

# Media Kit

## Organization Overview

Founded in 1985, the Office of Public Affairs of the [Bahá'ís of the United States](#) represents the U.S. Bahá'í community in its relationships with the U.S. government, non-governmental organizations, the media, and the broader public. The Office of Public Affairs (“OPA” or “the Office”) operates under the auspices of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, the elected governing body of the American Bahá'í community. The Bahá'í national headquarters for the United States is located in Evanston, Illinois; OPA is located in Washington, D.C.

OPA has three primary areas of focus: Human Rights, the Advancement of Women, and Sustainable Development. In these and other areas, OPA engages in public education, dialogue, awareness-raising, media outreach, and policy advocacy. Informed by Bahá'í teachings and principles, OPA seeks to contribute to the betterment of society and to promote the development of a just, unified, and sustainable world.

### *Advancement of Women*

The office’s activities related to the advancement of women cover a wide range of topics and issues related to the equality of women and men. Historically, the office has engaged in legislative advocacy work related to the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), including acting as the primary drafter and compiler of the handbook, *CEDAW: Rights That Benefit the Entire Community*, which has been used extensively in congressional hearings and by NGO advocates; *the Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA); and *the International Violence Against Women Act* (IVAWA). Currently, the office participates in dialogues related to the advancement of women at the national and international level as well as within Bahá'í communities in cities and towns.

### *Human Rights*

The promotion of human rights has long been an integral part of the work of the Office. Since its inception, OPA has advocated for the rights of Bahá'ís in Iran, who suffer severe and pervasive religious persecution at the hands of the government, as well as Bahá'ís who face religious persecution in other countries, such as Egypt. OPA also engages in general advocacy for international religious freedom. The Office has participated in NGO coalition efforts to promote US ratification of several international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). OPA has long been active in supporting US engagement with the International Criminal Court and currently co-chairs the Washington Working Group on the International Criminal Court.

### *Sustainable Development*

The Office has been engaged in discourses related to sustainable development since 1990 when preparations began for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. This event, known as the Earth Summit, opened a variety of social spaces for engagement between governments, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. Since that time, OPA has contributed, nationally and internationally, to discourses in areas such as the ethics of sustainable development, climate change, education for sustainable development, sustainable consumption and production, and governance for sustainable development. The Office helped found and administer a number of national NGO networks established to provide input to major international sustainable development conferences. It currently serves as secretariat for the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development and develops related educational programs for the U.S. Bahá'í community.

### **Background Information on the Bahá'í Faith**

Founded in Iran in 1844, the Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent monotheistic religions with more than five million adherents in 236 countries and territories. Bahá'ís come from nearly every national, ethnic and religious background, making the Bahá'í Faith the second most widespread religion in the world, after Christianity, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Bahá'ís view the world's major religions as part of a single, progressive process through which God reveals His will to humanity. Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, is recognized by Bahá'ís as the most recent in a line of Divine Messengers that includes Abraham, Krishna, Moses, the Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus Christ and Muhammad.

The central theme of Bahá'u'lláh's message is that humanity is one single race and that it is imperative, for the security and prosperity of all, that it resolve to move toward a united, global civilization. Bahá'ís believe in the harmony between science and religion, the equality of women and men, the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty, the common origin and unity of purpose of all world religions, and the elimination of all forms of prejudice.

For more information about the Bahá'í Faith, please visit: <http://bahai.us> and <http://bahai.org>

## **Brief Style Guide**

Members of the Bahá'í Faith are referred to as Bahá'ís; an individual adherent is a Bahá'í. The term Bahá'í may also be used as an adjective, as in “the Bahá'í community” or “a Bahá'í holy day.” “Bahatism” and “Bahaist” are incorrect.

In a first reference of the Bahá'í Faith, capitalize “Bahá'í” and “Faith.” In subsequent references, “the religion” or “the faith” are appropriate.

It is not accurate to refer to the Bahá'í Faith as a sect of any other religion, as it is an independent world religion with its own scriptures, holy days and administrative structure.

The term " Bahá'í Faith " is comparable to "Christianity" or "Islam" or "Judaism." The term "Bahá'í Faith" is the name of the religion – just as Christianity, or Islam, or Judaism is the name of a religion – and there is no other term that properly identifies the religion. The word "Bahá'í" alone is not the name of the religion, but is rather a noun referring to a person who is a follower of the Bahá'í Faith, or else an adjective referring to something affiliated with the Bahá'í Faith (e.g., "a Bahá'í gathering" or "a Bahá'í book"). Therefore, the term " Bahá'í Faith" should be used in its entirety and with both letters capitalized.

Standard Bahá'í usage includes accent marks in the following names: Bahá'í, Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. If it is not possible to use these accent marks, the names should be spelled Baha'i, Baha'u'llah, the Bab and Abdu'l-Baha.

### ***Pronunciation Guide***

Bahá'í	Bah-HIGH
Bahá'u'lláh	Bah-HAH-ol-LAH (The Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith)
The Báb	The Bob (The Prophet-Herald of the Bahá'í Faith)
‘Abdu’l-Bahá	Ab-dol ba-HAH (Son of Bahá'u'lláh)

## **Social Media**

WordPress: <http://iran.bahai.us/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/USBahaiOPA>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/USBahaiOPA>

## **Contact Information**

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