

To the followers of the Greatest Name
and the helpers of the Ancient Beauty
in the sacred land of Iran

Dear sisters, brothers, the solace of our eyes,

Today is the day of Naw-Rúz and the beginning of the soul-stirring spring. This ancient and glorious festival of the Persian people has, with the coming of Bahá'u'lláh, found a new splendour and vibrancy, for it has become a symbol of the arrival of the divine springtime and a reminder of the renewal, regeneration, and transformation that is made possible in the human world after the rising of the Sun of Truth. Praise be to God that in this spiritual springtime you cherished friends are like sweetly singing birds raised by the Beloved's own hand, warbling in the garden of rapture and servitude, your hearts aflame with the fire of the love of God, and your breasts illumined by His heavenly counsels. Know of a certainty that we remember you at every moment, laud your perseverance in the face of unnumbered adversities, and, particularly at the start of the new year, beseech at the Sacred Threshold well-being, genuine happiness, and true liberty for those beloved of our hearts and souls.

We hope that by now you have received our recent letter addressed to the Bahá'ís of the world, which describes and analyses events of the first century of the Formative Age and reflects on a hundred years of striving and effort by the community of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. From the condition of burning grief and painful uncertainty that afflicted the Bahá'í community immediately following the ascension of its loving Master, that same community has reached a stage in which its endeavours now far transcend internal concerns and are centred on society building. In the course of that century, the Faith gradually reached the peoples of the world, and the community of the Greatest Name became a reflection of the beauty of humanity and a symbol of the efficacy of unity in diversity. Wherever people encountered this Faith, they quickly made it their own and strove to draw on the teachings and the spiritual power of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in order to achieve practical advancement in their individual and collective lives. Reflection on this process of transformation and progress reveals the latent power vested in this Faith for the realization of the oneness of the world of humanity and the establishment of universal peace. In this eventful century, the followers of the Cause of the Almighty clearly demonstrated their commitment to the process of learning as they strove to reinforce a fundamental understanding of the Covenant, to establish Bahá'í communities around the world, and to raise the pillars of the Administrative Order. And through the power of divine assistance, they attained worthy accomplishments in this path.

A distinctive share in this spiritual drama belongs to the sorely tried and devoted compatriots of the Blessed Beauty. Whether disseminating the divine fragrances, establishing the institutions of the Administrative Order, pioneering to localities near and far, raising up successive generations of steadfast believers, encouraging their fellow Bahá'ís and associates along the path of service, or making every manner of sacrifice, those friends have at all times been at the front ranks and advanced at the vanguard. How blessed are you and your forebears, valiant horsemen, who have from the beginning of the Faith to the present day ceaselessly urged on the steed of endeavour in the arena of service, overcome every hurdle and obstacle, and obtained the highest prize and honour.

One of the distinguishing features of the year just ended was the attention that the people of Iran and people in the farthest corners of the world directed towards the ten Bahá'í women who were martyred forty years ago in the sacred city of Shiraz. The sacrifice of those devoted lovers of

God is a symbol of the sacrifice of all the wronged and illumined believers who stood firm in their faith and in their adherence to the divine teachings and principles for the transformation of the world, even accepting martyrdom, and wrote with the ink of love upon the pages of history. Although those tribulations were borne quietly, away from the public eye and unwitnessed by the majority of their compatriots, today Iranians are informed about what has befallen and is still being visited upon the Bahá'í community. They regard Bahá'ís as guardians of truthfulness and integrity and know well that this widespread and pervasive oppression is suffered by them for the sake of elevated human ideals and is endured in the path of service to Iran and to the world.

As we have previously mentioned, today, the people of the world—and among them the people of Iran—share more than ever before many of your aspirations and ideals in their hopes, aims, and expectations for their collective future. The divers social strata of the world are longing, in heart and mind, for equality, justice, and a society built on moral and worthy human qualities. Beyond shared ideals and aspirations, however, the people of the world are also searching for effective and practical means for the betterment of society. But every political and economic school of thought is overwhelmed by and unequal to the scale, nature, complexity, and interconnectedness of the challenges; their proponents are themselves confounded and perplexed. Irrespective of the useful insights those schools of thought may contain, the assumptions underlying the present world order—from the nature and identity of the human being to perspectives related to power and competition—are inadequate for a humanity which today stands at the threshold of its collective maturity. The world is thus facing a profound and far-reaching crisis that is destabilizing and disrupting its order. Although this crisis is not new, and the reasons for it are not unknown to the people of Bahá, yet its destructive results and the consequent confusion are more apparent than at any time past. Bahá'u'lláh writes:

We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy.

