

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

15 June 1987

[To two individuals]

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Your letter of 11 April 1987, signed by yourselves, ... , and ... , has been received by the Universal House of Justice, and we have been instructed to convey the following response to you.

The House of Justice is deeply concerned at the plight of so many of the indigenous and aboriginal peoples in various parts of the world who have been denied their rights as a consequence of actions by oppressive majorities. Such inequities and injustices are to be found in many countries. The purpose of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh is to lift the yoke of oppression from His loved ones, to liberate all the people of the world, and to provide the means for their abiding happiness.

The Bahá'í approach to resolution of the manifold problems affecting human society rests upon the assertion by Bahá'u'lláh that these ills are but various symptoms and side effects of the basic disease, which the Divine Physician has diagnosed to be disunity. Bahá'u'lláh has made it abundantly clear that the first step essential for the health and harmony of the whole of mankind is its unification. He says, "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established" (*The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 203). By contrast, the approach of most people is the exact opposite: their concentration is on attempts to remedy the multitude of ills besetting mankind, with the expectation that the resolution of these problems will lead ultimately to unity.

This unity can only be achieved through the spreading of the Faith and the building up of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh states in *Gleanings*, Section 120:

That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error.

As Shoghi Effendi states in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 34:

What else, might we not confidently affirm, but the unreserved acceptance of the Divine Program enunciated, with such simplicity and force as far back as sixty years ago, by Bahá'u'lláh, embodying in its essentials God's divinely appointed scheme for the unification of mankind in this age, coupled with an indomitable conviction in the unfailing efficacy of each and all of its provisions, is eventually capable of withstanding the forces of internal disintegration which, if unchecked, must needs continue to eat into the vitals of a despairing society....

Such an effort is frequently misunderstood by others who feel that the Bahá'ís are not concentrating on solving the immediate and pressing problems. This concern was addressed by the House of Justice in a letter written on 19 November 1974 to a National Spiritual Assembly:

... Bahá'ís are often accused of holding aloof from the "real problems" of their fellow-men. But when we hear this accusation let us not forget that those who make it are usually idealistic materialists to whom material good is the only "real" good, whereas we know that the working of the material world is merely a reflection of spiritual conditions and until the

spiritual conditions can be changed there can be no lasting change for the better in material affairs.

We should also remember that most people have no clear concept of the sort of world they wish to build, nor how to go about building it. Even those who are concerned to improve conditions are therefore reduced to combating every apparent evil that takes their attention. Willingness to fight against evils, whether in the form of conditions or embodied in evil men, has thus become for most people the touchstone by which they judge a person's moral worth. Bahá'ís, on the other hand, know the goal they are working towards and know what they must do, step by step, to attain it. Their whole energy is directed towards the building of the good, a good which has such a positive strength that in the face of it the multitude of evils—which are in essence negative—will fade away and be no more. To enter into the quixotic tournament of demolishing one by one the evils in the world is, to a Bahá'í, a vain waste of time and effort. His whole life is directed towards proclaiming the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, reviving the spiritual life of his fellow-men, uniting them in a divinely created World Order, and then, as that Order grows in strength and influence, he will see the power of that Message transforming the whole human society and progressively solving the problems and removing the injustices which have so long bedeviled the world.

It is contrary to Bahá'í principles for a believer to resort to partisan political action in asserting his rights or in seeking to obtain justice. It would be quite wrong for a Bahá'í to take up arms for a cause he or she believes to be just; such an action would be a direct contradiction of the aims of the Faith and of its laws. Believers are enjoined to deepen themselves more fully in the principles of world order expounded by Shoghi Effendi in his writings, so that they will gradually come to understand the underlying cause of the oppression of minorities, as well as the spiritual forces released by Bahá'u'lláh and animating the work of the Bahá'í community in laboriously erecting and perfecting the administrative institutions which are the means by which justice is being established in the world.

Bahá'ís are free to work within the existing political and legal system. There is no objection to any Bahá'í's making a legal claim to property or rights through the courts or administrative agencies to which he has access.

With the emergence of the Faith from obscurity, there are increasing opportunities to bring Bahá'í principles to the attention of governments and to offer advice in the promotion of human rights. It is essential that such endeavors be carried out under the aegis of the National Spiritual Assembly. The believers are free to make suggestions to their National Assemblies or to recommend a course of action, but they must trust in the wisdom of their National Spiritual Assemblies to decide whether or not such action is appropriate.

The House of Justice hopes the above makes clear the Bahá'í position on the important issue raised in your letter. We are asked to assure you that prayers will be offered at the Sacred Threshold for all those concerned with this distressing problem.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat