

Human Rights are God-Given Rights

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The Bahá'í Communities of North America - on the occasion of the world-wide commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the call to the world's leaders to establish universal peace through justice and unity by Bahá'u'lláh, Founder of the Bahá'í Faith - hail the International Year for Human Rights, 1968. At the Bahá'í Intercontinental Conference in Chicago the Bahá'ís affirm that in accordance with the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, human rights are God-given rights.

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE to this age is the recognition of the oneness of mankind. The painful but inevitable broadening of each man's allegiance from his own ethnic, racial, religious, national, cultural and economic group to the wider embrace of all mankind constitutes the central revolution of our time. Every person is affected by this revolution, which calls for changes in the provincial attitudes and behavior of all the people in the world. The recognition that mankind belongs to one family under one God brings with it the responsibility to respect and to help one another in every way.

THE PROPHETS OF GOD have stressed the unique character of man's individuality and of his right to live a fruitful life. Human rights, then, are not the exclusive prerogative of the few, to be parcelled out at the legislative discretion of human institutions. We believe rather that human rights are God-given and hence inviolable.

ALL PERSONS of whatever sex, race, nationality, ethnic group, religion or economic class are creations of God and all are equal in their spiritual essence and human dignity. Any act which discriminates against or otherwise restricts the human rights of any person demeans the dignity of the individuals involved and is contrary to the Teachings of God.

DISCRIMINATION OR UNJUST RESTRICTION against persons under any pretext poisons our relationships and thereby creates conflicts which threaten to destroy our civilization. This is undoubtedly the gravest sickness infecting our age. The dynamic accomplishments which could result from a truly organic and unified society, freed from all prejudicial attitudes, are thus denied us. Social repression and enforced degradation have created masses of people unable to exercise the functions of citizenship, making it impossible for them to contribute to the advancement of civilization and to enjoy its benefits.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES for developing their unique capacities are the right of all individuals. Variety, not conformity, is a basic characteristic of a progressive society. Therefore, an equal standard of human rights must be upheld throughout the world.

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