

# ONE COUNTRY

"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens" – Bahá'u'lláh

Newsletter of the  
Bahá'í International Community  
September 2011-February 2012  
Volume 22, Issue 1

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### Global outcry over Iran's human rights violations

UN General Assembly resolution on Iran passes by widest margin since 1993; Nobel laureates, philosophers and theologians in more than 16 countries express concern for Bahá'í educators

#### Inside this issue

page 2

Considering the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty.



page 4

New interfaith network aims to make pilgrimage a greener experience.



page 6

A life of service: Russell Garcia, composer, arranger, conductor and more.



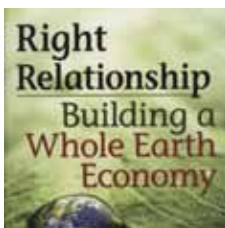
page 10

A new report catalogues Iran's campaign to demonize Bahá'ís.



page 16

Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy by Peter Brown and Geoffrey Garver.



UNITED NATIONS — From every region of the globe, including the UN headquarters building in New York, the ongoing and widespread violation of human rights in Iran is being increasingly condemned.

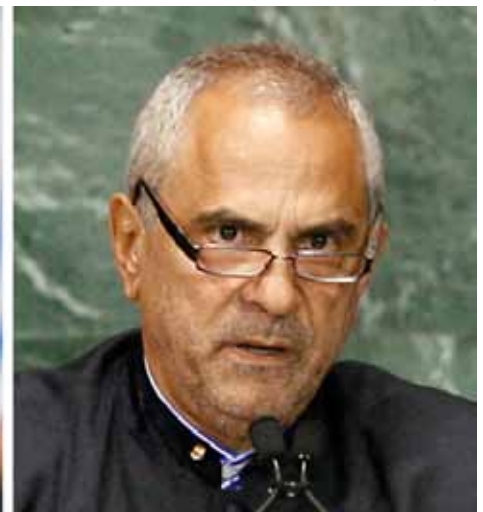
One of the strongest expressions of concern came on 19 December 2011, when the UN General Assembly approved a resolution about Iran's ongoing rights abuses.

By a vote of 89 to 30 with 64 abstentions, the Assembly approved a resolution that expressed "deep concern at serious ongoing and recurring human rights violations" in Iran, citing "a dramatic increase" in executions, the use of torture, the systematic targeting of human rights defenders, pervasive violence against women, and continuing discrimination against minorities, including members of the Bahá'í Faith.

In recent months, many others have voiced similar concerns about Iran's behavior towards its own people. A number have focused on Iran's treatment of its Bahá'í citizens, and, in particular, the crackdown on Bahá'í educators and students. Recent actions include:

- Two Nobel Peace Prize laureates, South African Archbishop emeritus Desmond Tutu and East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta, issued an open letter criticizing "Iran's war against knowledge." The September letter called on the Iranian government to drop charges against seven Bahá'í educators then on trial for their efforts to educate young Iranian Bahá'ís who are banned from college.

*Global outcry, continued on page 12*



Two Nobel Peace Prize laureates — Desmond Tutu, the Anglican Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, and Jose Ramos-Horta, President of East Timor — have joined the global outcry at the persecution faced by Bahá'í educators in Iran. (Photo credits: left, UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferre; right, UN Photo/Ky Chung)

# Initial considerations regarding the elimination of the extremes of poverty and wealth

## IN BRIEF

- **A focus on material wealth has not necessarily translated into social improvements, and growing inequality has made humanity increasingly insecure.**
- **Most of the world's people live in societies characterized by relationships of dominance — one nation by another, one race or class by another, one religious or ethnic group by another, or one sex by the other.**
- **We propose alternate assumptions about human nature, wealth generation, and access to knowledge. The masses cannot continue to be regarded only as consumers and end-users of technology originating in industrial countries.**
- **We invite a dialogue on the purpose of an economy, the concept of wealth, the role of knowledge, and the nature of work, among other things.**

*[Editor's note: The following is adapted from Bahá'í International Community's contribution to the 50th Session of the United Nations Commission on Social Development, which is scheduled for 1–10 February 2012.]*

**P**overty eradication programs have generally focused on the creation of material wealth. While these measures have improved living standards in some parts of the world, inequality remains widespread. In its 2005 Report on the World Social Situation, the United Nations highlighted the growing chasm between formal and informal economies, the widening gap between skilled and unskilled workers, and the growing disparities in health, education as well as in opportunities for social, economic and political participation. It has been well documented that the focus on growth and income generation has not necessarily translated into significant social improvements, and that growing inequality has rendered the global community increasingly unstable and insecure.

The Bahá'í International Community wishes to consider the related phenomena of the extremes of poverty and wealth. While the goal of poverty eradication is widely endorsed, the notion of eliminating extremes of wealth is challenging to many. Some fear that it could be used to undermine the market economy, to stifle entrepreneurship, or to impose income equalization measures. This is not what we mean. To be sure, material wealth is of critical importance to the achievement of individual and collective goals; by the same token, a strong economy is a key component of a vibrant social order. We propose that recognition of the problem of the extremes of poverty and wealth concerns itself, in essence, with

the nature of relationships that bind individuals, communities and nations. Today, most of the world's people live in societies characterized by relationships of dominance — whether of one nation over another, one race by another, one social class by another, one religious or ethnic group by another, or one sex by another. In this context, a discourse on the elimination of the extremes of poverty and wealth presumes that societies cannot flourish in an environment that fuels inequitable access to resources, to knowledge, and to meaningful participation in the life of society.

In this contribution, we briefly reflect on the manner in which the following aspects of society contribute to these extremes: a materialistic worldview, assumptions about human nature, the means of generating wealth, and access to knowledge. We propose an alternative set of assumptions and consider how these might advance a more equitable economic environment.

The dominant model of development depends on a society of vigorous consumers of material goods. Endlessly rising levels of consumption are cast as indicators of progress and prosperity. This materialistic worldview, which underpins much of modern economic thinking, reduces concepts of value, human purpose and human interactions to the self-interested pursuit of material wealth. The inevitable result is an unfettered cultivation of needs and wants which has led to a system dependent on excessive consumption by the few, while reinforcing exclusion and poverty for the many.

The materialistic worldview does not capture the totality of human experience. This includes expressions of love and self-sacrifice, the quest for knowledge and justice, attraction to beauty and to truth, the search for

meaning and purpose, to name but a few. In fact, the progress and vitality of the social order requires a coherent relationship between the material and spiritual dimensions of human life. Within such an order, economic arrangements support the development of just and peaceful human relations and presume that every individual has a contribution to make to the betterment of society.

