

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

July 31, 2015

To the American Bahá'í community
for the Feast of Kamál

Dearly loved Friends,

Our hearts were gladdened by the enthusiastic and wholehearted support you gave over the past year to the *Education Is Not a Crime* campaign, organized by noted Iranian human rights activist Maziar Bahari and his company, Off-Centre Productions. Fully half of the campaign's 12,000 followers on Facebook are residents of the United States and more than 200 screenings of the documentary took place in this country on the campaign's day of action on February 27 and in the days surrounding it. While more than 60 related articles appeared in American newspapers, many through your efforts, the numerous celebrity endorsements the campaign garnered also received wide coverage, especially in the social media. With this resounding success as a backdrop, we are pleased to share with you news regarding the next phase in the campaign, entitled "Paint the Change."

Inspired by the well-known advice attributed to Mahatma Gandhi that to truly influence the conduct of others and the course of events, one must "be the change" one wishes to see in the world, "Paint the Change" will revolve around the creation of outdoor murals and street art to express support for all those denied access to higher education in Iran—particularly Bahá'ís. Efforts will draw on the power of public art to give a city's common spaces a unique character and to help raise awareness of local, national, and international issues and concerns.

"Paint the Change" will commission murals in cities around the world—two of them being New York and Los Angeles. The murals will serve as sites for events and as inspiration for photos and videos that will transform local art into the emblems of a global movement. Beyond the official murals, "Paint the Change" will stimulate individuals and groups to create their own art.

Street art can take many forms, and we hope that you will—with the same energy and resourcefulness you have applied to every phase of the work to defend our persecuted Bahá'í sisters and brothers—find creative ways to express your support of "Paint the Change." An online handbook will provide useful materials and sample artwork to aid you, and the "Paint the Change" website (at <http://www.paintthechange.me/>) will enable you to explore ways that you and your community can join this new phase of *Education Is Not a Crime*. Use of the social media will be integral to the success of "Paint the Change" and it is already active on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#). To join the conversation, please follow and "like" the "Paint the Change" pages and use the official hashtags, #EducationIsNotACrime and #PaintTheChange.

The campaign will also be engaging a professional filmmaker to produce video vignettes focusing on activities connected with "Paint the Change" in various locales across the world. These videos will appear throughout the campaign's duration, concluding in the spring of 2016. Individuals and communities are encouraged to keep the campaign apprised of local activities (you may send images and footage to be@paintthechange.me). A list of links to campaign websites and social media accounts is attached.

In this endeavor, as at all times, Bahá'ís are expected to obey the law. With our full support, the campaign is urging all participants to "stencil responsibly," meaning they should strictly adhere to municipal laws and ordinances governing street art, and before taking steps to create a mural or any other work of art, obtain clear and unmistakable consent from the owners of the wall or public space they have selected as their "canvas."

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As we call you to action in one more effort to heighten public awareness of the indignities being borne by our Iranian fellow believers, we do so with every confidence that you will rise to the occasion, as you have done so many times before, with swiftness and perfect assurance of the justness and effectiveness of the endeavor. Be certain of our warm affection and deepest appreciation as you do so, and of our prayers for your great success.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kenneth E. Bowers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary

Attachment