

THE PROMISE OF WORLD PEACE

Universal House of Justice

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Section II – Requirements for Peace

in simplified language
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Seat of the
Universal
House of
Justice



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Banning nuclear weapons, prohibiting the use of poison gases, or outlawing germ warfare will not remove the root causes of war. However important such practical measures are in a peace process, they are too superficial to exert lasting influence. Peoples are ingenious enough to invent other forms of warfare, and to use food, raw materials, finance, industrial power, ideology, and terrorism to subvert one another for supremacy and dominion.

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Nor can the present problems of humanity be resolved through the settlement of specific conflicts or disagreements among nations. A genuine universal framework must be adopted.

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National leaders recognise the world-wide character of the problem in the issues that confront them daily. And studies by many concerned groups and agencies of the United Nations show the challenging requirements to be met. There is, however, a paralysis of will; and it is this that must be examined and dealt with. This paralysis is rooted in a deep-seated conviction of the inevitable aggressiveness of mankind.

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The result is a reluctance to subordinate national self-interest to the requirements of world order, and to face courageously the implications of establishing a united world authority. In addition the largely ignorant and subjugated masses are unable to express their desire for a new order in which they can live in peace, harmony and prosperity with all humanity.

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The tentative steps towards world order, especially since World War II, give hopeful signs. The increasing tendency of groups of nations to formalize relationships to co-operate in matters of mutual interest suggests that eventually all nations could overcome this paralysis.

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The Association of South East Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community and Common Market, the Central American Common Market, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the European Communities, the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the South Pacific Forum, are organizations that prepare the path to world order.

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The increasing attention being focused on some of the most deep-rooted problems of the planet is yet another hopeful sign. Despite the obvious short-comings of the United Nations, the more than forty declarations and conventions adopted by that organization, even where governments have not been enthusiastic in their commitment, have given ordinary people a sense of a new future.

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the similar measures concerned with eliminating all forms of discrimination based on race, sex or religious belief; upholding the rights of the child; protecting all persons against torture; eradicating hunger and malnutrition; using scientific and technological progress for peace and human benefit--all such measures, if courageously enforced and expanded, will advance the day when the threat of war will have lost its power to dominate international relations.

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A few issues, because of their immediate relevance to establishing world peace, deserve additional comment.

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Racism, one of the most persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. It is too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings. Racism slows the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims, corrupts those who practice it, and hurts human progress. Recognition of the oneness of mankind, implemented by appropriate legal measures, must be universal if this problem is to be overcome.

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The extreme difference between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the edge of war. Few societies have dealt effectively with this. The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical approaches. A fresh look at the problem is required, consulting experts from a wide range of disciplines, without economic and ideological arguments, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made. It is an issue not only of eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty, but also of understanding those spiritual truths which can produce a new universal attitude. Fostering such an attitude is itself a major part of the solution.

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Extreme nationalism, as distinguished from a legitimate patriotism, must give way to a wider loyalty, to the love of humanity as a whole. Baha'u'llah's statement is: "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens." The concept of world citizenship is a result of the contraction of the world into a single neighbourhood through scientific advances and the interdependence of nations. Love of all the world's peoples does not exclude love of one's country. The advantage of the part in a world society is best served by promoting the advantage of the whole. Current international activities in various fields which create mutual affection and a sense of solidarity among peoples need greatly to be increased.

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Religious conflict, throughout history, has been the cause of wars, stopped progress, and is increasingly rejected by people of all faiths and no faith. Followers of all religions must be willing to face the basic questions which this raises, and to arrive at clear answers. How are the differences between them to be resolved, both in theory and in practice? The challenge facing the religious leaders is to contemplate, with hearts filled with compassion and a desire for truth, the plight of humanity, and to ask themselves whether they cannot, in humility, overcome their differences in a spirit of forgiveness to work together for human understanding and peace.

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Freedom for women, with full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important requirements for peace. The denial of such equality is unjust to half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations.

There are no moral, practical, or biological justifications for such denial. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields will the moral and psychological climate be created for international peace.

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Universal education, already supported by dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves full support from the governments of the world. For ignorance is the principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples and maintaining prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless all its citizens are educated. Many nations lack the resources to do this, and must set priorities. First priority should go to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most rapidly spread throughout society. Teaching the concept of world citizenship should be part of the standard education of every child.

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A lack of communication between peoples prevents efforts towards world peace. Adopting an international auxiliary language would help to solve this problem and should receive urgent attention.

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There are two important points. One is that ending war is not simply a matter of signing treaties; it is complex and requires commitment to solving issues not usually associated with peace. Political agreements alone cannot achieve collective security. The other point is to raise the challenge of peace to the level of principle, as distinct from what is practical. For, in essence, peace comes from an inner state supported by a spiritual or moral attitude, and it is through this attitude that enduring solutions can be found.

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There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any group with good intentions can find practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough.

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The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only in harmony with human nature, it also creates an attitude, a dynamic, a will, a hope, which help to discover and implement practical measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority can best solve problems if they would first identify the principles involved and then be guided by them.