Guide to Annual Public Affairs Activities and Events
Opportunities for Engagement by Local Bahá'í Communities

This guide outlines annual activities, events, and observances that are in line with the National Spiritual Assembly's public affairs goals, as well as the spirit of the Bahá'í teachings. In particular, these events promote engagement in the Office of Public Affairs' core areas of action, including human rights, racial and gender equality, sustainable development, interfaith activity and other related themes.

Local Bahá'í communities are encouraged to participate in, lead, and help foster these activities and events in their cities or towns as one means of engaging in public affairs work at the community level.

The activities and events are listed first by date, in an annual calendar. The dated listings are hyperlinked; thus, clicking on a listing will take the reader directly to detailed information on the activity or event. The detailed information appears below the calendar, under alphabetically-listed areas of action.

For further information or guidance, please contact the National Spiritual Assembly's Office of Public Affairs in Washington, D.C. at 202-833-8990 or usnsa-opa@usbnc.org.

Annual Calendar of Activities and Events

January
World Religion Day
January 30 – April 4: A Season for Nonviolence

February
Black History Month
February 1 – 7: World Interfaith Harmony Week
February 20: World Day of Social Justice

March
Women's History Month
March 8: International Women's Day
March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

April
Sexual Assault Awareness Month
April 22: Earth Day

May
May 15: International Day of Families

June
June 5: World Environment Day
Race Unity Day
June 20: World Refugee Day
June 26: International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

July
July 17: World Day for International Justice

August

August 9: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
August 12: International Youth Day
August 19: World Humanitarian Day

September

September 21: International Day of Peace

October

Domestic Violence Awareness Month
October 11: International Day of the Girl Child
October 16: World Food Day
October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
October 24: United Nations Day
October 24: World Development Information Day
October 27: International Religious Freedom Day

November

November 16: International Day for Tolerance
November 20: Universal Children's Day
November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
November 25 – December 10: 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Gender Violence

December

December 1: World AIDS Day
December 5: International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
December 10: Human Rights Day
December 18: International Migrants Day

Gender Equality

March: Women's History Month

History: The month began with a 1978 celebration of Women's History Week in a small school district in California, an idea that then spread to numerous other school districts, communities, and organizations across the country. Following a presidential proclamation of National Women's History Week in 1980 and six subsequent years of Congressional resolutions honoring the week, in 1987, Congress declared March as National Women's History Month. The Month has become a national celebration of women's contributions to history, culture and society.

Resources**:**

http://womenshistorymonth.gov/about.html

http://www.nwhp.org/whm

March 8: International Women's Day

History**:** In 1975, the United Nations began observing International Women's Day, which has been celebrated internationally on March 8 since 1913. The UN General Assembly proclaimed 1975 to be International Women's Year and the decade of 1976-1985 to be the UN Decade for Women. In 1977, the Assembly invited Member States to proclaim, in accordance with their historical and national traditions and customs, any day of the year as United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. States were called upon to contribute to creating conditions for the elimination of discrimination against women and for their full and equal participation in social development.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/womensday

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/iwd

http://www.internationalwomensday.com

April: Sexual Assault Awareness Month

History: Beginning with Take Back the Night Marches in the 1970s and continuing with state-based and community-based work against sexual violence, an increasingly national movement against sexual violence began to focus its efforts on a Sexual Assault Awareness Week in April during the 1980s, which was broadened to a month during the 1990s. Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) was first observed nationally in

April 2001. The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence.
Resources**:**
http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/

October: Domestic Violence Awareness Month
History**:** In October 1981, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence observed the first Day of Unity, which was designed to connect battered women's advocates across the nation who were working to end violence against women and their children. It soon became a special week in which a range of activities were conducted at the local, state, and national levels to mourn those who have died because of domestic violence, celebrate those who have survived, and connect those who work to end violence. In October 1987, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed and the first national toll-free hotline for domestic violence was created. In 1989, Congress passed the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month Commemorative Legislation, which has passed every year since then.
Resources**:**
http://www.ncadv.org/takeaction/DomesticViolenceAwarenessMonth.php

October 11: International Day of the Girl Child
History: In 2011, the UN General Assembly declared October 11 to be the International Day of the Girl Child, a day to recognize the rights of girls and the unique challenges they face around the world. Girls are often deprived of education, subjected to violence, including physical abuse and female genital mutilation, and forced into child marriage. The Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges that girls face and to focus on promoting the empowerment of girls and the fulfillment of their rights.
Resources:
http://www.un.org/en/events/girlchild/
http://dayofthegirl.org/

