

# Baha'is and Military Service

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The policies governing the relationship of American Bahá'ís to military service are currently being reviewed. Pending publication of a more definitive explanation, the friends will be guided by the Guardian's statement of principle and by certain repeated elaborations by the National Spiritual Assembly.

Shoghi Effendi's 1946 guiding words of principle are still in effect: ". . . the Bahá'ís should continue to apply . . . for exemption from any military duties that necessitate the taking of life. There is no justification for any change of attitude on our part at the present time."

It is obligatory, and not optional for all Bahá'ís in the United States to apply for non-combatant status when registering at the age of 18. By registering as a Bahá'í, there is opportunity for recognition of the Cause both at the Draft Board and among acquaintances. Instructions for youth may be obtained from the local or national assemblies. The Bahá'í statements on military service and on loyalty to government are supplied.

Since it is only through the Selective Service machinery of classification and induction that a noncombatant status can be assured, one who volunteers for service ordinarily forfeits his right to receive that status. Therefore, Bahá'ís should not voluntarily enlist in any branch of the Armed Forces which by definition is entirely a combatant Service.

A person who becomes a Bahá'í while in service, and who does not already have non-combatant status has an obligation to his government to finish out his term of duty as he has honorably committed himself to do. However, it may be possible to obtain de facto non-combatant status by transferring to a selected duty which does not call for physical fighting; such transfer should be effected in such fashion as not to impair relationships with responsible superiors, and without there being any question of his willingness to serve his country without regard for personal

safety, comfort, or type of service to which he may be assigned.

Each Bahá'í serviceman should request identification as a Bahá'í, not as a Protestant, Catholic or Jew. Since the Bahá'í Faith is recognized as a separate religion, and military authorities have permitted the Bahá'í star as a headstone symbol for those buried in military cemeteries, the designation "Bahá'í" can readily be gained.

In unusual or special cases where the above general principles do not appear to be applicable, or when specific information is required, please contact the National Bahá'í Office.

— Bahá'is and Military Service (Used by permission of the curator)