Consider that nearly 800 million adults cannot read or write; that two and a half billion people lack basic sanitation; that nearly half of the world's children live in poverty. At the other extreme, a mere handful of individuals controls 7% of the world's GDP. We have an economic system that generates extreme inequality. Many assume that such inequality, while undesirable, is necessary for the generation of wealth. If the process by which wealth is accumulated is characterized by the oppression and domination of others, how, in such an environment, can we hope to mobilize the material, intellectual, and moral resources needed to eradicate poverty?

The legitimacy of wealth depends on how it is acquired and how it is expended. Wealth is commendable to the highest degree if it is acquired through earnest effort and diligent work, if the measures to generate that wealth serve to enrich society as a whole, and if the wealth obtained through those measures is expended to promote knowledge, education, industry, and, in general, to advance human civilization.

The principle of justice can be expressed on different levels related to the process of the acquisition of wealth. Employers and their employees, for example, are bound to the laws and conventions that regulate their work. Each is expected to carry out his or her responsibilities with honesty and integrity. At another level, we can consider whether the measures generating the wealth are serving to enrich society and to promote its well-being. The various approaches to obtaining wealth must enter into the discourse on poverty eradication, so that measures which involve the exploitation of others, the monopolization and

**In 2004, this group of women in Waltama, Chad, organized a literacy class following community consultation.**



manipulation of markets, and the production of goods that promote violence and tear at the social fabric can be fully explored and scrutinized by the generality of the people.

Alongside this discourse, the eradication of the extremes of poverty and wealth will require no less than a knowledge revolution. Such a revolution will need to redefine the role of every individual, community and nation in the generation and application of knowledge. It will need to acknowledge both science and religion as two complementary systems of knowledge, which throughout history have made possible the investigation of reality and the advancement of civilization. As these processes unfold, they will help to transform the quality and legitimacy of education, of science and technology, as well as patterns of consumption and production. The masses of the world's people cannot continue to be regarded only as consumers and end-users of technology originating in industrial countries. Such an orientation suffocates the necessary levels of human enterprise and creativity needed to address today's pressing challenges. The development of capacity to identify technological need, to innovate, and to adapt existing technologies is vital. If successfully developed, such capacity would serve to break the unbalanced flow of knowledge from North to South, from urban to rural, and from men to women. It would help to expand the concept of "modern" technology to one characterized by locally defined needs and priorities that take into account a community's material and spiritual well-being.

The eradication of poverty is a larger undertaking rooted in relationships that define the interactions between individuals, communities and nations. We invite others actively working to establish a more just and equitable social and economic order to engage with us in dialogue about these underlying issues in order to learn from each other and to collectively advance efforts towards these ends. We conclude with a number of questions:

What is the purpose of an economy? What assumptions about human nature underlie our understanding of the purpose of an economy? How do we understand the concept of wealth?

How do the extremes of poverty and wealth stifle development, empowerment and healthy relationships? What kinds of identities are formed with the existence of these two extremes (e.g. dependent, self-righteous, consumer, producer, etc.)? How do these identities perpetuate inequality?

What is the role of knowledge — derived from both science and religion — in transforming our economic structures and processes?

How can we conceptualize the nature and purpose of work, wealth, and economic empowerment beyond notions of utility maximization on the part of self-interested individuals?

What are the entry points for making changes in the economy? What motivates individuals, communities, corporations and governments to reform economic structures and processes?

What widely held conceptions or beliefs hinder our ability to transform the economic systems we have today? How can these be overcome?

# Network aims to make pilgrimage a greener experience

## IN BRIEF

- **A new interfaith network has been launched to help make pilgrimage sites more environmentally sustainable.**
- **Some 10 cities and faith traditions have joined, including the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel.**
- **Other sites include the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar in India, the Armenian Orthodox holy city of Etchmiadzin in Armenia, and Jerusalem — a major pilgrimage destination for the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths.**

**A**SSISI, Italy — An estimated 100 million people make some kind of pilgrimage every year, some for a few hours, others for days or months.

To address the environmental impact of these journeys — and to assist the world's holy places to become as environmentally sustainable as possible — a new network has been organized to help make sacred sites around the world more environmentally sustainable.

Representatives of some 15 faith traditions, along with secular and environmental organizations, gathered here November 2011 to launch the world's first global commitment to green pilgrimage.

Local governments and faith groups responsible for 10 holy sites have become the first to join

the network. They include the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar in India, the Armenian Orthodox holy city of Etchmiadzin in Armenia, and Jerusalem — a major pilgrimage destination for the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths.

The Bahá'í World Centre — and the city of Haifa, Israel, where it is located — have also become founding members of the Network. Last year alone, the Bahá'í holy places attracted around 750,000 pilgrims and visitors.

“The Green Pilgrimage Network will ask the faithful to live, during the most intense of religious experiences, in a faith-consistent way,” said Martin Palmer, Secretary-General of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), which has established the Network in association with WWF.

“To travel to a holy place in such a way as to treat the whole world as sacred is to be a true pilgrim,” said Mr. Palmer.

Mr. Palmer said other faith and pilgrimage sites are expected to join in the future. “This is an invitation to all holy places to put into practice what they preach — namely, that when we walk upon this Earth, we walk on sacred land,” he said.

The Network was launched in the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Michael of Kent at the Sacred Land celebration, held in Assisi from 31 October to 2 November.

Some 90 delegates from around the world



Founding members and friends of the Green Pilgrimage Network, launched at Assisi, Italy, in a celebration organised by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) in association with WWF, on 1 November 2011. (Photo credits: ARC/Katia Marsh)

## President of Palau visits Bahá'í World Centre

— representing all the major faiths  
— took part in a two-day conference which examined the way forward for religion and environmentalism, and the Green Pilgrimage Network.

The Bahá'í International Community was represented at the event by Jalal Hatami, its Deputy Secretary-General.

“The Bahá'í World Centre is discussing with the authorities in Haifa how to make the city more ecological,” said Mr. Hatami. “This includes promoting the use of public transport among all citizens and greener practices in the hospitality sector, improving the management of energy and water, and encouraging more recycling and waste reduction.”

Mr. Hatami described hearing about the various initiatives already under way in various holy cities as “very inspiring.”

“It demonstrated that the faith communities have much to say about the environment and can really make an impact if they work towards common goals,” he said.

For members of the Bahá'í Faith, pilgrimage currently involves a visit to the cities of Haifa and Akka for a period of 9 days, during which they visit the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, the Shrine of the Báb, and other Bahá'í holy places in the Haifa-Akka area.



