



Justice

Sustainable Development Goal 16

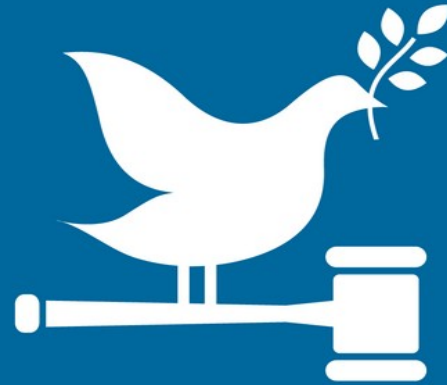
Issues for Discourse with Youth

Bahá'í Discourse - Justice

Sustainable Development Goal 16

16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to **justice** for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



What is Justice?

The quality of being (morally) just or righteous; just conduct; integrity; rectitude. Observance of the divine law
(Oxford English Dictionary)

- Justice: what is right and wrong
- Application of laws: governmental or spiritual
- Injustice: an act that brings harm to others
- Institutions that apply justice: courts, Houses of Justice

Need for Justice Globally

- our world has globalised without justice
- the present materialistic civilisation fulfils only our physical needs and desires
- its values are egotistical and self-centred
- injustice is everywhere

Our Present Unjust Civilisation

We have institutions that are inherently unjust, that:

- ignore their impacts on the global system
- pursue a narrowly defined material purpose (wealth, power)
- for which the end justifies any means

Example: the modern multinational corporation:

- pursuing short-term profit through any means
- arms and weapons
- addictive drugs/chemicals (caffeine, nicotine, narcotics, alcohol, etc.)
- addictive technologies
- violence and sex entertainment, gambling, etc.

International
Court of Justice
The Hague



Bahá'í view of Justice

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

Justice

"No light can compare with the light of justice. The establishment of order in the world and the tranquillity of the nations depend upon it." (Baha'u'llah)

(Universal House of Justice, To the Bahá'ís of the World, 1 March 2017. Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa.)

Justice

Know verily that the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, LXXXVIII)

Justice

The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. We cherish the hope that the light of justice may shine upon the world and sanctify it from tyranny.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXII)

Justice

If the rulers and kings of the earth, the symbols of the power of God, exalted be His glory, arise and resolve to dedicate themselves to whatever will promote the highest interests of the whole of humanity, the reign of justice will assuredly be established amongst the children of men....

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXII)

Justice

The structure of world stability and order hath been reared upon, and will continue to be sustained by, the twin pillars of reward and punishment....

There is no force on earth that can equal in its conquering power the force of justice and wisdom....

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXII)

Justice in application

Overstep not the bounds of moderation, and deal justly with them that serve thee. Bestow upon them according to their needs, and not to the extent that will enable them to lay up riches for themselves, to deck their persons, to embellish their homes, to acquire the things that are of no benefit unto them, and to be numbered with the extravagant. Deal with them with undeviating justice, so that none among them may either suffer want, or be pampered with luxuries. This is but manifest justice.

(Bahá'u'lláh (to the Sultan of Turkey), Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXIV)

Justice

No power on earth can prevail against the armies of justice, and every citadel must fall before them; for men willingly go down under the triumphant strokes of this decisive blade, and desolate places bloom and flourish under the tramlings of this host.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Secret of Divine Civilization](#), p. 70)

Justice

There are two mighty banners which, when they cast their shadow across the crown of any king, will cause the influence of his government quickly and easily to penetrate the whole earth, even as if it were the light of the sun: the first of these two banners is wisdom; the second is justice.

A Just Bahá'í Civilization

...the stupendous enterprise of laying the foundations of the Kingdom of God has been set in motion, and the population of the earth has been endowed with the powers and capacities equal to the task. That Kingdom is a **universal civilization shaped by principles of social justice** and enriched by achievements of the human mind and spirit beyond anything the present age can conceive.

(Universal House of Justice, *One Common Faith*, p. 54-55)

A Just Bahá'í Civilization

"This is the Day", Baha'u'llah declares, "in which God's most excellent favours have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things.... Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead."

(Universal House of Justice, *One Common Faith*, p. 54-55)

Equity and Justice

Justice and equity are twin Guardians that watch over men.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912](#), page 76)

From them are revealed such blessed and perspicuous words as are the cause of the well-being of the world and the protection of the nations.

