

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

27 April 2017

Transmitted by email

To National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Pilgrimage is one of the divine ordinances enshrined in the Most Holy Book. Addressing a pilgrim, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes: "Render thanks unto God that thou didst come to the Blessed Spot, didst lay thy head upon the Threshold of the Sacred Shrine, and didst make pilgrimage to the hallowed sanctuary round which circle in adoration the intimates of the spiritual realm." Statements made by and on behalf of the beloved Guardian indicate that pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines can become a means whereby one "can experience that mystic love which constitutes the very core of every true religion", can enable one to obtain "a clearer vision of the mission and significance of the Faith", and can "greatly invigorate the friends and stimulate them to greater services and sacrifice."

The Universal House of Justice has had occasion to review the matter of pilgrimage to the Holy Land and has directed us to share with you measures it has taken over the years and more recently to make pilgrimage more accessible to a greater number and diversity of believers.

The long waiting list that had existed for many years has been eliminated and, at present, those seeking to come on pilgrimage are offered, shortly after receipt of their application, a range of dates from which to choose. The five year waiting period before one can apply to undertake another pilgrimage has been reduced to three years, and steps have been taken to make it easier for a larger number of families and friends to come on pilgrimage together. Permission may now be requested by relatives or friends for those who are not registered members of the Bahá'í community to join them. Efforts are under way to further streamline the online application process through the website [pilgrimage.bahai.org](http://pilgrimage.bahai.org).

Some of you will be aware that the House of Justice has also instituted a group pilgrimage programme, the response to which has been very encouraging. With logistical support provided by their National Assemblies, groups of pilgrims from selected areas of the world from which few had previously come, including remote parts of vast and distant countries, are now among those who have the privilege of spending precious days in the precincts of the Holy Shrines and Holy Places associated with the lives of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. To date, seventy National Assemblies have been invited to participate in the programme, and believers from forty-five countries have already had the privilege of making their pilgrimage through this process.

You are requested to consider, in consultation with the Counsellors, ways in which awareness among the friends of the significance of pilgrimage may be increased—including those in remote and isolated areas—and how greater numbers of believers can be encouraged to avail themselves of this great blessing, bearing in mind ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s counsel that to visit the Holy Shrines “is obligatory if one can afford it and is able to do so, and if no obstacle stands in one’s way.” A film, “Pilgrimage: A Sacred Experience”, which was created to help the friends to better appreciate the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage and its role in fostering the development of one’s dedication to the Cause, may be of assistance to you in this connection. The film may be viewed at [pilgrimage.bahai.org](http://pilgrimage.bahai.org). As you will recall, the film was made available to all National Assemblies on a DVD enclosed with a covering letter dated 20 January 2006.

The House of Justice will supplicate at the Sacred Threshold that your deliberations and actions to this end may attract the confirmations of the Abhá Beauty.

With loving Bahá’í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre  
Boards of Counsellors  
Counsellors