The president of the Republic of Palau, Mr. Johnson Toribiong, and his wife, Mrs. Valeria Toribiong — pictured center — visited the terraces of the Shrine of the Báb on 25 November 2011. Guests included representatives of the municipality of Haifa.

**H**AIFA, Israel — The head of state of the Republic of Palau paid an official visit to the Bahá'í World Centre in November while on a state visit to Israel.

President Johnson Toribiong with his wife, Valeria Toribiong, were welcomed by a member of the Universal House of Justice, Stephen Hall, and his wife, Dicy Hall, on 25 November 2011. Also in the receiving party was a member of the International Teaching Centre, Zenaida Ramirez.

Palau is one of the world's youngest sovereign states, located in the Pacific Ocean, 800 kilometers east of the Philippines. President Toribiong himself requested the visit to the Bahá'í World Centre while on a state visit to Israel.

At a reception held in the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, Mr. Hall presented the president with the book, *Bahá'í Shrine and Gardens in*

*Haifa and Acre*. A laser-etched crystal memento of the Shrine of the Báb was also presented to Mrs. Toribiong.

“The president — who is an attorney by profession — expressed his appreciation of the Bahá'í teachings on justice,” said Kern Wisman, representative of the Bahá'í International Community, who was a member of the welcoming party.

After speeches, the delegation — which also included Palau's Justice Minister, John Gibbons, and guests from the municipality of Haifa — visited the Shrine of the Báb and its surrounding terraced gardens, which particularly interested Mrs. Toribiong who, in her role as first lady, has done much to promote the beautification of her country.

## Award-winning composer dedicated life to building a better world



### IN BRIEF

- **Russell Garcia was an influential composer, arranger and conductor who recorded more than 60 albums and worked with legendary performers such as Judy Garland and Ella Fitzgerald.**
- **He also dedicated his life to promoting the Bahá'í teachings of oneness and unity around the globe, including by sailing the world's oceans on a trimaran.**

**K**ERIKERI, New Zealand — Russell Garcia, who died on 20 November at the age of 95, was an influential composer, arranger, and conductor, who dedicated his prodigious talents to promoting the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith around the world.

In a career spanning eight decades, Mr. Garcia recorded more than 60 albums under his own name, and worked with such legendary performers as Judy Garland and Oscar Peterson. He arranged and conducted Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald's bestselling 1958 recording of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, and worked on three other albums and a concert at the Hollywood Bowl with Armstrong.

Born in Oakland, California, on 12 April 1916, Mr. Garcia began writing music as a boy. His arrangement of the song, *Stardust*, was performed by the Oakland Symphony Orchestra when he

In 2008, at the age of 92, Russell Garcia embarked on a concert tour of Austria.

was just 11. He started a jazz band while still at school and, as a teenager, worked five nights a week playing the trumpet in a San Francisco hotel.

His first break came in 1939 when he was asked to cover for the conductor of a radio show, *This is Our America*. The show's director, Ronald Reagan, kept Mr. Garcia on for two years. Reagan's then wife, the actress Jane Wyman, recommended Mr. Garcia to NBC where he was hired as a staff composer and arranger. He composed for television shows including *Rawhide* and *Laredo*. Among his film work, he wrote the music for the 1960 adaptation of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, collaborated with Henry Mancini on the soundtrack for *The Glenn Miller Story*, and arranged Charles Chaplin's music for *Limelight*.

A teaching post at the Westlake School of Music in Los Angeles also resulted in Mr. Garcia writing *The Professional Arranger Composer*. The book and its sequel have been translated into six languages and are still used in universities and music conservatories around the world.

“Garcia was very much admired for the breadth of his skills as an arranger and a composer and then became even more influential by virtue of these books,” music critic Don Heckman told *The Los Angeles Times*. “They continue to be basic handbooks for anyone who wants to understand the process of arranging and composing.”

### Vow for world peace

During the Second World War, Mr. Garcia fought in the Battle of the Bulge. “This is absolute insanity, people shooting at strangers,” the composer said, vowing that, if he came out of it alive, he would dedicate himself to world peace.

He and his wife, Gina, joined the Bahá’í Faith in 1955 and, from then on, devoted their lives to promoting its principles. In 1966, when Mr. Garcia was at the peak of his career, they sold their home and possessions, bought a boat, and set sail, carrying the Bahá’í teachings to the islands of the Pacific Ocean. They knew nothing about sailing, and Mrs. Garcia did not know how to swim.

“Not many people have the chance to follow their hearts with no financial worries,” Mr. Garcia later said. “We had the ‘charm’ working for us: we knew the royalties would see us through for some years.”

The couple spent six years on their 13-metre fiberglass trimaran, “The Dawn-Breaker,” anchoring in, among other places, Jamaica, the Galapagos Islands, the Marquesas, Haiti, Cuba and Tahiti. In 1969, while they were in Fiji, musicians visiting from New Zealand invited Mr. Garcia on behalf of the New Zealand Broadcasting Commission and the Music Trades Association to do live concerts, radio and TV shows as well as lecture at universities around the country.

The Garcias had planned their voyage to last for at least three years before returning to Hollywood. But they fell in love with New Zealand and bought a house on the shore of Tangitu Bay, North Island.

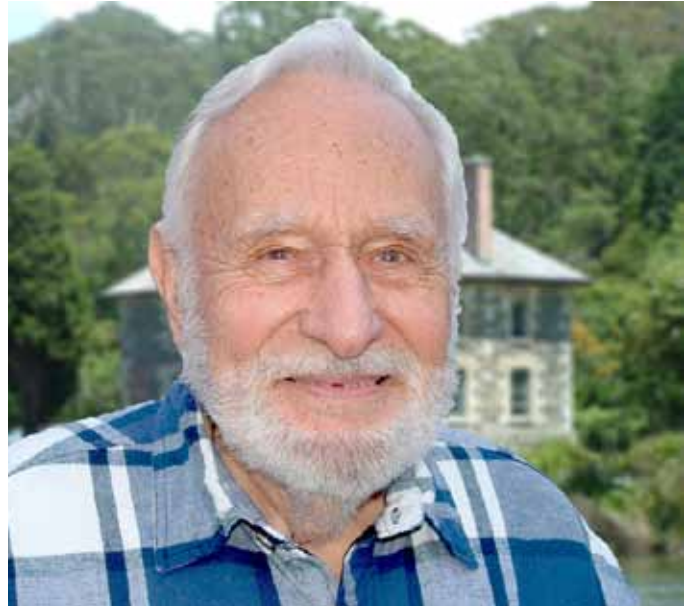
For the last four decades of his life, Mr. Garcia continued to compose, arrange for singers and conduct much of his original music with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. In 2005, the Los Angeles Jazz Institute honored him for his contribution to jazz. In 2009, he and his wife were awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit from Queen Elizabeth II for their service to music.

