

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Riḍván 1972

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

The opening of the final year of the Nine Year Plan sees the Bahá'í world community poised for overwhelming victory. With grateful hearts we acknowledge the continuing confirmations which have attended its efforts and the Divine bounties which have never ceased to rain down upon this blessed, this ever-developing embryonic world order.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Panama, the Mother Temple of Latin America, will be dedicated this Riḍván. Three beloved Hands of the Cause, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúḥíyyih Khánum representing the Universal House of Justice, Ugo Giachery and Zikrullah Khadem will attend this historic ceremony. The imaginative and inspiring concept of the architect, Peter Tillotson, has been wonderfully realized and we extend to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama on behalf of the entire Bahá'í world, loving congratulations on their achievement.

Although the dissolution of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iraq has, unhappily, resulted from the persecution of the Faith in that land, the thirteen new National Spiritual Assemblies which will come into being this Riḍván will bring the total number of these pillars of the Universal House of Justice to 113.

The goals requiring acquisition of properties and establishment of Teaching Institutes are well in hand and, in those countries where legal circumstances permit, incorporation of Assemblies and recognition of Bahá'í marriage and Holy Days are making good progress.

It is the teaching goals which must engage our attention and effort. Although more than 260 territories have achieved their assigned goals of localities where Bahá'ís reside, and in some cases have exceeded them, enabling the Bahá'í world community to rejoice in having outstripped on a world scale the total number of localities envisaged in the Plan, there are still some 60 territories where this goal is yet to be won and where its attainment must be given absolute priority between now and Riḍván 1973. It is expected that a large number of new Local Spiritual Assemblies will be established at Riḍván and immediately after the position of this goal is ascertained a detailed listing of all territories throughout the world which have not yet won their goals for localities and Local Spiritual Assemblies will be sent to every National Spiritual Assembly for urgent release to the friends.

It is hoped that during this last year of the Plan the principle of collaboration between National Spiritual Assemblies will be extended far beyond the special tasks set in the Nine Year Plan. Those communities which have already attained their goals or are in clear sight of them should consider the world picture as disclosed by the listing mentioned above and do everything they can, without jeopardizing their own success, to assist their fellow communities with pioneers and traveling teachers, or in any other way possible. Such a process will greatly consolidate the unity and brotherhood of the Bahá'í world community.

In the meantime we call on all believers everywhere to prayerfully consider their personal circumstances, and to arise while there is yet time, to fill the international pioneer goals of the Plan. There are 267 pioneer needs still to be answered—75 in Africa, 57 in the Americas, 40 in Asia, 30 in Australasia and 65 in Europe.

The extraordinary advances made since that Riḍván of 1964 when the Nine Year Plan was begun, continuing the organized and purposeful process of teaching on a world scale instituted by

our beloved Guardian when he launched the Ten Year Crusade, force upon our attention new requirements of this ever-growing world order both for its own organic life and in relation to the disintegrating world society in which it is set. The divergence between the ways of the world and of the Cause of God becomes ever wider. And yet the two must come together. The Bahá'í community must demonstrate in ever-increasing measure its ability to redeem the disorderliness, the lack of cohesion, the permissiveness, the godlessness of modern society; the laws, the religious obligations, the observances of Bahá'í life, Bahá'í moral principles and standards of dignity, decency and reverence, must become deeply implanted in Bahá'í consciousness and increasingly inform and characterize this community. Such a process will require a great development in the maturity and effectiveness of Local Spiritual Assemblies. The purposes and standards of the Cause must be more and more understood and courageously upheld. The influence of the Continental Boards of Counselors and the work of their Auxiliary Boards must develop and spread through the entire fabric of the Bahá'í community. A vast systematic program for the production of Bahá'í literature must be promoted.

Our immediate and inescapable task, however, is to ensure that every attainable goal of the Nine Year Plan is achieved. This must be done at all costs. No sacrifice, no deferment of cherished plans must be refused in order to discharge this "most important" of the many "important" duties facing us. Who can doubt that one last supreme effort will be crowned with success? Even now the national community to bear the laurels of first achieving every task assigned to it, Fiji, leads the procession of rejoicing and victorious communities within the Army of Light. We may well emulate Bahá'í youth whose recent surge forward into the van of proclamation and teaching is one of the most encouraging and significant trends in the Faith, and who storm the gates of heaven for support in their enterprises by long-sustained, precedent and continuing prayer. We are all able to call upon Bahá'u'lláh for His Divine, all-powerful aid, and He will surely help us. For He is the Hearer of prayers, the Answerer.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]