrink at nothing to this end. In recent months, there has been a marked increase in calumnies and lies, misinformation and untruths about the Cause. How utterly futile are their efforts! For the expenditure of energy and fortune on systematic campaigns to propagate falsehoods about your beliefs has, as you know, led to an upsurge in interest to study the Bahá'í teachings and its history.

Consider for a moment the reason for the rise in this interest. It is, of course, a well-known fact that when searching for the truth of a matter, one cannot limit oneself to the study of the statements of its detractors; for an unbiased judgement, the original source must be investigated. Consider what lies and calumnies have for 1,400 years been propagated by the enemies of Islam. Is the truth of the Faith of the Prophet Muḥammad to be judged by the protestations of His enemies or by immersion in and reflection on the ocean of the sacred Word revealed to Him by God?

Regrettably, in your land, truth has become a flexible plaything in the hands of those who are drunk on worldly power. So institutionalized has lying become in official circles that statements made by the authorities increasingly lack any credibility. This is in sharp contrast to the way in which your compatriots are able, with growing clarity, to see and understand your posture. For the sake of upholding the truth and not uttering a simple false statement about your belief that would open up to you every social and economic opportunity, you maintain your integrity and refuse to deny or dissimulate your faith. Among your fellow citizens and on the international stage, this commitment to truthfulness has won for you high standing and immeasurable praise. Little wonder, then, that some of those who attack the Faith in the virtual space now pretend to speak in the voice of the Bahá'ís. Knowing that the words of your avowed adversaries are devoid of any credibility, these hapless antagonists attempt to sow dissension in your midst by commandeering your voice so as to use its moral authority, won by your honesty, to undermine your unity. This effort is so transparent that none take it seriously, but it is an indication of the desperation and frustration of those who oppose you.

This same deceitful attitude is in evidence in the manner in which Bahá'í youth are denied higher education. Every year a new ruse is used to deceive; this year was no exception. But the diligence with which the Bahá'í youth in Iran, despite every obstacle, continue to pursue justice and seek knowledge has again won the admiration of the people of the world and their governments. Whether in the determination and integrity of the young student who, having passed the entrance exam, demands evidence to know why she is being denied her right to higher

education; whether in the heart-rending lines written by a child in defence of her sister against manifest injustice; whether in the fearless audacity and resolve evinced by the concerned father who travels hundreds of miles to set forth the truth to those in seats of power; or whether in the gestures of support and solidarity from your compatriots—in all your countless other unmarked acts of fidelity and steadfastness, as well as in acts of nobility and valour on the part of the people of Iran, a unique and instructive account is being written in deeds.

Yet your actions are not confined to efforts to seek justice. Your unrelenting pursuit of knowledge is perhaps one of the most outstanding examples of constructive resilience in the modern age. In a world where education is not immune from the forces that promote a materialistic conception of human life, and where, for some, university degrees have become commoditized, your admirable pursuit of learning for its own sake, for the sake of the powers of the human mind that it enhances and the capacities for service that it develops, stands in sharp contrast. But what is all the more remarkable is that this attitude, this understanding, this value you rightfully attach to learning is not confined to a certain small section of your community. The imperative to educate is a central concern for your young and old alike; for the students, certainly, but also for those who risk their all to teach and impart knowledge, for those who organize educational endeavours, for those parents who sacrificially ensure their children are able to continue their education, for those who generously offer hospitality, for those who pray for this effort and wish it well, and for countless others who in a myriad other ways make this collective act possible. This resolute spirit and these selfless deeds deserve the highest praise.

Reflect upon the destructive forces at work that are destabilizing equilibrium across the face of the globe, including the situation that prevails in your own land. Power is seized and exercised in a manner that twists or obscures the truth to serve the special interests of the few at the expense of the many. Fanaticism is unleashed in the name of religion, such that it distorts human behaviour and promotes social strife in a manner that stands in stark contrast to the spiritual qualities and social well-being which the Messengers of God sacrificed themselves to foster. Materialism dulls the human spirit, trapping that bird, which should soar in the heavens, in the mire of self-indulgence and animalistic tendencies. As human beings are buffeted by these forces, they long for truth and that which is right and become impelled to discover a way out of this morass. Inspired by the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, you stand against such negative forces, you respond to this search for truth, and together with others of like mind you serve the process of the construction of a just and peaceful world. Praised be God that you are engaged in carrying out the admonitions of your Beloved. Continue then with confidence on your path. Challenged by self-serving power, pursue the acquisition of knowledge; in the face of fanaticism, build unity, and combat prejudices of all kinds; in response to enmity and hatred, offer love and show mercy and compassion; rather than surrendering to consumerism, live a selfless life of service and use your resources for the betterment of the world. Consort in fellowship and work with all who strive for these noble aims.

This prayer of the Master describes well your state and expresses the sentiments of our hearts:

O Divine Providence! This assemblage is composed of Thy friends who are attracted to Thy beauty and are set ablaze by the fire of Thy love. Turn these souls into heavenly angels, resuscitate them through the breath of Thy Holy Spirit, grant them eloquent tongues and resolute hearts, bestow upon them heavenly power and merciful susceptibilities, cause them to become the promulgators of the oneness of mankind and the cause of love and concord in the world of humanity, so that the perilous darkness of ignorant prejudice may vanish through the light of the Sun of Truth, this dreary world may become illumined, this material realm may absorb the rays of the world of spirit, these different colours may merge into one colour and the melody of praise may rise to the kingdom of Thy sanctity.

Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent and the Almighty!

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]