On learning of his passing, the Universal House of Justice recalled how Mr. Garcia also “devoted himself to the creation of a range of musical compositions as a means of spreading the light of Baha’u’llah,” also noting his “prodigious efforts” in the application of artistic endeavor to promote the oneness of humanity.

He and his wife created an opera, *The Unquenchable Flame*, which will have its premiere in Auckland next July, and a choral piece, *A Path to Peace*, inspired by the Bahá’í writings. Photographs and quotations projected above the stage illustrated conditions in the world that prevent peace, as well as ideas and principles that would promote it.

“My wife and I wrote this show because we thought there was a great need for people to understand these issues,” said Mr. Garcia.

Wellington-based voice teacher Charles Humphreys commissioned one of Mr. Garcia’s last arrangements in March last year. Praising the



Russell Garcia (1916-2011), composer, conductor, arranger and dedicated promoter of the Bahá’í teachings.

composer’s generosity, Humphreys told the New Zealand news website *Stuff*, “From the first time I spoke to him I could tell that this was a man who was peaceful and full of the kind of love of life and people that we all search a lifetime to possess.”

Together, the Garcias also regularly volunteered their services to teach primary school children in New Zealand about spiritual qualities through the use of songs, stories and creative exercises.

“Every action, every motive has got to be a build-up for a better, beautiful, happy, peaceful world for all mankind,” said Mr. Garcia.

“We see mankind as one. So any goal that is not to help everybody is not a good goal,” said Mr. Garcia. “We’ve dedicated our lives to trying to build a better world.”

## In India, Lotus temple embodies “message for the world of today”



The Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi is 25 years old — and now receives on average some 4.3 million visitors at year. Some 5,000 people attended 25th anniversary celebrations in November 2011.

### IN BRIEF

- **More than 5,000 visitors came for the 25th anniversary of the Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi.**
- **Delhi's Chief Minister praised the nine-sided building as “iconic”.**
- **Inspired by the lotus flower, the temple is one of the most visited buildings in the world, receiving an average of 4.3 million visitors a year.**

**N**EW DELHI — On the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Bahá'í House of Worship here, Delhi's Chief Minister praised the impact the temple has made on Indian society, and beyond.

“This is a very iconic building of India. There's nothing like this anywhere else,” Sheila Dikshit told the crowd attending the temple's silver jubilee festivities. “It is thanks to this temple that Delhi has also found a way to reach the hearts of millions of people all over the world.”

The Chief Minister's remarks came as she paid a special visit on the final morning of a weekend-long celebratory program, held 12-13 November 2011, at which more than 5,000 visitors from throughout the sub-continent — as well as almost 60 other countries — gathered at the temple's grounds.

“I wish I could express in words my joy,” Mrs. Dikshit told the celebration. “Your message is the message for the world of today. The Bahá'í Faith is the faith that teaches us all are equal. It rises above any narrow consideration of humanity.”

In its message to mark the occasion, the Universal House of Justice noted the temple's “power to harmonize the manifest diversity of its visitors, to awaken nobility in hearts, and to strengthen hope for peace.”

“Under the shadow of this magnificent edifice, millions who seek God have found tranquillity and been uplifted by the songs of praise and exaltation that rise from its inner sanctum,” wrote the Universal House of Justice.

Greetings were also received from the President of India, Mrs. Shrimati



## Australia “enriched and ennobled” by Bahá’í temple



Civic dignitaries and guests gather in front of the Bahá’í House of Worship in Sydney, Australia, ahead of a reception and service on 18 September 2011, marking the temple’s fiftieth anniversary.

Pratibha Devisingh Patil, and former President, Dr. A.P.J. Kalam.

“The House of Worship with its beautiful environment transmits a message on how to celebrate the differences existing in the society,” Dr. Kalam wrote. “This culture of celebrating the differences in the society is the greatest contribution made by [the] Bahá’í Faith to humanity.”

### Inspired by the lotus flower

The Bahá’í House of Worship, popularly referred to as the “Lotus Temple” because of its award-winning design inspired by the lotus flower, is one of the most visited buildings in the world. Over the past quarter of a century, it has received an average of 4.3 million visitors every year — from all nations, religions and walks of life.

The growing contribution made by the House of Worship to Indian society was noted by India’s Minister for Tourism, Subodh Kant Sahai, who wrote how it “serves as a venue for non-denominational activities such as the spiritual and moral education for children and young people, as well as gatherings where adults systematically study spiritual principles and their application in daily life.”

The message that “worship is not complete unless it is translated into service,” was reiterated throughout the weekend’s presentations, on such themes as communal harmony, social transformation, the education of children, and the empowerment of youth.

The contribution of young people was evident in the devotional programs, artistic presentations and talks, which included addresses by a number of individuals and representatives of organizations who were recognized as “Champions of Social Transformation.”

Concluding her remarks, the Chief Minister of Delhi paid tribute to the House of Worship’s architect, Fariborz Sahba of Canada, who was also in attendance, and those who maintain the temple today.

“Above all, I’d like to bow my head in front of those who keep this building looking as it did on the first day,” said Mrs. Dikshit.

**S**YDNEY, Australia — On the fiftieth anniversary of Australia’s Bahá’í House of Worship, dignitaries paid tribute to its contribution to the life of the community.

“Our society is enriched and ennobled by the temple,” said the Mayor of Pittwater, Councillor Harvey Rose.

“It’s a beacon from the sea, and the land and the sky...a beacon which lights the way to a better world — a world where antagonism and division is replaced by one of unity, of construction and of hope,” Councillor Rose told a reception ahead of a special anniversary service.

The Mayor added that the temple and the Bahá’í community have “an important role not only in our community, but in the broader Australian community.”

The reception held 18 September 2011 launched a week of events marking the golden jubilee of the temple’s inauguration. The service that followed was characterized by the Bahá’í principle of unity in diversity — with

singing in the Aboriginal Wirradjuri language, as well as Arabic, English and Samoan. Passages from Bahá’í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Islamic scriptures were also read.

### “A silent sentinel of faith”

Located in beautiful hills and bushland above Sydney’s northern beaches, the House of Worship opened in September 1961 after four years of construction. It is one of only seven such temples in the world.

