

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

September 25, 2017

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

Dearly loved Friends,

By now most of you undoubtedly have received word of the release, on September 18, of our intrepid sister, Mahvash Sabet, after nearly a full decade spent in Iran's notorious Evin Prison. She was the first of the Yárán—the ad hoc seven-member group attending to the basic spiritual and material needs of Iran's Bahá'í community—to be arrested and sentenced as part of the government's systematic and unrelenting persecution of its Bahá'í citizens. As the terms of her former colleagues similarly draw to conclusion over the next several months, we pray that they, too, will soon be free to return to the loving embrace of their families and friends.

The jubilation Mrs. Sabet's long hoped-for release inspires in our hearts should not, however, for a moment delude us into thinking that the pressure on the friends in the Cradle of the Faith has to any degree lessened. As recent events—from the shutting down of scores of Bahá'í businesses to the desecration of Bahá'í cemeteries—show us, it has not. Nevertheless, we remain confident that, in God's good time, the full emancipation of our Faith in the land of its birth will come. For the present, we cannot but marvel at the stellar example set by the entire community of Iran's Bahá'ís, whose indefatigable courage, integrity, and fidelity to its Truth have brought worldwide renown to the unifying Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and begun to soften the hearts of multitudes of their fellow citizens—breaking the hold of more than a century and a half of poisonous prejudice, misrepresentations, and outright lies promulgated by government, clergy, schools, and the media.

Who other than Bahá'u'lláh, we must ask ourselves, could have created a community so spiritually transformed, so completely devoted to principle, so loving, and so united as to have not only survived generations of relentless persecution but to have completely avoided bitterness, sedition, or partisanship, remained loyal to their homeland and obedient to their government, and shone out as beacons of service? The people of Iran, no less than the peoples of the world, are taking notice and will ultimately recognize fully the magnificence of their achievement. What we are witnessing is unparalleled in the annals of history—a miracle that only the Hand of God could have produced.

As the Bicentenary of Bahá'u'lláh's birth draws ever nearer, let us be inspired anew by the sacrifices willingly borne by our beloved Iranian sisters and brothers and redeem them by raising His banner with the same selflessness and courage—such that our efforts set a new standard of sustained and energetic teaching throughout the nation.

Though our challenges are different, they are no less formidable; our opportunities no less significant; the spiritual qualities they call for no less demanding; the final outcome they anticipate no less consequential for the future of the world. Let us arise, then, to the summons issued to us directly by the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi:

The community of the organized promoters of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the American continent—the spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers of an heroic Age, who by their death proclaimed the birth of that Faith—must, in turn, usher

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in, not by their death but through living sacrifice, that promised World Order, the shell ordained to enshrine that priceless jewel, the world civilization, of which the Faith itself is the sole begetter. While its sister communities are bending beneath the tempestuous winds that beat upon them from every side, this community, preserved by the immutable decrees of the omnipotent Ordainer and deriving continual sustenance from the mandate with which the Tablets of the Divine Plan have invested it, is now busily engaged in laying the foundations and in fostering the growth of those institutions which are to herald the approach of the Age destined to witness the birth and rise of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Our warmest affection, our admiration and pride in your achievements, and our ardent prayers for great success in your future endeavors on behalf of the Promised One Whose advent we will soon celebrate accompany you in all you do.

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