

“If any discrimination is at all to be tolerated, it should be a discrimination not against, but rather in favor of the minority, be it racial or otherwise. Unlike the nations and peoples of the earth, be they of the East or of the West, democratic or authoritarian, communist or capitalist, whether belonging to the Old World or the New, who either ignore, trample upon, or extirpate, the racial, religious, or political minorities within the sphere of their jurisdiction, *every organized community enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh should feel it to be its **first and inescapable obligation to nurture, encourage, and safeguard every minority** belonging to any faith, race, class, or nation within it.*” ADJ

## NURTURE

79.1 **As has become progressively apparent, the organic process of growth outlined by the House of Justice in recent Plans is reaching higher levels of complexity**, especially in those clusters where the number of active participants has increased significantly. The transformation of communities under way across the globe in cluster after cluster, while still in its early stages, touches upon the most fundamental of *social and cultural forces, currents, and aspirations*.

This growth process involves a coherent and systematic pattern of activity focused upon community building and includes

- ✓ the *multiplication* of study circles and institute campaigns,
- ✓ the *education* of children,
- ✓ the *spiritual empowerment* of junior youth, individual and
- ✓ collective *teaching* efforts,
- ✓ *visits* to the homes of believers and their friends,
- ✓ a *cultivation* of collective devotional life,
- ✓ *social action*,
- ✓ greater *involvement* in the discourses of society,
- ✓ as well as many other elements that *enhance the capacity* of individuals, institutions, and the community—the three protagonists of the Plan.
- ✓ Pivotal to this pattern of activity is the *development of human resources* through the training institute, with a sequence of courses that
- ✓ reinforce in the participants a *posture of learning* by which understanding continues to expand as they carry out *acts of service* of increasing complexity.

**This educational process *nurtures* a thirst for the Word of God, not only fostering an enduring habit of study and reflection on that wellspring of all progress but also enabling the friends to apply the Teachings in their own lives and in the burgeoning life of the community.**

In its communications with the Bahá'í world, the House of Justice has described and elucidated these unfolding developments, and the Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, the Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, as well as regional and local institutions, have *laboured shoulder to shoulder with the believers who are striving to understand and respond to this guidance*. As the friends, including those who do not wish to study the courses of the institute, embrace the guidance of the House of Justice in its entirety and, with love and a true Bahá'í spirit, rally around their institutions, they find that questions they may have are resolved.

(From a letter dated 18 January 2013 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

## ENCOURAGE

- 65.3 There is also an important distinction made in the Faith between authoritative interpretation, as described above, and the interpretation which every believer is fully entitled to voice. **Believers are free, indeed are encouraged, to study the Writings for themselves and to express their understanding of them.** Such personal interpretations can be most illuminating, but all Bahá'ís, including the one expressing the view, however learned he may be, should realize that it is only a personal view and can never be upheld as a standard for others to accept, nor should disputes ever be permitted to arise over differences in such opinions.
- 71.6 The promotion of learning of every kind among the Faith's members is an activity fundamental to the achievement of the community's wide-ranging goals. **Consequently, the encouragement of individual believers to acquire knowledge,** the operation of Bahá'í schools, universities, and training institutes, the organization of study groups, and the work of task forces dedicated to relating the principles of the Revelation to the challenges facing humankind all represent activities with which both the Counsellors and their auxiliaries, on the one hand, and National and Local Spiritual Assemblies, on the other, must concern themselves. In shouldering these demanding responsibilities, Bahá'í institutions everywhere find their efforts greatly enhanced by the assistance of believers whose intellectual pursuits, qualities of character, and devotion to the Cause particularly fit them to contribute their services.
- 71.7 A special responsibility in the matter rests on the Counsellors because of the duty assigned to them **to assist in releasing the potential of the individual believer.** The members of this institution, appointed for specific terms, have been given the task of carrying forward into the future the functions of the protection and propagation of the Faith conferred in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the Hands of the Cause. Thus, the Counsellors are called on
1. to “*diffuse* the Divine Fragrances,
  2. to *edify* the souls of men,
  3. to *promote* learning,
  4. to *improve* the character of all men and
  5. to be, at all times and under all conditions, *sanctified* and *detached* from earthly things.”