Open to all people, the purpose of Bahá’í Houses of Worship is to provide a central gathering place for prayer and meditation as well as, in time, a range of facilities to serve the social and educational needs of the population.

Pittwater’s Member of Parliament, Rob Stokes, who read at the service, said that the temple “stands as a silent sentinel of faith, of inclusion, of a real spiritual strength.”

# New report exposes Iran's media campaign to demonize Bahá'ís

## IN BRIEF

- Although little-noticed outside, Iran has embarked on a wide-ranging campaign to demonize Bahá'ís in the national media.
- A new report from the Bahá'í International Community has cataloged more than 400 instances of anti-Bahá'í propaganda over a 16-month period from late 2009 through early 2011.
- The campaign spurns international human rights law and seeks to brand Bahá'ís as "outsiders" in their own land.

**N**EW YORK — In a wide-ranging media campaign that has gone largely unnoticed outside of Iran, hatred and discrimination are being systematically stirred up against the country's 300,000-member Bahá'í minority.

A report released 21 October 2011 by the Bahá'í International Community documents and analyzes more than 400 press and media items over a 16-month period that typify an insidious state-sponsored effort to demonize and vilify Bahá'ís, using false accusations, inflammatory terminology, and repugnant imagery.

"This anti-Bahá'í propaganda is shocking in its volume and vehemence, its scope and sophistication," said Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations.

"It's all cynically calculated to stir up antagonism against a peaceful religious community whose members are striving to contribute to the well-being of their society," she said.

Titled *Inciting Hatred: Iran's media campaign to demonize Bahá'ís*, the report's main conclusions are:

- That anti-Bahá'í propaganda originates with — and is sanctioned by — the country's highest levels of leadership, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who gave a highly discriminatory speech in the holy city of Qom in October 2010.

- That the campaign spurns international human rights law and norms, including a precedent-setting resolution passed in March 2011 at the United Nations Human Rights Council that specifically condemns and combats the negative stereotyping and incitement to hatred of religious minorities.

- That Bahá'ís are branded as "outsiders" in their own land and as enemies of Islam in a manner that is clearly

calculated to provoke the religious sensibilities of Iranian Shiite Muslims.

- That the campaign aims to deflect attention away from calls for democracy in Iran by using Bahá'ís as an all-purpose "scapegoat" — and, in so doing, to smear those who oppose the government as well as human rights campaigners as Bahá'ís, "as if that were the most heinous crime."

- That Iranian authorities disseminate ludicrous conspiracy theories including that foreign broadcasters, in particular the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Voice of America (VOA), are controlled by or under the influence of Bahá'ís because they report stories about human rights violations in Iran.

"The diverse content of these attacks demonstrates tremendous effort and commitment of resources by the Islamic Republic," says the report.

## Gross distortions

"Many attacks are built on gross distortions of Bahá'í history; some attempt a strategy of guilt by association through lumping Bahá'ís together with completely unrelated groups — such as 'Satanists' or the Shah's secret police; still others deploy a tactic of connecting Bahá'ís with 'opponents' of the regime, which allows the Government to discredit both the Bahá'ís and its opponents in a single transaction. The campaign makes extensive use of the World Wide Web, and often uses graphic images that portray Bahá'ís as fiendish ghouls or agents of Israel."

Bani Dugal said the demonization of Iran's Bahá'í community is a matter that deserves the attention of governments, international legal institutions, and fair-minded people everywhere.

"The campaign not only clearly violates international human rights



law,” she said, “it also utterly contradicts Iran’s long-standing claim at the UN and elsewhere that it is working to support measures to outlaw or condemn hate speech directed against religions or religious followers.”

“The parallels between the campaign of anti-Bahá’í propaganda in Iran today and other state-sponsored, anti-religious campaigns of the past are undeniable. History shows us that such campaigns

are among the foremost predictors of actual violence against religious minorities — or, in the worst case, precursors of genocide,” said Ms. Dugal.

The full report, in both English and Persian, along with an online-only appendix that summarizes each of the 400-plus documents or articles that were collected during the period of this survey, is available at: [www.bic.org/inciting-hatred](http://www.bic.org/inciting-hatred)

## L A W

# In Bangladesh, jurists learn about Bahá’í personal and family law

**D**HAKA, Bangladesh — Almost 180 legal professionals from around the country gathered here for a conference on the Bahá’í Faith and the personal and family laws that apply to its members.

Held in the auditorium of the country’s Supreme Court, the unprecedented event aimed to prepare advocates and judges who might be required to assist Bahá’ís with legal matters, such as marriage and inheritance.

In Bangladesh, there is a division between “public” and “private” — or “personal” — laws, and family affairs are dealt with under religious practice. Some 90 percent of the country is Muslim, and Islamic personal and family laws are well understood.

“It is significant because if there is any problem among Bahá’ís, and they go to regular courts, the judges have to rule according to Bahá’í personal law,” said Jabbar Eidelkhani, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors who spoke at the conference.

“So the advocates and judges that attended this conference, as well as training sessions previously, will now know more about how such laws apply to Bahá’ís,” he said.

The day-long conference, held on 3 December, was opened by Mizanur Rahman, chairman of Bangladesh’s Human Rights Commission.

“If religion is for ensuring human dignity then the Bahá’í personal law is

something which addresses that theme. In this respect it is not different than any other religion,” said Dr. Rahman.

Also addressing the conference was Justice Delwar Hossain, who presented a keynote paper on the origin and background of Bahá’í personal laws, and advocate Samarendra Nath Goswami, the event’s main organizer, who discussed the significance of Bahá’í laws to legal professionals. Mr. Goswami has previously conducted small training sessions on the subject.

There have been Bahá’ís in Bangladesh since the 1920s. The first local Spiritual Assembly was formed in Dhaka in 1952. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Bangladesh was established in 1972, shortly after the country declared its independence. There are an estimated 13,000 Bahá’ís currently living in the country.



The Bangladesh Supreme Court building. Below: Four of the speakers at the conference on Bahá’í law held in the building’s auditorium on 3 December 2011. Left to right, Dr. Mizanur Rahman, chairman of the Bangladesh Human Rights Commission; Mr. S.N. Goswami, advocate; Mr. Justice Delwar Hossain; and Dr. Jena Shahidi, member, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Bangladesh.

