

THE PROMISE OF WORLD PEACE

Universal House of Justice

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Introduction

in simplified language
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Seat of the Universal House of Justice

The Promise of World Peace

To the Peoples of the World:

The Great Peace which people of good will over countless generations have wished, and for which the sacred scriptures have constantly promised, is now within the reach of the nations. For the first time in history it is possible for everyone to view the entire planet and its diversified peoples in one perspective. World peace is not only possible but inevitable. It is the next stage in the evolution of this planet.

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Whether peace is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors because humanity clings to old patterns of behaviour, or is to come now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all on earth. At this time when the problems confronting nations have become one common concern, failure to stop conflict and disorder would be irresponsible.

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Favourable signs towards world order include the formation of the League of Nations, succeeded by the United Nations; the achievement since the Second World War of independence by the majority of nations, completing the process of nation building; the vast increase in co-operation among formerly antagonistic peoples in international undertakings in the scientific, educational, legal, economic and cultural fields; the rise of international humanitarian organizations; the spread of women's and youth movements calling for an end to war; and the widening networks of ordinary people seeking understanding through personal communication.

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Scientific and technological advances push forward the social evolution of the planet, and provide the means to solve the practical problems of humanity. They enable the administration of the complex life of a united world. Yet barriers persist in doubts, misconceptions, prejudices, suspicions and narrow self-interest between nations and peoples.

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Out of a deep sense of spiritual and moral duty, we invite your attention to the insights first communicated to the rulers of mankind more than a century ago by Baha'u'llah, Founder of the Baha'i Faith.

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"The winds of despair", Baha'u'llah wrote, "are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divides and afflicts the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appears to be lamentably defective."

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This prophetic judgement has been confirmed in the inability of sovereign states in the United Nations to prevent war, the threatened collapse of the international economic order, the spread of anarchy and terrorism, and the intense suffering which these are causing to increasing millions. Indeed, so much have aggression and conflict come to characterize our social, economic and religious systems, that many believe that such behaviour is part of human nature and cannot change.

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This view has led to a paralyzing contradiction in human affairs. On the one hand, people of all nations long for peace and harmony, for an end to fear in their daily lives.

On the other, they agree to the assumption that human beings are selfish and aggressive and thus cannot erect a progressive, dynamic and peaceful social system, allowing individual creativity and initiative but based on co-operation and reciprocity.

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As the need for peace becomes more urgent, the contradiction demands a reassessment of this assumption. The evidence reveals that such conduct, far from expressing man's true self, represents a distortion of the human spirit. Agreeing to this will set in motion constructive social forces consistent with human nature, encouraging harmony and co-operation instead of war and conflict.

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To choose such a course is not to deny humanity's past but to understand it. The Baha'i Faith sees the current world confusion as a natural phase in an organic process leading ultimately to the unification of the human race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet. The human race has passed through evolutionary stages like the stages of infancy and childhood for an individual, and is now at the end of turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age.

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Acknowledging that prejudice, war and exploitation were immature stages in our history and that the human race is today experiencing tumult on the way to maturity is not a reason for despair but helps in the effort to build a peaceful world. This is possible, the necessary constructive forces do exist, and unifying social structures can be erected.

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Whatever suffering and turmoil may come in the years immediately ahead, however dark the immediate circumstances, the Baha'i community believes that humanity can meet these trials with confidence in the ultimate outcome. Far from leading to the end of civilization, the convulsive changes facing humanity will serve to release the "potentialities inherent in the station of man" and reveal "the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality".