



Journal of the Bahá'í Community of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
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National Spiritual Assembly

## National Spiritual Assembly

### National Convention

This year's National Convention focused on the Five Year Plan. The Ridván message to the Bahá'ís of the World, and the Universal House of Justice's letter of 9th January 2001 to the Counsellors' Conference at the Bahá'í World Centre are moving us into a more mature way of planning and implementation.

We have been asked to think about the process that enables a locality to grow and develop from the arrival of the first home-front pioneers to the stage at which it is ready for an intensive programme of growth. We are being impelled to think in terms of the development of human resources by Training Institutes programmes and study circles. Merely to enrol new believers is not enough. All of us, those who are not yet Bahá'ís, new Bahá'ís, veteran Bahá'ís, are all part of a vast process of transformation, coming ever closer to Bahá'u'lláh, becoming increasingly firm in the Covenant and engaged in raising up yet more human resources for the Blessed Beauty.

As Counsellor Shahriar Razavi explained in his excellent presentations at National Convention, the Universal House of Justice has, through the International Teaching Centre, conducted experiments in establishing a sustainable Bahá'í community in each area. Having learned from the experiments and from the experiences of Bahá'ís all around the world, the Universal House of Justice has now given us the means by which we can develop our capacity and ensure that the Bahá'í community is deeply and sustainably rooted in every locality throughout the United Kingdom.

As we follow the guidance of the Centre of the Faith we shall see our community grow numerically and in capacity; we shall see more Local Assemblies emerge in the newly defined Local Assembly areas; we shall see the Bahá'í community becoming a force in the land.

### National Convention Election: Results

At National Convention over the weekend of 27-29 April, the following were elected to the National Spiritual Assembly.

Mr Barney Leith, 83 votes;  
Dr Wendi Momen, 67 votes;  
Dr Kishan Manocha, 59 votes;  
Dr Iain Palin, 58 votes;  
Mr Peter Hulme, 52 votes;  
Dr Shirin Tahzib, 52 votes;  
Dr John Parris, 51 votes;  
Mrs Rita Bartlett, 46 votes;  
Mr Trevor Finch, 37 votes.

The incoming National Spiritual Assembly met at Convention to elect its officers, who are as follows.

Chairman, Dr Shirin Tahzib;  
Vice Chairman, Dr Iain Palin;  
Secretary, Mr Barney Leith;  
Treasurer, Dr Wendi Momen;  
Assistant Secretary, Dr Kishan Manocha.

Owing to prior commitments, Dr Manocha is unable to take up the post of Assistant Secretary until after 12 June. Dr Momen has kindly agreed to step in as acting Assistant Secretary until then.

There are two points to emphasise as we move through these significant times:

1. The whole Bahá'í community needs to be in learning mode as we move through the remaining years of the first century of the Formative Age. The House of Justice has shown us that this is possible at the highest level. We must emulate them.
2. Our success in this Plan and the ones that will follow will be proportional to the extent of loving collaboration between the elected institutions and the Learned Arm. It's not just a matter of inviting the Auxiliary Board member or the assistant to the occasional meeting. The two Arms have to work closely as we plan and implement and reflect and revise and plan again.

The National Spiritual Assembly wants to bring joy to the hearts of the House of Justice. The UK Bahá'í community has an enviable record of service and will, no doubt, rise to even greater heights of service and achievement.

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## Bahá'í Information Office

### World Centre Pictures

There has been a site of World Centre photographs on the UK Bahá'í Information Office's Webspaces for several years now. It has shown photographs of the developments of the Arc and the Terraces and also of the 1998 International Convention, and seems to have been much appreciated.

However time moves on, and this and the completion of the developments mean the site is looking increasingly dated.

We therefore propose to decommission and archive the site by the Summer of 2001 CE. If you wish to visit, download pictures, etc., we recommend you do so soon. The Website can be accessed via the BIO Webspaces on the UK national site at [www.bahai.org.uk/bio/](http://www.bahai.org.uk/bio/) - please note this as the new standard URL for the Bahá'í Information Office sites.

### "Sustainable Development: the Spiritual Dimension"

This is the title of a new statement from the Bahá'í International Community which will be of interest to all who are involved with, or just care about, sustainable development, social and economic development, Agenda 21, etc. To help make share it with the Friends the UK Bahá'í Information Office is making it available in various ways. To obtain a copy please contact BIO; Internet users can receive it electronically (RTF or PDF format - specify which) by e-mailing. The statement is also on the Web: at the BIO Agenda 21 Website - you can access it at [www.iol.ie/~isp/agenda21/sdspiritual.htm](http://www.iol.ie/~isp/agenda21/sdspiritual.htm) and then backtrack into the rest of the site.

<b>Bahá'í Information Office</b>
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## What does the national Fund Actually Do?