# Global outcry over Iran's human rights violations

## IN BRIEF

- **Around the world, the outcry against Iran's ongoing human rights violations is growing.**
- **In December, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution on Iran's human rights record.**
- **The vote followed statements from the UN Secretary General, Nobel Laureates Tutu and Ramos-Horta, and globally renowned philosophers and theologians, among others.**
- **Many expressed special concern over the arrest and imprisonment of Bahá'í educators seeking only to circumvent the government's ban on higher education for Bahá'í youth.**

*Global Outcry, continued from page one*

- More than 40 distinguished philosophers and theologians from 16 countries, including Brazil, India, South Africa, China, and Kenya, and representing Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim backgrounds, signed and issued a letter in October that condemned Iran's attacks on an informal educational initiative of the Bahá'í community — known as the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) — which Iran has repeatedly sought to shut down.

- Heiner Bielefeldt, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, told reporters at a UN press conference in October that Iran's persecution of Bahá'ís is among the most “extreme manifestations of religious intolerance and persecution” in the world today.

- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued a report in October saying he was “deeply troubled” by human rights violations in Iran, which he said have “continued and intensified” over the last 12 months, and have included a “notable increase” in the country's use of the death penalty, along with a rise in unfair trials, amputations, and the use of torture, arbitrary arrest and detention. He also expressed concern over the treatment of minorities, including Bahá'ís.

- The European Parliament in November passed a resolution on Iran's human rights record, citing numerous concerns, ranging from increased executions and the widespread use of torture to the systematic oppression of human rights defenders, journalists, women and minorities. It also took note of Iran's increased persecution of Bahá'ís, noting they “suffer heavy discrimination, including denial of access to education.”

Representatives of the Bahá'í International Community said the

global outcry was powerful evidence that the world has become increasingly intolerant of human rights violators.

“The Assembly's vote this year makes absolutely clear the international community's utter frustration with Iran's continuing oppression of its citizens,” said Bani Dugal, principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the UN.

Ms. Dugal added that delegates to the General Assembly seemed especially frustrated by Iran's repeated refusal to cooperate with the UN in receiving special human rights investigators, in particular a proposed visit from Ahmad Shaheed, the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran.

“Since the appointment of Ahmed Shaheed, Iran has not welcomed him to the country and, in fact, has even questioned the legitimacy of his appointment,” said Ms. Dugal.

Dr. Shaheed was among those who have expressed his concerns over Iran's record in recent months. He released a report in October saying he has received a number of “first-hand testimonies” about “deficits in relation to the administration of justice, certain practices that amount to torture, cruel, or degrading treatment of detainees, the imposition of the death penalty in the absence of proper judicial safeguards, the status of women, the persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, and the erosion of civil and political rights, in particular, the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders and civil society actors.”

## The crackdown on education

Iran's crackdown on Bahá'í educators seemed a special concern for many. In May 2011, authorities raided some 30 Bahá'í homes in cities throughout Iran where Bahá'ís had

conducted informal educational activities meant to provide higher education for Bahá'í youth — who have been banned from public and private universities in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Some 14 individuals associated with the informal Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education were arrested.

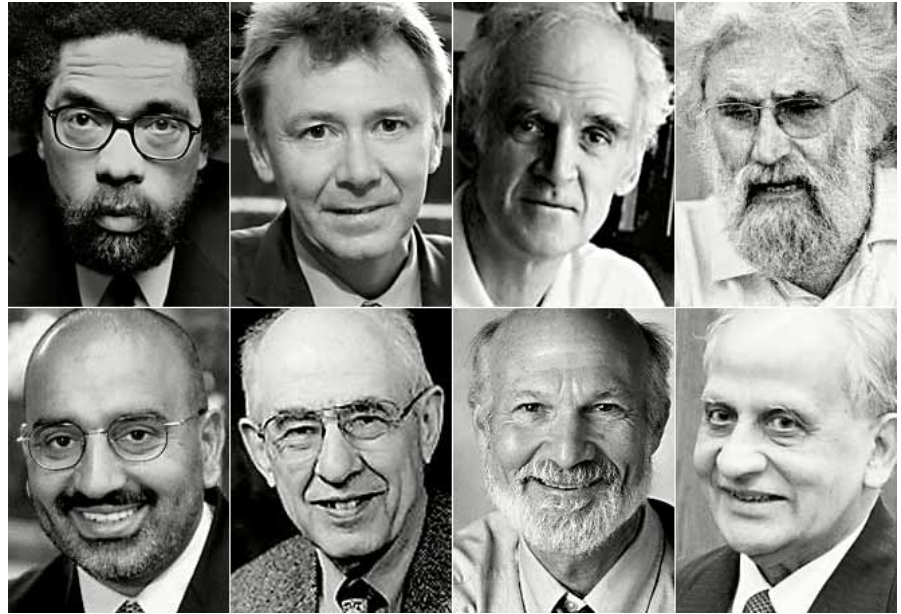
In September, it was learned that seven of those educators had been sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The seven were taken to court on two separate days, handcuffed and chained at the ankles. There, in the presence of their attorneys, they were informed of the verdict and their sentences, with little time to defend themselves.

Diane Ala'i, representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the UN in Geneva, said neither the defendants nor their lawyers were shown a written copy of the verdict, "but we know from transcripts taken down by people present at the hearing that the seven were found guilty of membership in the deviant Bahaist sect, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country, in order to further the aims of the deviant sect and those of organizations outside the country."

Two of the Bahá'ís, Vahid Mahmoudi and Kamran Mortezaie, each received five years imprisonment, while four-year jail terms were given to Mahmoud Badavam, Nooshin Khadem, Farhad Sedghi, Riaz Sobhani and Ramin Zibaie.

"The authorities know full well that there is no truth whatsoever to the charges," said Ms. Ala'i. "The prohibition on foreign diplomats attending court — and the refusal of the judiciary to provide written documentation of the verdict — show how unjustifiable the assertions and actions of the government are, and clearly expose the blatant religious discrimination that is at the heart of this case."

In their statement Archbishop Tutu and President Ramos-Horta found this type of discrimination in education especially outrageous. "The forward progress of humankind in the last centuries has been fueled, more than any other factor, by increasing access to information, more rapid exchange of



Forty-three distinguished philosophers and theologians have signed an open letter protesting against Iran's persecution of Bahá'í educators and students. Among them are such prominent figures as: (top row, left to right) Cornel West, Princeton, U.S.A.; Graham Ward, Oxford, U.K.; Charles Taylor, McGill, Canada; Leonardo Boff, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; (bottom row, left to right) Ebrahim Moosa, Duke, U.S.A.; Hilary Putnam, Harvard, U.S.A.; Stanley Hauerwas, Duke, U.S.A.; and Tahir Mahmood, former member, Law Commission, India.

ideas, and in most parts of the world, universal education," wrote the two Nobel laureates.

