

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

18 November 1991

To the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in Every Land

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

A time of challenge for the stalwart upholders of the Cause of God has now come upon us at the very moment when the world is grappling with tremendous problems, moral, social, economic and ecological. The Bahá'í community has grown in size and influence to the point where it is put to the test on all sides and at all levels. The opportunities are immense but we now face the question of whether to push forward with all speed, or to hold back because the resources available to us are inadequate for the purpose.

In lands where people have accepted the Faith in large numbers, the process of economic and social development, linked with the establishment, consolidation and strong functioning of Local Spiritual Assemblies, is attaining ever greater importance and is placing upon the international resources of the Faith a heavy demand for manpower and finance. In the countries of the former Eastern Bloc the need for assistance in the form of Bahá'í literature, pioneers, traveling teachers, the establishment of local centers, is made the more urgent by the extraordinary receptivity to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh shown by the spiritually thirsty populations. The opportunities for the promotion of the Cause of God in these areas cannot be allowed to go unheeded.

At the national level, the structure of Bahá'í communities is growing in complexity as the number of believers rises, and National Spiritual Assemblies are being increasingly invited by national governments and nongovernmental organizations to offer advice and assistance in upholding human rights, in safeguarding the environment, in promoting moral education, and in overcoming the ravages of prejudice and the rising tide of lawlessness which are undermining the social structure. Internationally a parallel process is taking place.

At the World Center itself, the construction work on the Mount Carmel Projects has begun, preparing facilities befitting the central institutions of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh for that time when they will have to shoulder the tremendous responsibilities that will be thrust upon them as the Lesser Peace begins to be established in the world.

Over the past four years there was a steady increase in the contributions of the friends worldwide to the international funds of the Faith, and it had been our hope and expectation that this rise would continue and even be accelerated in the current year. But since last Riḍván, on the contrary, there has been a sudden drop in contributions both to the international funds as a whole and to the Arc Projects Fund, creating a crisis which must be promptly overcome. In response to the growing needs of the teaching work and the Arc Projects, we have for several years been drastically cutting the expenditure of the World Center, canceling or postponing many activities which, although valuable, cannot be pursued under the present condition of shortage of funds. This process cannot be taken much further without seriously hampering the ability of the World Center to function at the level which the interests of the Faith require.

If the financial needs of this year and those immediately ahead are to be met, the contributions to the international funds of the Cause must, far from decreasing, be substantially increased.

Such an effort will call for sacrifice on the part of individual believers and also for the diversion of funds from those local and national projects which are not essential. We are confident that the friends will respond to this call, as they did to the crisis precipitated by the Iranian

Revolution in 1979 when, at one moment, 61% of the income of the international funds was cut off.

This is the immediate need. Beyond this there is, we believe, a worldwide need for appreciation of this basic principle of our Faith: that contributing to the Fund should constitute an integral part of the spiritual life of every Bahá'í and be regarded as the fulfillment of a fundamental spiritual obligation. In too many countries we have encountered a reluctance among the teachers of the Cause to include, in their presentation of the Teachings, support of the Fund as a natural part of Bahá'í life. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh more than once refers to the necessity for combining spiritual and material means in achieving the purposes of the Faith. Shoghi Effendi, for his part, referred to the Fund as the life-blood of the Cause.

We urge all the friends to give deep thought to the importance of supporting the Cause financially and to the effect that Bahá'í activities have on the condition of the entire human race.

It is our fervent prayer at the Sacred Threshold that Bahá'u'lláh will inspire His devoted followers in every land to arise unitedly in the service of His Cause and will reward their sacrifices with an outpouring of heavenly bounties.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]