

[AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

8 May 2015

To the Bahá'ís of Iran

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

During the blessed days of Ridván and in the company of a large contingent of the followers of the Blessed Beauty—pilgrims, visitors, and the friends serving at the Bahá'í World Centre—we circumambulated the Holy Shrines, expressing in our hearts profound gratitude for the unceasing divine confirmations that have led to significant advances for the Cause of God in nearly five thousand clusters across all continents, advances that have arisen out of the humble efforts of the friends, in collaboration with fair-minded people of goodwill throughout the world, to work for the prosperity and betterment of society. In our prayers and meditations, we called you to mind and not only remembered the anniversaries of the arrests of the former Yárán and some of the distinguished friends who served the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education, but also recalled, with heavy hearts, the persecution that thousands of Bahá'ís in Iran continue to face each day because of their religious beliefs and the more than one hundred believers that remain unjustly imprisoned. In our supplications at the Holy Threshold, we beseeched Him to bestow justice upon the rulers and fairness upon the clerics so that this oppression and tyranny might be brought to an end and that you and the other noble citizens of your ancient and sacred land may see the dawning light of peace and prosperity.

What the events of the past year have demonstrated ever more clearly to the people of Iran and others from around the world who promote peace and concord is the stark contrast between the peaceful intentions and selfless service of the Bahá'í community and the lamentable and inhuman acts of those who, under the influence of ignorant religious prejudice, continue to perpetrate injustices against you. The support of Iranians of goodwill, whether living inside or outside Iran, offered in defence of the civil rights of their Bahá'í compatriots was also much in evidence. Whether it was students placing on an empty chair the name of a Bahá'í who had been barred from attending university; shop owners offering work to a Bahá'í, a fellow businessman whose trade permit had been revoked; or a number of friends and neighbours signing a petition consenting to the burial of a deceased Bahá'í whose interment had been prevented because of the alleged objections of the public—these are a few of the many examples that demonstrate the support, in cities and villages, of the generality of the people of Iran. There is also ample evidence to show that high-minded Iranians from every segment of society—be they defenders of human rights; insightful and open-minded clerics; political and social activists; writers, journalists, artists, producers of television programmes, and historians who, for the benefit of future generations, have endeavoured to collect documents and records related to the countless acts of oppression against the Bahá'ís and present an unbiased view of Bahá'í aims and beliefs in their work; those who in their articles and personal blogs express their sympathy and

understanding; individuals who, by signing petitions, demand the restoration of your rights; or those who carry out extensive campaigns that protest against both the denial of higher education to Bahá'í youth and the general persecution of the Bahá'ís—share the conviction that all those living in that land, as concerned fellow citizens, can serve shoulder to shoulder to bring about progress in their beloved country. The support of humanitarian organizations, scientific institutions, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, and representatives of various governments, as well as resolutions passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations, is evidence of how the people of the world abhor the ongoing persecutions that you and other Iranians endure.

Your faith and certitude in the Manifestation of God for this resplendent age, your detachment from worldly affairs and attentiveness to spiritual life, your adherence to the principles of this great Faith, your iron will and legendary patience in enduring the difficulties you face in His path, the wisdom and constructive resilience you manifest in the face of the appalling conditions that currently beset you, and your determined endeavours in service to your beloved country and to the world—all these call to mind this passage revealed by the Supreme Pen where, after describing the zeal and overflowing love of His followers and recounting the sacrifices they make in fulfilment of the Divine Will, He states: “I swear by Thy glory, O my God! I am astonished at them and at that which they have manifested in the path of Thy love. Blessings and joy be upon them!... Methinks Thou didst fashion them for Thy love and didst single them out for attraction to Thee; Thou didst infuse into them the spirit of Thy Cause and didst reveal unto them the beauty of Thy oneness.” Rejoice, therefore, valiant knights in the arena of fidelity who tread the path of sacrifice, for you are the embodiments of this blessed statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “O ye beloved of the Lord! Regard ye not the tyranny and iniquity of the ignorant. Resist oppression with justice, oppose tyranny with equity, and respond to bloodthirstiness with loving-kindness. Be the well-wishers of the advancement of Persia and its people and strive to promote civilization for all humanity.”

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]