November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

History**:** Since 1981, women's activists have marked November 25 as a day against violence, as this was the date of the brutal assassination in 1960 of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic, on orders of Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo. In 1999, the UN General Assembly designated November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The Day is an opportunity for governments, international organizations, and NGOs to organize activities designed to raise public awareness of violence against women – which includes intimate partner violence, sexual violence in conflict, female genital mutilation, and trafficking in persons – and provide opportunities to take action to end this violence.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday

http://endviolence.un.org/

November 25 – December 10: 16 days of Activism to Eliminate Gender Violence

History**:** This international campaign originated from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991. Participants chose the days falling between November 25, the International Day Against Violence Against Women, and December 10, International Human Rights Day, to symbolically link violence against women and human rights, and to emphasize that such violence is a violation of human rights. The 16 Days Campaign is a time to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women by raising awareness of the human rights dimensions of gender-based violence; creating connections between local, national and international work to end gender-based violence; and promoting governmental advocacy tools for ending violence against women.

Resources**:**

http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu

Human Rights

January 30 – April 4: A Season for Nonviolence

History**:** This is a 64-day educational, media, and grassroots campaign dedicated to demonstrating that nonviolence is a powerful way to heal, transform, and empower individuals our communities. Inspired by the 50th and 30th memorial anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this international event honors their vision for an empowered, nonviolent world.

Resources**:**

http://www.agnt.org/season-for-nonviolence

February 20: World Day of Social Justice

History: In 2007 the UN General Assembly declared that February 20 will be celebrated as the World Day of Social Justice, and invited Member States to devote the day to promoting national activities in accordance with the objectives and goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Observances of the World Day of Social Justice focus on supporting the efforts of the international community to eradicate poverty, promote full employment and decent work, and ensure gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/socialjusticeday

June 20: World Refugee Day

History**:** In 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution noting that 2001 marked the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and declared June 20 as World Refugee Day. The Day is a time to remember those who have been forcibly displaced from their homes and communities and to undertake efforts to increase awareness about the plight of refugees, to raise funds for the assistance of refugees, and to encourage governmental and nongovernmental actors to adopt policies and practices that will ensure the protection of refugees.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/refugeeday

June 26: International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

History**:** In 1997, the UN General Assembly proclaimed June 26 the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, with a view to the total eradication of torture and the effective implementation of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which entered into force on June 26, 1987.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/torturevictimsday

http://www.un.org/events/torture

July 17: World Day for International Justice

History**:** Governments, civil society organizations, legal associations, students and activists around the globe observe the World Day for International Justice on July 17. The date marks the anniversary of the entry into force on July 17, 2002 of the Rome Statute, the treaty that created the International Criminal Court (ICC). Building upon the nascent system of international justice that has emerged since the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials after World War II, the ICC is the first permanent and independent international judicial institution capable of trying individuals accused of the most serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including the crimes of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Resources**:**

http://www.iccnow.org

http://www.amicc.org

August 12: International Youth Day

History**:** In 1999, the UN General Assembly declared August 12 to be International Youth Day. Young people today face pressing global challenges, such as high levels of unemployment, vulnerable working conditions, and marginalization from decision making processes. Partnerships – with the UN, governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and philanthropists – can help increase opportunities for success by leveraging comparative advantages, resources, and shared interests.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/youthday

November 16: International Day for Tolerance

History**:** In 1996, the UN General Assembly invited Member States to observe the International Day for Tolerance on November 16. This action came in the wake of the UN Year for Tolerance, 1995, proclaimed by the Assembly in 1993. The Day is designed to encourage respect and appreciation for the diversity of humanity, the rich variety of the world's cultures, and the vital need for the peoples of the world to live together in harmony.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/toleranceday

November 20: Universal Children's Day

History**:** In 1954, the UN General Assembly recommended that all countries institute a Universal Children's Day. It suggested to governments that the Day be observed on the date which each considers appropriate. November 20 marks the day on which the Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, in 1959, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989. They Day is an opportunity to promote worldwide fraternity and understanding between children and to support activities that promote the welfare of the world's children.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/children_day

http://www.dayofprayerandaction.org

December 10: Human Rights Day

History**:** In 1950, the UN General Assembly invited all Member States and interested organizations to observe December 10 as Human Rights Day. The Day marks the anniversary of the Assembly's 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first international instrument dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights and the foundation of the modern system of international human rights law. Human Rights Day celebrates the basic rights and fundamental freedoms that are inherent to all human beings, and the global commitment to upholding dignity and justice for all people.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday

http://www.un.org/en/rights

http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ABOUTUS/Pages/HumanRightsDay.aspx
http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/Resources.asp