The letter from 43 distinguished philosophers and theologians likewise focused on the education issue. "To acquire knowledge and learning is the sacred and legal right of all; indeed, the state is obliged to provide it," they wrote. "In Iran, the government has done the opposite."

**"To acquire knowledge and learning is the sacred and legal right of all; indeed, the state is obliged to provide it. In Iran, the government has done the opposite."**

Open letter from 43 philosophers and theologians

Among those signing the letter were Charles Taylor of McGill University, Hilary Putnam of Harvard University, Cornel West of Princeton University, Leonardo Boff of Rio de Janeiro State University in Brazil, Ebrahim Moosa of

Duke University in the USA, Graham Ward of Oxford University, Abdulkader Tayob of the University of Cape Town in South Africa, Xinjian Shang of Peking University in China, Ashok Vohra of Delhi University in India, and Rabbi Aryeh Cohen of the American Jewish University in the USA.

On a national level, too, numerous individuals and groups have expressed concern about the fate of Bahá'í educators.

In Ireland, more than 50 academics called upon the Iranian authorities to cease attacking Bahá'ís and allow access to higher education for all. "It is hard to believe that any government would deny the right to education to a group of students," they wrote to the *Irish Times* in November.

In Germany, some 45 prominent professors also demanded the immediate release of the seven. In a letter dated 25 October to Iran's Minister for Science, Research and Technology, they wrote, "We insist upon the unrestricted observance of the right of higher education for all citizens

of your country in accordance with international norms...”

In Brazil on 4 November, some 26 filmmakers, producers and actors urged the government of Brazil to defend the rights of filmmakers, journalists and Bahá'í educators. Among the signatories to the open letter were such acclaimed directors as Hector Babenco, Atom Egoyan, and Walter Salles.

In a statement on 20 October, Brazilian Federal Representative Luiz Couto — former president of the country's Human Rights Commission — said: “We all know the work that is developed by the Bahá'ís in Brazil in the areas of equality, justice and human rights; and many of us are also familiar with their educational work in the communities...Why can't these people have the right to profess their faith?”

On 31 October, Scholars at Risk (SIR), an international network of over 260 universities and colleges in 33 countries, said Iran's exclusion of Bahá'í individuals from higher education raises “serious concerns about a wider campaign to limit the ability of intellectuals and scholars generally to work freely in Iran.” This is counter to “Iran's rich intellectual history and traditional support for the values of scholarship and free inquiry.”

On 7 December, 48 Deans and Senior Vice-Presidents of American medical schools, representing a third of all US medical schools, issued an open letter addressed to Iran's representative to the United Nations, voicing their “concern about the treatment of Bahá'í students and educators in Iran.”

“[W]e believe that education is an inherent human right. At our respective institutions, we have hosted and continue to host students, residents, fellows, and faculty irrespective of their religious beliefs from all over the world. We have welcomed this diverse population into our educational communities to contribute to the discovery and dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of humanity.”

## Former UN commander in Rwanda sees pre-genocide conditions for Bahá'ís in Iran

One of the strongest statements about the situation facing Bahá'ís in Iran came recently from Canadian Senator Romeo Dallaire, who said that Iran's current actions remind him of pre-genocide conditions he witnessed in Africa when he commanded a UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda.

“The similarities with what I saw in Rwanda are absolutely unquestionable, equal, similar and in fact applied with seemingly the same verve,” said General Dallaire during a Senate inquiry on 29 November 2011. General Dallaire was force commander for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) in 1994 and is now widely acknowledged as an expert on genocide.

“We are witnessing a slow-motion rehearsal for genocide. Any Iranian who identifies as Bahá'í is barred from higher education, from holding a position in the government, or from partaking in the political process,” he said.

**“We are witnessing a slow-motion rehearsal for genocide. Any Iranian who identifies as Bahá'í is barred from higher education, from holding a position in the government, or from partaking in the political process.”**

- General Romeo Dallaire

Other similarities to the Rwandan situation, said General Dallaire, included the imprisonment of Bahá'ís for no reason other than their belief.

“The prisons of Rwanda were filled with Tutsi people for almost the same reasons, except their crime was based on their ethnicity, rather than their religion,” he told Canada's upper house.

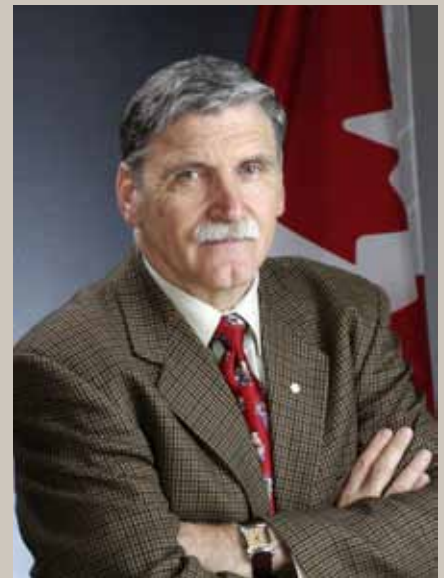
Another parallel lies in the persecution of Bahá'í educators who try to teach young community members in

the face of government efforts to ban them from university.

“A similar scenario played out in Rwanda where the Tutsi ethnic minority was not allowed access to higher education in their country. They had to leave the country in order to access higher education.”

When the facts and trends of the persecution of Iranian Bahá'ís are put together, he said, it amounts at a minimum to something he called “ideological genocide.”

“An essential element of ideological genocide is the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Bahá'í community as a separate religious entity. It is this intent to destroy the Bahá'í community as a separate religious entity that requires our urgent and deliberate attention.”



Senator Romeo Dallaire

## Two former members of the Universal House of Justice pass away

**T**wo former members of the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, have passed away in recent months.

Peter J. Khan, who served on the Universal House of Justice from 1987 until April 2010, died suddenly on 15 July 2011 in his native Australia. He was 74 years old.

Ian C. Semple, who served on the body from its establishment in 1963 until 2005, passed away on 1 December 2011 in Switzerland. He was 82 years old.

Dr. Khan was born in New South Wales on 12 November 1936 to a family of immigrants from India's Punjab region. At 12 years old, Dr. Khan, his parents and sister, became the first Muslims in Australia to join the Bahá'í Faith.