Like the Hands, the Counsellors have no interpretive authority, an authority conferred by the Covenant only on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Guardian of the Faith. While some Counsellors, like some of the Hands, will have pursued various academic or professional disciplines in their individual careers, their discharge of their duties is not dependent on proficiencies of this kind.

- ✓ All of them share fully in the **vital task of encouraging believers everywhere** in the acquisition of knowledge, in all its dimensions.
- ✓ All share, too, in the responsibility assigned to the institution of which they are members to protect the Faith against its enemies, both external and internal, a concern to which both the Master and the Guardian attached pre-eminent importance.

## SAFEGUARD

6.1 We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and **safeguarding of men, women and children**. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions.  
(Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 69–70)

7.1 It is incumbent upon the men of God’s House of Justice to fix their gaze by day and by night upon that which hath shone forth from the Pen of Glory for the training of peoples, the upbuilding of nations, **the protection of man and the safeguarding of his honour**.  
(Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 125)

### 9.1 Religion

- ✓ **bestoweth** upon man the most precious of all gifts,
- ✓ **offereth** the cup of prosperity,
- ✓ **imparteth** eternal life, and
- ✓ **showereth** imperishable benefits upon mankind.

It behoveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God’s House of Justice, to endeavour to the utmost of their power to

- ✓ **safeguard** its position,
- ✓ **promote** its interests and
- ✓ **exalt** its station in the eyes of the world. In like manner it is incumbent upon them to
- ✓ **enquire** into the conditions of their subjects and to
- ✓ **acquaint** themselves with the affairs and activities of the divers communities in their dominions.

We call upon the manifestations of the power of God—the sovereigns and rulers on earth—to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.

(Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 130)

53.1 Among the powers and duties with which the Universal House of Justice has been invested are:

To ensure the preservation of the Sacred Texts and to **safeguard their inviolability**; to analyse, classify, and coordinate the Writings; and to defend and protect the Cause of God and emancipate it from the fetters of repression and persecution;

To advance the interests of the Faith of God; to proclaim, propagate and teach its Message; to expand and consolidate the institutions of its Administrative Order; to usher in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh; to promote the attainment of those spiritual qualities which should characterize Bahá'í life individually and collectively; to do its utmost for the realization of greater cordiality and comity amongst the nations and for the attainment of universal peace; and to foster that which is conducive to the enlightenment and illumination of the souls of men and the advancement and betterment of the world;

To enact laws and ordinances not expressly recorded in the Sacred Texts; to abrogate, according to the changes and requirements of the time, its own enactments; to deliberate and decide upon all problems which have caused difference; to elucidate questions that are obscure; to **safeguard the personal rights, freedom and initiative of individuals**; and to give attention to the **preservation of human honour, to the development of countries and the stability of states**;

To promulgate and apply the laws and principles of the Faith; to **safeguard and enforce that rectitude of conduct which the Law of God enjoins**; to preserve and develop the Spiritual and Administrative Centre of the Bahá'í Faith, permanently fixed in the twin cities of 'Akká and Haifa; to administer the affairs of the Bahá'í community throughout the world; to guide, organize, coordinate and unify its activities; to found institutions; to be responsible for ensuring that no body or institution within the Cause abuse its privileges or decline in the exercise of its rights and prerogatives; and to provide for the receipt, disposition, administration and safeguarding of the funds, endowments and other properties that are entrusted to its care;

To adjudicate disputes falling within its purview; to give judgement in cases of violation of the laws of the Faith and to pronounce sanctions for such violations; to provide for the enforcement of its decisions; to provide for the arbitration and settlement of disputes arising between peoples; and to be the exponent and guardian of that Divine Justice which can alone ensure the security of, and establish the reign of law and order in, the world.

*(The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, pp. 5–6)*