December 18: International Migrants Day

History**:** In 2000, the UN General Assembly proclaimed December 18 to be International Migrants Day. The date marks the day in 1990 when the Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of the need for further efforts to ensure respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people living outside their countries of origin.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday
https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/events/migrants/index.html

Interfaith

January: World Religion Day

History**:** In December 1949, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States instituted an annual World Religion Day to be observed publicly by Bahá'í communities wherever possible throughout the United States. The third Sunday of January each year has been designated for this celebration. It is an opportunity to promote interfaith understanding and harmony by emphasizing the common features of all world religions, and to thereby promote a unified approach to addressing the problems confronting humanity.

Resources**:**

http://www.worldreligionday.org

http://www.bahai.us/world-religion-day

February 1 – 7: World Interfaith Harmony Week

History**:** In 2010, the UN General Assembly proclaimed World Interfaith Harmony Week. It noted that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace, and established World Interfaith Harmony Week as a means of promoting harmony between all people, regardless of their faith. Recognizing the imperative need for dialogue among different faiths and religions to enhance mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation among people, the Assembly encouraged all States to support, during that week, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world's churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship, on a voluntary basis and according to their own religious traditions or convictions.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/interfaithharmonyweek

http://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com

October 27: International Religious Freedom Day

History: The Day marks the date in 1998 when the U.S. President signed the International Religious Freedom Act into law. The new law created an Office of International Religious Freedom within the U.S. State Department, headed by a new Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. It also created the U.S.

Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent governmental body. Both the Office of International Religious Freedom and USCIRF monitor and report on religious freedom conditions around the world. The Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of religious persecution and to highlight the importance of freedom of religion.

Resources:

http://www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/

http://uscirf.gov/

Racial Equality

March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
History: In 1966, the UN General Assembly designated March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. The date was chosen to commemorate the day that police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws." In 1979, during the second half of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the Assembly decided that that a Week of Solidarity with the peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination, beginning on March 21, would be organized annually in all Member States. The Day and the Week provide opportunities to raise awareness of the pernicious and harmful effects of racism and to promote dialogue to encourage racial equality and unity.
Resources**:**
http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/racial
http://www.un.org/en/events/racialdiscriminationday

August 9: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
History**:** In 1994, the UN General Assembly decided that the International Day of the World's Indigenous People would be observed on August 9 every year during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. The date marks the day of the first meeting, in 1992, of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. The Day is an opportunity to strengthen cooperation for solving problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health.
Resources**:**
http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday
http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples.aspx

February: Black History Month
History**:** Black History Month, or African American History Month, is an annual celebration of achievements by black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. The observance was originally conceived as

Negro History Week in 1925, and was commemorated by schools, civic organizations, and city governments annually. Since 1976, every U.S. president has issued proclamations officially designating the month of February as African American History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating black history.

Resources**:**

http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov

June: Race Unity Day

History**:** In 1957, The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States inaugurated Race Unity Day to promote racial harmony and understanding. Since then, communities throughout the country have held celebrations, open to the public, on the second Sunday in June. Originally called Race Amity Day, the name was changed to Race Unity Day in 1965. The purpose of Race Unity Day is to focus attention on racial prejudice, which Bahá'ís believe is the most challenging moral issue facing our nation.

Resources**:**

http://www.bahai.us/race-unity-day-second-sunday-in-june

http://www.bahai.us/social-action/race-unity

Sustainable Development and Global Prosperity

April 22: Earth Day

History**:** The first Earth Day, held on April 22, 1970, activated 20 million Americans from all walks of life and is widely credited with launching the modern environmental movement. The passage of the landmark Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and other groundbreaking environmental laws soon followed. Growing out of the first Earth Day, the Earth Day Network works with over 22,000 partners in 192 countries to broaden, diversify, and mobilize the environmental movement. More than 1 billion people now participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world.