Dr. Khan became an electrical engineer, receiving his BSc (1956), his BE (1959), and his doctorate (1963) — all from the University of Sydney. From 1963 to 1967, he lived in the United States as a Fulbright postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan, and remained there as a professor of electrical engineering until his return

to Australia in 1975. He became a visiting professor at the University of New South Wales and an associate professor at the University of Queensland from 1976 until 1983. A senior member of the Institution of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, he was a member of the editorial board of its journal, *Transactions on Microwave Theory*.

In 1983, Dr. Khan was appointed to serve as an International Counselor at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa. Four years later, he was elected to the Universal House of Justice. He is survived by his wife, Dr. Janet Khan.

Mr. Semple was born in 1928 in England. He did national service in the British Army from 1947-50, during which period he earned a commission in the Royal Corps of Signals.

He studied at Pembroke College, Oxford, obtaining a BA in German and French Language and Literature in 1952 and an MA in 1955. He subsequently studied accounting in the City of London, qualifying as a Chartered Accountant in 1955.

He is survived by his wife, Louise, and three children.

## Review: *Right Relationship*

**Whole Earth**, continued from page 16 federalism; global environmental trusteeships; and a mandatory world court — all aimed at “reining in economic development so that it no longer pushes past the ecological limits of the earth.”

There is much common ground between the Bahá'í teachings and the analysis and proposals offered by Dr. Brown and Mr. Garver.

Certainly their discussion of the need for stronger institutions of global governance will resonate with the Bahá'í teachings on the need to establish a united world federal system. And their discussion of the need for everyone to become “stewards of the entire planet” likewise resounds with the Bahá'í idea of world citizenship.

The book's discussion of the “active convergence of science and religion” also echoes Bahá'í teachings on the fundamental oneness of science and religion. And most Bahá'ís would likely agree with the conclusion that values are the key to long term sustainability.

“Instead of the anxious, illusory pursuit of more money and possessions, people need to think about pursuing joyful, grateful, and fulfilling lives in right relationship with life's commonwealth,” conclude Dr. Brown and Mr. Garver. “Values progression of this kind is needed not only at a personal level but also in institutions and enterprises at the community, national, and international level.”



ONE COUNTRY is published quarterly by the Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community, an international non-governmental organization which encompasses and represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá'í Faith.

For more information on the stories in this newsletter, or any aspect of the Bahá'í International Community and its work, please contact:

ONE COUNTRY  
Bahá'í International Community –  
Suite 120  
866 United Nations Plaza  
New York, New York 10017  
U.S.A.

E-mail: [onecountry@bic.org](mailto:onecountry@bic.org)  
<http://www.onecountry.org>

Editor: Brad Pokorny

Associate Editors:  
Rob Weinberg (Haifa)  
Sophie Menard (Paris)  
Kong Siew Huat (Macau)  
Ralf Wolf (Germany)

Editorial Assistants: Veronica Shoffstall,  
Kendra Boothe

Design: Tom Mann

All material is copyrighted by the Bahá'í International Community and subject to all applicable international copyright laws. Stories from this newsletter may be republished by any organization provided that they are attributed as follows: “Reprinted from ONE COUNTRY, the newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community.”

© 2012 by The Bahá'í International  
Community / ISSN 1018-9300

Printed using  
soy-based inks  
on paper from  
sustainable  
forests.



# A new direction for world economics?

## *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy*

— By Peter G. Brown and  
Geoffrey Garver  
Berrett-Koehler Publishers,  
San Francisco

### IN BRIEF

- **Given the limits imposed by finite resources, our global economic directions and its environmental impact desperately need reevaluation.**
- **The authors ask a series of questions designed to test underlying assumptions, such as “What is an economy for? and “What is fair?”**
- **They conclude what’s needed is a new moral and ethical framework that draws on the world’s spiritual traditions and new discoveries in ecological science.**

Unlike many environmental books, *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy* does not spend a lot of time trying to convince its audience that there is a lot going wrong in the world, whether over climate change, income inequality or environmental degradation. The authors assume most readers understand that already, if only by the logic that the infinite growth advocated by traditional economists can’t possibly continue on a planet with finite resources.

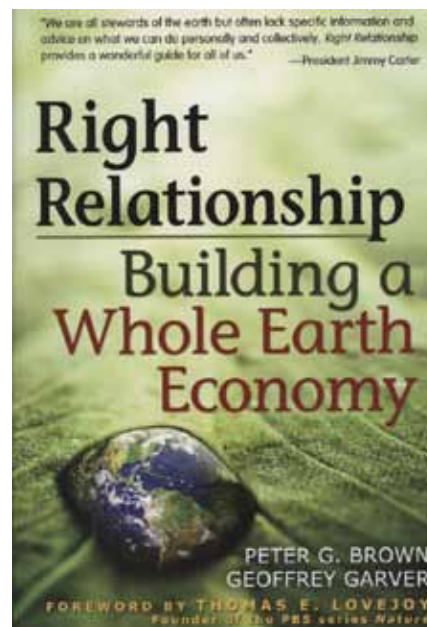
What Peter G. Brown and Geoffrey Garver offer instead are a series of questions aimed at the underlying assumptions that prevail among policy-makers today about the relationship between environment and economics on what has been called “spaceship Earth.” Specifically, they pose five: “What is the economy for? How does it work? How big is too big? What is fair? How should it be governed?”

Their conclusions flow from the idea that each question can best be answered by considering the “relationships” between the various parts of the overall human/social/planetary system that we find ourselves deeply enmeshed in — and specifically in terms of “right” relationships, which is a moral and ethical concept drawn from the spiritual tradition of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), which the authors follow.

The concept, say Dr. Brown and Mr. Garver, “arises from the same deep commitment to human solidarity, human betterment, and the well-being of the commonwealth of life” that is followed by Quakers and many others.

“Economics and ecology are domains of relationship,” they write. “Economics is about access to the means of life. Ecology is about the mutual interdependence of life communities.”

Applying such principles, their answers include:



- That an economy is for “the well-being of communities and the individuals who make them up” – and “to preserve and enhance the integrity, resilience, and beauty of the whole commonwealth of life.”

- That it works by drawing on the “science that underlies the workings of life systems on the earth” and the understanding that humanity cannot advance by “attempting to grow endlessly on a finite planet.”

- That an economy is too big when it has “negative effect on the integrity, resilience, and beauty of the social systems and ecosystems that make up life’s commonwealth.”

- That fairness is a matter of ensuring “that living beings and living systems receive the means by which they can flourish” and that there is “fair distribution among all members of life’s commonwealth, while at the same time preserving opportunities for healthy competition and diversity.”

- That governance today requires a global framework, involving new international institutions that would include “an earth reserve; some form of global

***Whole Earth*, continued on page 15**