

Bahá'is World-wide

- Bahá'í international community = five million
- It represents 2,112 ethnic and tribal groups who live in over 121,000 localities in 190 independent countries and 45 dependent territories and overseas departments
- Its membership cuts across boundaries of class and race
- It governs itself through local and national elected bodies known as Spiritual Assemblies
- Its international centre and the seat of its world governing council (the Universal House of Justice) - located in the Holy Land, in Haifa, Israel as specified by Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'is in Canada

- Bahá'í Community of Canada celebrated 100th anniversary in 1998
- approximately 28,000 members living in 1,380 localities with 326 elected local spiritual assemblies
- National Spiritual Assembly was established in 1948; incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1949

Principal Teachings

- Central to Bahá'í teachings:
 - concept of one God
 - major religions established progressively by divine messengers, or teachers
 - spiritual essence of major religions is same - social teachings change according to needs
 - time has come for recognition of: unity of the human race, establishment of equality of women and men, elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty, realisation of world peace
- Bahá'is are striving to:
 - understand and implement spiritual and moral teachings in personal and community lives
 - support establishment of international structures: foundation for global unity

Basis for the Persecution of Bahá'is in Iran

- Muslims regard Muhammad as 'Seal of the Prophets'
- Many Muslims believe that with Muhammad divine revelation ceased; the only true religions are Islam and those which pre-date it
- Bahá'í Faith teaches that divine revelation is continuous: all great religions are valid and represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society
- This evolution will continue into the future with the advent of new Messengers, or Manifestations of God
- Islamic fundamentalists in Iran regard Bahá'is as heretics and those who convert to the Bahá'í faith as apostates for whom Islamic law prescribes the death penalty
- Bahá'í World Centre located in Haifa, Israel - regarded as evidence that the Bahá'í Faith is not a religion but a political movement with Zionist sympathies
- State of Israel established decades after the Haifa/Akka area designated Bahá'í world centre
- Some Bahá'í teachings and practices are rejected by, arouse anger of, Islamic fundamentalists, for example:
 - equality of women and men
 - administration of Bahá'í community by elected bodies
 - abrogation of a professional clergy