Resources**:**

http://www.earthday.org

http://www.epa.gov/earthday

May 15: International Day of Families

History**:** In 1989, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 1994 to be the International Year of the Family, with the intent of increasing awareness of family issues and improving the capability of nations to tackle family-related problems with comprehensive policies. In 1993, the UN General Assembly declared that May 15 of every year should be observed as the International Day of Families. The Day provides an opportunity to promote awareness of the social, economic, and demographic processes affecting families and to strengthen family-centered components of policies and programs as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to development.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/familyday

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/IDF.html

June 5: World Environment Day

History**:** In 1972, the UN General Assembly designated June 5 as World Environment Day to raise public awareness of the need to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural environment. That date recalls the opening day of the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, which led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Resources**:**
http://www.unep.org/wed
http://iefworld.org
http://www.uspartnership.org

August 19: World Humanitarian Day
History: In 2008, the UN General Assembly designated August 19 as World Humanitarian Day. The date was chosen to commemorate the day when a brutal terrorist attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad in 2003 killed 22 people, including UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello. The Day seeks to draw attention to humanitarian needs worldwide and to honor the humanitarian relief workers who assist the world's poorest, most marginalized, and most vulnerable individuals. Those observing the Day are encouraged to engage in acts of service to others.
Resources:
http://www.un.org/en/events/humanitarianday/index.shtml
http://www.whd-iwashere.org

October 16: World Food Day
History**:** In 1979, the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization proclaimed October 16 to be World Food Day. The date marks the day that the Food and Agriculture Organization was founded in 1945. The aim of the Day is to heighten public awareness of the world food problem and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. In 1980, the UN General Assembly endorsed observance of the Day in consideration of the fact that "food is a requisite for human survival and well-being and a fundamental human necessity."
Resources**:**
http://www.worldfooddayusa.org
http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/en
http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/food/index.html

October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
History**:** In 1992, the UN General Assembly, welcoming the fact that certain NGOs had, in many Member States, observed October 17 as World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, declared that date the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The

observance aims to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries, particularly in developing countries – a need that has become a development priority.
Resources**:**
http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/poverty
http://social.un.org/index/Poverty/InternationalDayfortheEradicationofPoverty.aspx

October 24: World Development Information Day
History**:** In 1972, the UN General Assembly instituted World Development Information Day to draw attention to development problems and the need to strengthen international cooperation to solve them. The Assembly decided that the date should coincide with United Nations Day, October 24 – which was also the date of the adoption, in 1970, of the International Development Strategy for the Second UN Development Decade. The Day provides an opportunity to disseminate information and mobilize public opinion, particularly among young people, to raise awareness of the potential of international cooperation to solve development problems.
Resources**:**
http://www.un.org/en/events/devinfoday

December 1: World AIDS Day
History**:** In 1988, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared December 1 to be World AIDS Day. The same year, the UN General Assembly stated its deep concern about the pandemic proportions of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and stressed the importance of observing World AIDS Day. Today, over 34 million people are living with HIV/AIDS. The Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of the disease and to highlight progress towards treating, preventing, and curing the disease.
Resources**:**
http://www.aids.gov/world-aids-day
http://www.un.org/en/events/aidsday
http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/world-aids-day

December 5: International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
History**:** In 1985, the UN General Assembly invited governments to observe annually, on December 5, an International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development

and urged them to take measures to heighten awareness of the important contribution of volunteer service, thereby stimulating more people in all walks of life to offer their services as volunteers, both at home and abroad. The Day is an opportunity to recognize the work of volunteers and to promote a culture of volunteerism.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/volunteerday

http://www.unv.org/what-we-do/intl-volunteer-day.html

UN and World Peace

October 24: United Nations Day

History**:** The anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter on October 24, 1945 has been celebrated as United Nations Day since 1948. It has traditionally been marked throughout the world by meetings, discussions, and exhibits on the goals and achievements of the Organization. In 1971, the UN General Assembly recommended that Member States observe it as a public holiday.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/events/unday

http://www.unausa.org/membership/una-usa-events/un-day

September 21: International Day of Peace

History**:** In 1981, the UN General Assembly declared that the opening day of its regular session in September "shall be officially dedicated and observed as the International Day of Peace and shall be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples." In 2001, the Assembly decided that, beginning in 2002, the International Day of Peace would be observed on September 21 each year, with this date to be brought to the attention of all people for the celebration and observance of peace. It declared that the Day shall be observed as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence, an invitation to all nations and people to honor a cessation of hostilities throughout the Day. It also invited Member States, United Nations bodies, and regional and non-governmental organizations to commemorate the day and to cooperate with the United Nations in establishing the global ceasefire.

Resources**:**

http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday

http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org