### Supporting the Office for the Advancement of Women

The Office for the Advancement of Women works in three main areas: representing the British Bahá'í Community at national and international events; developing policy and supporting the Associations of Bahá'í Women.

### Representation

This includes work at the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations as part of the Bahá'í International Community delegation and European Bahá'í women's events. At the national level the OAW supports the representation of the Faith at the Women's national Commission, UNIFEM, the National Council of Women and the Women's Advisory Council to the United Nations together with other national meetings with government officials and departments. events supporting local and sub-national.

## **Policy**

The OAW is responsible for developing a body of literature which can be presented to other organisations and individuals regarding current issues or on those issues upon which it is felt the Baha'i community should make a statement or contribute to the debate. To this end there is an on-going process of commissioning papers. There is a wide variety of work to be done and OAW is always glad to welcome help in this area. If anyone would like to know more they are most welcome to contact OAW.

## **Supporting Association of Baha'i Women**

There are three levels of this organisation. The first is the body of all Baha'i females in the UK who are automatically members of the association of Baha'i Women UK. This means that we can be partners or affiliates to other bodies by virtue of our numbers and dispersal.

However each area of the UK is distinct and requires that work with the different decentralised agencies must be specific and sensitive. Consequently there are for sub-regional ABWs which are ABW Northern Ireland, ABW Scotland, ABW Wales, ABW England. Whilst these are sister agencies to the Councils, the role of the OAW is to help and support them as much as they need. This requires visits to the different areas by the Director, training, provision of materials and correspondence to keep in touch and pass on necessary information.

In order to ensure that the needs of Baha'i women are looked after and that the teachings of Baha'u'llah relating to the advancement of women are developed in the UK, a network of local ABWs is being developed. They have already become a tool for the communities where they are already established to do a wide range of activities from nurturing to active involvement in the wider community. This again involves travel and correspondence and the provision of materials. The Juggle conference and its related activities was a means to both the Eternal Affairs role of the OAW but also as an opportunity to nourish Baha'i women. It has been recognised as a great success and another conference in the autumn will be held on 23 November to build on this successful endeavour.

This is a brief over-view of the work of the OAW and cannot thus contain much of the work. If anyone is interested they are most welcome to contact the Director for further information or queries.

Zarin Hainsworth

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## **The Attainment of the Unity of Nations and the Lesser Peace**

The Universal House of Justice has recently sent the National Assembly a copy of a letter to an individual believer together with a memorandum on the subject of 'The Attainment of the Unity of Nations and the Lesser Peace'.

The National Assembly feels that this timely document would be of interest to many of the friends and it is now available in both hard copy and PDF version. If you would like a copy, please contact [resources@bahai.org.uk](mailto:resources@bahai.org.uk) or write to the National Office, 27 Rutland Gate, London SW7 1PD.

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## **Statement on Involvement in Politics and Civil Elections**

The Prime Minister has now made it clear that the date of the forthcoming General Election is likely to be 7 June. In this light, the National Spiritual Assembly believes that it is timely for the friends to study a statement and compilation, prepared by the National Assembly to highlight the correct attitude to take if the friends are questioned or canvassed by parliamentary candidates or their supporters.

Please email [oea@bahai.org.uk](mailto:oea@bahai.org.uk) for a copy of the statement & compilation. We can send it to you as a PDF file, as an RTF file, or in hard copy.

The National Assembly wishes the friends not to take a hostile stance towards politicians. Guided by the Universal House of Justice, the National Assembly has worked painstakingly, through its Office of External Affairs and Office for the Advancement of Women, to build cordial relationships with MPs and Peers. These relationships are of inestimable value in helping achieve the two objectives of the House of Justice's external affairs strategy: the defence of the Baha'is in Iran and promoting processes towards world peace. This essential work could be damaged if individual Baha'is are hostile towards politicians or dismissive of their work; it could also be damaged if Baha'is make incorrect statements about the Baha'i Faith and politics.

The friends are urged to study the statement and compilation carefully so that they will understand how to conduct themselves if they are approached by canvassers in this or any other of the many elections that take place, for the European Parliament, for the devolved legislatures in the UK, for local authorities and so on.

In a letter to an individual believer, dated 23 June 1987, the Universal House of Justice points out that the Baha'i community increasingly needs to relate to governments, highlights the complexity of these matters and the difficulty for individuals to understand what is legitimate action for Baha'is, and emphasizes that:

"... it is important that decisions as to the conduct of such relationships be made by authorized institutions of the Faith and not by individuals. In matters of this kind, given the utter complexity of human affairs with which the Baha'i community must increasingly cope spiritually and practically, individual judgment is not sufficient."

**The statement is the guidance of the National Spiritual Assembly and we ask the friends to do their best to follow it. Please email for a copy.**

With loving Baha'i greetings

National Spiritual Assembly,  
Barney Leith, Secretary

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