

XV. ENDOWMENTS, LOCAL AND NATIONAL

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English



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1. Endowment Land Used for Site of Haziratu'l-Quds Ceases to be Endowment in the Bahá'í Sense¹

"The Universal House of Justice acknowledges your letter of July 15 about the use of a local endowment for the site of the local Haziratu'l-Quds, and instructs us to send you the following reply."

"Endowments, whether local or national, are normally pieces of property held in the name of the National or Local Spiritual Assembly as an investment and asset. The Haziratu'l-Quds and the land on which it is built cannot be considered an endowment as this is a separate institution. If, therefore, endowment land is used for the site of a Haziratu'l-Quds, it ceases to be an endowment in the Bahá'í sense. Where a parcel of land owned as an endowment is sufficiently large to be subdivided, one part to remain as the endowment and the other to be the site of the Haziratu'l-Quds, it is permissible to do this but a clear demarcation must be made to distinguish clearly what is the endowment and what is the Haziratu'l-Quds. This demarcation, which must be made in the Assembly's records as well as on the site itself, is an internal domestic matter and need not be recorded in the Land Registry."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, August 11, 1974)

1. National Endowments

"A national endowment should be regarded as an investment in real estate owned by the National Spiritual Assembly. It may be anywhere in the country and can be a small, inexpensive piece of land donated by one of the friends, or else acquired out of the resources of the National Fund."

('Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, 1984 ed., p. 231)

1. Local Endowments

"...A local endowment can be quite a small piece of land; it can be purchased by the Local Spiritual Assembly or more usually the gift of one or more of the believers. If the Local Assembly

1. (See also: XXIII, Nos. 912-922, Haziratu'l-Quds)



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is incorporated, the endowment should be registered in its name, but if it is not, the endowment can be held by one or more of the believers on behalf of the community. For example, if one of the believers gives a small piece of land he can continue to hold it in his name, but it will be known that he does so on behalf of the Local Spiritual Assembly and that the land will in time be transferred legally to the Assembly when that is possible...."

(Ibid.) [pg 217]

1. Endowment Land — There is No Objection to Raising a Temporary Structure

"Endowment land cannot, at the same time, be used as another Bahá'í institution such as Haziratu'l-Quds or a Teaching Institute. There is no objection to erecting a temporary structure on endowment land for the convenience of the friends who may visit it or have gatherings there provided that if its use becomes of a permanent nature it would be necessary to acquire a new Endowment."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 30, 1971)

1. Endowment Land to be Regarded as an Investment for Local Assemblies

"...The principle involved is that the endowment land should not be used for any other Bahá'í purpose, and is to be regarded as an investment for the future advantage and benefit to the Local Spiritual Assembly. If the endowment plot is sufficiently large that not all of it is needed to serve as an endowment, it is permissible to designate a part of it as endowment property and the balance may be transferred to the use of the summer school. In such a case a line of demarcation should be made between the portion to be regarded as endowment and the portion to be used for summer or winter school purposes. This demarcation, which must be made in the Assembly's records, as well as on the site itself, is an internal domestic matter and need not be recorded in the Land Registry."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, April 15, 1979)

1. Endowment Property May Be Used for Sports Facilities or to Produce Income for the Work of the Faith

"In reply to your letter of 29 August 1985 in which you inquire about endowment property, we are instructed to say that while such property is regarded as an investment for the future benefit of the Bahá'í community, and as such should not be used for purposes of summer schools, conferences and other Bahá'í events except on a temporary basis, the Universal House of Justice sees no reason why it should not be used for sports facilities. It also might be farmed or otherwise developed to produce income, and such income or proceeds from a capital gain may be used for the general work of the Faith."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala, September 30, 1985)

1. Summary of Principles which Should Govern Acceptance of Free Land for Bahá'í Use

"We are asked by the Universal House of Justice to acknowledge your letter of 20 August 1985 regarding the possibility of obtaining free land from the government in order to build a Haziratu'l-Quds, and to share the following principles which should govern any decision you will make in this regard.

1. The principle of not accepting gifts from non-Bahá'ís for strictly Bahá'í purposes applies to receiving free grants of land from non-Bahá'ís, whether individuals, institutions or governments. [pg 218]
1. There is no objection, however, to accepting free plots of land from the government or civic authorities if such plots are used for Bahá'í cemeteries or for such institutions as are charitable or humanitarian in nature, such as schools.
1. In countries where the only method to acquire property is to be granted by the authorities' free use of land, there is no objection to receiving such allocation of land (which excludes ownership) for the building of institutions of a strictly Bahá'í nature, such as a Haziratu'l-Quds, a Summer School, or a Teaching Institute.
1. If the government offers gifts of land to all religious communities in recognition of their status as a religious entity in the country, Bahá'ís may accept such properties under the provisions of points 1 and 2 above. They should make it clear to the government that they can embark upon the establishment of institutions of a humanitarian or charitable nature, only when conditions favourable to the establishment of such institutions are present."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 19, 1985) [pg 219]

