

The Universal House of Justice

The supreme governing and legislative body of the Bahá'í Faith.

Elected every five years at an international Bahá'í convention, the Universal House of Justice gives spiritual guidance to and directs the administrative activities of the world-wide Bahá'í community. It is the institution Bahá'u'lláh ordained as the agency invested with authority to legislate on matters not covered in His writings.

In *His Will and Testament* 'Abdu'l-Bahá elaborates on its functions and affirms that it is infallibly guided.

The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice are the twin, crowning institutions of the Bahá'í Administrative Order.

Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant.

Abdu'l-Bahá

Spiritual Assemblies

Administrative institutions of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order that operate at the local and national levels and are elected according to Bahá'í principles. They are responsible for co-ordinating and directing the affairs of the Bahá'í community in their areas of jurisdiction.

The institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly is ordained by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (referred to there as the "House of Justice"); the institution of the National Spiritual Assembly is established by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *His Will and Testament*.

The term "Spiritual Assembly" was introduced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá so that, while the Faith is still generally unknown, people will not make the erroneous deduction from the term "House of Justice" that it is a political institution.

Regional Spiritual Assemblies have been elected in many areas and are gradually reduced in size and eventually replaced by National Spiritual Assemblies as the Faith expands and consolidates itself.

The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá, and should it exceed this number it doth not matter.

Bahá'u'lláh

Hands of the Cause of God

Eminent Bahá'ís appointed by Bahá'u'lláh to stimulate the propagation and ensure the protection of the Faith.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in *His Will and Testament* conferred authority on the Guardian to appoint Hands of the Cause and specified their duties.

Shoghi Effendi, in a message dated October 1957 to the Bahá'í world, called the Hands of the Cause of God "the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth." After his death on 4 November 1957 the Hands of the Cause of God assumed responsibility for preserving the unity of the Bahá'í Faith and for guiding the Bahá'í world community to the victorious completion of the Ten Year World Crusade planned by Shoghi Effendi. They also called for the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 and requested the friends not to elect them, leaving them free to discharge their own specific responsibilities.

Following the formation of the Universal House of Justice, five Hands of the Cause of God were selected by fellow Hands of the Cause to serve at the Bahá'í World Centre, while the rest continued their continental responsibilities, which included overseeing the work of the Auxiliary Board members.

Finding itself unable to appoint or legislate in order to appoint additional Hands of the Cause of God, the Universal House of Justice, in a cable dated 21 June 1968 and a letter dated 24 June 1968, announced the establishment of the institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors.

Continental Board of Councillors

An institution of the Bahá'í Administrative Order established by the Universal House of Justice in 1968 to extend into the future the functions of protection and propagation of the Faith assigned to the Hands of the Cause of God by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament. Its members are appointed to five-year terms by the Universal House of Justice and serve in five zones—Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia, and Europe.

The International Teaching Centre co-ordinates the work of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, who are assisted in their work by Auxiliary Board members, whom they appoint and supervise.

... the House of Justice created, in June 1968, the Continental Boards of Counsellors. Empowered to extend into the future the functions of the Hands of the Cause for the protection and propagation of the Faith, the new institution assumed responsibility for guiding the work of the already existing Auxiliary Boards and joined National Assemblies in shouldering responsibilities for the advancement of the Faith.

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...the Continental Counsellors and the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants are charged with functions relating to the protection and propagation of the Faith.

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Auxiliary Board

An institution established by Shoghi Effendi in 1954 to act as “deputies, assistants and advisers” to the Hands of the Cause of God as they carry out their twin duties of protection and propagation.

With the formation of the Continental Boards of Counsellors in 1968, the Hands of the Cause of God were freed of responsibility for appointing, supervising, and co-ordinating the work of the Auxiliary Boards, and these functions were transferred by the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors.

There are two Auxiliary Boards, one for protection and one for propagation; members serve on one of the two boards.

Each Auxiliary Board Member who is allotted a specific area in which to serve, should establish contact with the Local Spiritual Assemblies and other localities of his area, encourage and guide all such centres in the implementation of the goals of the Plan, become informed of the relative strength and weakness of each locality, and feel responsible before God in the discharge of his responsibilities. Should he lose contact with a particular Local Spiritual Assembly or locality, he should use his initiative in finding a satisfactory solution to the problem. He should also send his reports and recommendations to the Counsellors on a regular basis.

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The **Institutions** *of the* **Bahá'í Faith**