

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1 October 2015

Transmitted by email:

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice received your email letter of 16 September 2015, in which you seek guidance on how to address challenges facing your country as a result of the dramatic rise in the number of migrants and refugees entering Europe and their effects on the Bahá'í community. We have been asked to respond as follows.

The heart of a Bahá'í cannot help but be affected by the news and images broadcast of the plight and suffering of hundreds of thousands of souls—many fleeing their war-torn homeland for their very survival and for the opportunity for a better life. It is all too easy, however, to be swept up in the immediacy of the crisis and echo the cries arising on one side or another of the contemporary debate surrounding the flow of refugees and migrants, seeking a rapid solution to a problem which is but the latest symptom of a much deeper and far-reaching concern. The friends should be reminded that the challenge now confronting Europe is yet another manifestation of the disintegration of a lamentably defective world order described in such vivid terms by the beloved Guardian. Although governments have no choice but to respond somehow to the tragic and disruptive circumstances now arousing in the populace conflicting feelings of compassion and concern, of prejudice and fear, there is no expedient political or humanitarian solution.

As the well-wishers of humanity, the friends should respond to such developments with insight, elevated discourse, and confidence. “Let them see no one as their enemy, or as wishing them ill,” the Master exhorts us, “but think of all humankind as their friends; regarding the alien as an intimate, the stranger as a companion, staying free of prejudice, drawing no lines.” While deeply moved by the suffering of so many, the Bahá'í community remains undeflected by these developments, for it sees in them further evidence of the mysterious workings of the Major Plan of God that are hastening the emergence of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Such world-shaking events will remain a feature of life at this stage of the Formative Age. War, conflict, economic disruption, and social turmoil will continue to bedevil the world and vex its leaders. With their thinking centred on the principles of the Faith, their fingers on the pulse of their

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nations, and their knowledge of the capacities of their communities, National Spiritual Assemblies are in a unique position to shed light on the path the friends should follow.

In considering how to guide your community in responding to the situation, you should assist the friends to steer away from becoming entangled in its political dimensions and to strive to uplift the vision of their compatriots by calling attention to the root causes of the issues mentioned above and the teachings of the Faith that address them. May the friends endeavour to raise the level of the discourse by referring to the relevant spiritual and moral principles, avoiding being pulled into dichotomous political or social debates, and refraining from making comments that are contentious, ill-tempered, prejudicial, or divisive.

Because the means of your Bahá'í community at this stage in its development are limited, it is not feasible for the institutions of the Faith in to initiate a programme of collective action. Yet there may be scope for some individual believers, according to their time, capacity, and resources, to become involved in activities in their immediate surroundings directed towards lending humanitarian assistance. Indeed, it is natural for a Bahá'í to want to reachout to those who are in need.

In recent years it has become evident that in communities where there has been a strong emphasis on the capacity-building features of the Five Year Plan, the ability of the friends to engage in social action has increased substantially. Accordingly, you would do well to encourage the friends to persevere in their efforts to strengthen the training institute and the activities of the Plan, for therein lies the key to multiplying your human resources and creating a vibrant, united, and loving community. As they progress along this path, they will become increasingly capable of contributing in tangible ways to the practical resolution of the problems that confront populations at the grassroots in cities and towns, neighbourhoods and villages. May these words of the Master be a source of guidance and inspiration for every believer in your country:

As for you, O ye lovers of God, make firm your steps in His Cause, with such resolve that ye shall not be shaken though the direst of calamities assail the world. By nothing, under no conditions, be ye perturbed. Be ye anchored fast as the high mountains, be stars that dawn over the horizon of life, be bright lamps in the gatherings of unity, be souls humble and lowly in the presence of the friends, be innocent in heart. Be ye symbols of guidance and lights of godliness, severed from the world, clinging to the handhold that is sure and strong, spreading abroad the spirit of life, riding the Ark of salvation. Be ye daysprings of generosity, dawning- points of the mysteries of existence, sites where inspiration alighteth, rising-places of splendours, souls that are sustained by the Holy Spirit, enamoured of the Lord, detached from all save Him, holy above the characteristics of humankind, clothed in the attributes of the angels of heaven, that ye may win for yourselves the highest bestowal of all, in this new time, this wondrous age.

In the course of your consultations and as developments unfold, you will no doubt benefit from drawing on the advice of the Counsellors.

The House of Justice will offer prayers in the Holy Shrines on behalf of the believers in ,
that they may be guided and confirmed in their noble efforts to advance the Cause of God.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre
Board of Counsellors in Europe
Counsellor
Bahá'í International Community,
United Nations Office,
New York and Geneva
Bahá'í International Community,
Brussels Office