

Justice (bayt-e ?adl-e ?omumi). Shoghi Effendi interpreted this to mean that Houses of Justice would eventually be established at local, national, and international levels and be proceeded, from 1923 onward, with the formation of national Spiritual Assemblies (mahfel-e ruhani-e melli), which he identified with the secondary Houses of Justice. Predecessors to these national bodies had existed in some countries from the time of ?Abd-al-Baha? with such names as the Bahai Temple Unity and the Central Spiritual Assembly (mahfel-e ruhani-e markazi). Shoghi Effendi also established in 1951 a body called the International Bahai Council (Šura-ye bayn-al-melali-e Baha?i) which he stated was a precursor of the Universal House of Justice. Following the death of Shoghi Effendi in 1957, the Hands of the Cause of God (Ayadi-e Amr Allah), who had been designated “Chief Stewards of Baha’u’llah’s embryonic World Order” (Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha’i World, p. 127), decided upon the election of the Universal House of Justice which was elected in 1963 by the members of all of the National Spiritual Assemblies. The Universal House of Justice adopted its constitution in 1972 (Bahá’í World 17, p. 287).

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According to Baha’-Allah (al-Ketab al-aqdas, quoted in Local Spiritual Assemblies, p. 3), Houses of Justice should be composed of nine persons, although if it exceeds that number it does not matter. ?Abd-al-Baha? laid down that they should be elected bodies: the local Houses of Justice to be elected by all of the Bahais in an area, the national body through indirect election by delegates elected by the Bahais of each electoral area, and the Universal House of Justice to be elected by the national bodies.

Among the general functions of the Houses of Justice, as enunciated by Baha’-Allah, are the following: to promulgate the cause of God; to educate the souls of men; to preserve the law; to make the land prosperous; to administer social affairs; to educate the children; to take care of the old, the weak, and the ill who have fallen into poverty (Ganjina-ye hodud, p. 214).

The following statements of Baha’-Allah and ?Abd-al-Baha? are considered to relate solely to the Universal House of Justice: (a) It is under the “care and protection” of Baha’-Allah and the “shelter and unerring guidance” of the Bab (Will and Testament, p. 11) and is “the source of all good and freed from all error” (ibid., p. 14); (b) its membership is confined to men (Selections, p. 80); (c) it can legislate laws and ordinances to cover all areas that are not expressly laid down by Baha’-Allah and may also repeal laws enacted previously by the Universal House of Justice, but it cannot alter the laws laid down by Baha’-Allah (Kalamat-e ferdowsiya, in Majmu’a, p. 37, tr. Tablets, p. 68; see also Will and Testament, pp. 14, 19-20); (d) it administers all religious endowments (awqaf: al-Ketab al-aqdas quoted in Gan-jina-ye hodud, p. 221); (e) it receives the religious tax of Hoquq Allah and has full authority over its expenditure (Ganjina-ye

hodud, p. 107); (f) all matters of state (omur--e siasiya) should be referred to this body (Lawh-e bešarat in Majmu'a, p. 14; tr. Tablets, p. 27); (g) it must promote the "lesser peace" (Lawh-e donya in Majmu'a, p. 50; tr. Tablets, p. 89); (h) whosoever disobeys or opposes the House of Justice has disobeyed and opposed God (Will and Testament, p. 11).

The powers and duties of the Universal House of Justice, according to its constitution, may be summarized thus: ensuring the preservation of the sacred texts; protecting the Bahai faith from repression and persecution; propagation of the Bahai faith; expansion and consolidation of the Bahai administration; promoting spiritual qualities in the Bahai community and peace and amity among nations; enacting, abrogating, and changing according to the requirements of the time such laws and ordinances not expressly recorded in the sacred text; safeguarding the personal rights, freedom, and initiative of the individual; applying the Bahai principles and laws; developing the spiritual and administrative center of the Bahai faith in the Haifa-Acre (Akka) area; guiding and coordinating Bahai activities throughout the world; receipt and administration of the funds and endowments entrusted to its care; adjudication and arbitration of disputes referred to it; pronouncing sanctions against violations of Bahai law (Bahá'í World 17, p. 286).

Bibliography : For the constitution of the Universal House of Justice, see Bahá'í World 17, 1976-79, Haifa, 1981, pp. 285-92; also published separately Haifa, 1972. For the model declaration of trust and bylaws for a national and local Spiritual Assembly, see *ibid.*, pp. 337-45, 361-64 respectively. For quotations from Baha'-Allah, 'Abd-al-Baha', Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice, see the compilations: *Local Spiritual Assemblies*, *National Spiritual Assemblies*, *The Universal House of Justice*, nos. 1, 5, and 16 respectively of a series of compilations issued by the Universal House of Justice, Oakham, England, 1970, 1971, 1984. For the history of the development of the administrative institutions of the Bahai faith, see R. Mehrabkani, "Mahafel-e šawr dar 'ahd-e jamal-e aqdas-e Abha," *Payam-e Baha'i* 28, February, 1982, pp. 9-11; 29, March, 1982, pp. 8-9; E. Braun, *From Strength to Strength*, Wilmette, 1978; P. Smith, "A Sociological Study of the Babi and Baha'i Religions," Ph.D. thesis, University of Lancaster, England, pp. 291-95, 325-29, 338-47, 349-50. Other works referred to in the text are: *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha*, Wilmette, 1944; *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha*, Haifa, 1978; A. Ešraq Kavari, *Ganjina-ye hodud o ahkam*, Tehran, 128 Badi'/1971; Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'láh*, Wilmette, 1955; *Majmu'a az alwah-e jamal-e aqdas-e Abha*, Langenheim, Germany, 138 Badi'/1991; tr. as *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Haifa, 1978; *Bahá'í World Faith*, Wilmette, 1956; Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-57*, Wilmette, 1958.

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