It is no wonder then that, as a result of this crisis, conflict and contention among peoples and war and strife among nations are increasing day by day, and every pure heart and illumined conscience is oppressed and saddened thereby. Although many souls are immersed in the sea of hopelessness and despair, there are also many people of goodwill who are earnestly and sincerely searching for a remedy and striving for a solution. The people of Bahá, through the blessing of the divine verses and by the aid of the vision and insights obtained from the matchless interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian, know the reasons for the events happening in the world and understand their significance. They are well aware of that which the infallible Physician has diagnosed and the remedy He has prescribed. They are mindful of the direction in which the process of the maturation of the human race, despite its unavoidable ebbs and flows, is moving. They have gained valuable experience from their historic as well as recent endeavours in assisting the process of development and transformation and are ready and eager to share with everyone the practical approaches and lessons they have learned.

It is clear and evident to the believers that the cornerstone of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the establishment of that universal peace which is destined to be built upon the basis of the unity of all nations and upon the foundation of the Most Great Justice. Consider these words of the Blessed Beauty: "My object is none other than the betterment of the world and the tranquillity of its peoples. The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded." He also avers: "All men have

been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.” He further counsels: “Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that haply the dissensions that divide it may, through the power of the Most Great Name, be blotted out from its face, and all mankind become the upholders of one Order, and the inhabitants of one City.” And such is His admonition: “Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men.”

Today, the spiritual duty and moral responsibility of every conscientious soul is to serve the cause of the peace and unity of the world. In this important undertaking, every member of the human family has a share. In purifying the heart and cleansing its mirror from prejudice on the one hand, and in creating the social conditions for peace and unity on the other, every individual has agency and the capacity to play a part. All souls are able to promote the culture of peace and unity in their interactions with friend and stranger alike. And in this day, such an intention will attract the confirmations of God. As a result souls come to inspire each other, increase their endurance in the face of difficulties, assist one another in dealing with problems, build amity and solidarity, and advance on a constructive path towards a bright future. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá thus states: “... peace must first be established among individuals, until it leadeth in the end to peace among nations. Wherefore, O ye Bahá’ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.”

Praise be to God that the followers of the Greatest Name throughout the world are familiar with this task and have exerted the utmost effort at all times, in all places, and to the degree possible to discharge this critical responsibility and to learn, in collaboration with like-minded and sympathetic people, how to nurture communities that can manifest the fundamental principles of peace and the requirements of amity and oneness. Such communities keenly endeavour to give practical expression to the principle of the equality of women and men; they are committed to the centrality of justice and fairness; they strive to create harmony and unity, combined with diversity; they make consultation the axis for individual and collective decision-making, the remover of conflict, and the builder of agreement; they promote economic solidarity and mutual support among people; they teach children and junior youth freedom from both prejudice and rancour, and regard the youth as being at the vanguard of the advancement and transformation of society; they view spiritual and moral principles as the foundation of the exaltation of humanity and of every kind of progress. And in this way, they spread a culture of peace and reconciliation. Participation in the discourse on peace and oneness, in all its numerous facets, is another way in which the followers of Bahá’u’lláh assist souls to look to the future with a vision transcending the challenges and limitations of society today, and work together to better understand the essential prerequisites of a peaceful society and make it a reality. To explain and expand upon the Bahá’í perspective on world peace is well beyond the scope of this letter, but we hope that in this connection our message dated 18 January 2019 addressed to the Bahá’ís of the world will be of assistance to you.

There is no doubt that you, lovers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, will in the course of this new year continue to fulfil His hopes and, in this path, will remain confirmed and assisted, assured and contented:

I hope this New Year will be happy and blessed and will become the cause of the attainment of divine assistance and confirmation, so that ye may become the cause of the unity of the world and proclaim the oneness of the human race, may change enemies into friends and make those who are deprived the confidants of the mysteries of the world’s Great Peace.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