(Bahá’u’lláh, [Epistle to the Son of the Wolf](#), page 13)

Equity and Justice

Equity is fairness, the standard by which each person and group is able to maximize the development of their latent capacities. Equity differs from absolute equality in that it does not dictate that all be treated in exactly the same way. While everyone is endowed with talents and abilities, the full development of these capacities may require different approaches. It is equity that ensures that access and opportunity are fairly distributed so that this development might take place.

(Bahá'í International Community, Valuing Spirituality in Development, 1998)

Equity and Justice

Equity and justice are the twin guardians of society. Equity is the **standard** by which policy and resource commitment decisions should be made. Justice is the **vehicle** through which equity is applied, its practical expression in the life of the individual and society. It is only through the exercise of true justice that trust will be established among the diverse peoples, cultures and institutions of an increasingly interdependent world.

(Bahá'í International Community, Valuing Spirituality in Development, 1998)

Equity and Justice

The Bahá'í Teachings state that the pillars of justice are reward and punishment. Those who act justly deserve reward, whether tangible or intangible, for such behavior. Those who act unjustly are in need of appropriate sanction both to arrest the injustice and to safeguard their own spiritual well-being.

(Bahá'í International Community, [Valuing Spirituality in Development](#), 1998)

Justice

Justice is the one power that can turn the growing consciousness of humanity's oneness into a collective desire to build the necessary structures of global community life. As the people of the world increasingly access information of every kind and diverse ideas, justice will become the ruling principle of successful social organisation.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, §18)

Justice

For the individual, justice enables the human soul of each person to distinguish truth from falsehood. In the sight of God, Bahá'u'lláh says, Justice is "*the best beloved of all things*" since it permits each individual to see with his own eyes rather than the eyes of others, to know through his own knowledge rather than the knowledge of his neighbour or his group. It calls for fair-mindedness in one's judgements, for equity in one's treatment of others, and is thus always with us in our daily life.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, §19)

Justice

At the group level, justice is the essential guide to collective decision making, because it is the only way to achieve unity of thought and action. Far from the past association of justice with punishment, justice is the practical expression of awareness that, for human progress, the interests of the individual and those of society go together.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, §20)

Justice

As justice guides our human interactions, we learn to consult without passion about options to be examined and to select appropriate courses of action. In this way our old habits of taking sides and manipulating are far less likely to interfere with decision-making.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, §20)

Justice

In defining progress, concern for justice protects us from the temptation to sacrifice the well-being of all of humankind -- and even of the planet itself -- to the ways new technologies benefit a wealthy few. In design and planning, it makes sure that limited resources do not go to projects outside a community's essential social or economic priorities.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, §21)

Justice in Development

Only development programmes that are seen as meeting their needs and as being just and equitable can earn the commitment of the masses of humanity necessary for implementation.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, §21)

Justice and Trust

To achieve our demanding collective goals requires relevant human qualities such as honesty, a willingness to work, and a spirit of co-operation. For this, every member of society -- indeed every group within society -- must trust that they are protected by standards and promised benefits that apply equally to all.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, §21)

Justice as process and outcome

Justice is central to oneness at a planetary level. There are profound injustices to people and planet in the widespread suffering resulting from humanity's extractive relationship with the natural world, when a select few benefit from excessive use of the earth's resources while hurting many others, when immediate desires take away from the basic needs of future generations.

(based on One Planet – One Habitation §29)

Justice as process and outcome

Correcting such ills will require honesty, creativity, perseverance, and humility. Decision-making must include the voices of those who have been disadvantaged by the current order, drawing on insights of populations and indigenous peoples living in harmony with the natural world, and creating more holistic and sustainable models for present and future generations.

Climate Injustice

- For climate justice, urgent action is needed to address loss and damage -- climate impacts so severe they cannot be adapted to, especially in poorest countries.
- The victims contributed the least to climate change
- Climate change — as well as our collective efforts to adapt to and mitigate it — will exacerbate inequity should we fail to ensure a just transition.

Source: World Resources Institute: <https://www.wri.org/insights/2023-ipcc-ar6-synthesis-report-climate-change-findings>

Injustice and Planetary Boundaries

- (1) some regions and populations are far more vulnerable to climate and environmental impacts
- (2) the same people have contributed least to the problems
- (3) in the process, their fair share of natural resources and services has been appropriated by others, limiting their available pathways to development
- (4) this reduces their access to the benefits of progress, leaving them poor
- (5) they are often vulnerable locally well before global limits have been reached

Injustice and Planetary Boundaries

- the fears of many developing countries and disadvantaged groups about what should be done and by whom, in returning within planetary limits
- a 'just' limit has already been crossed in the last decade
- millions of people are already impacted by climate-related hazards
- some countries are facing inevitable drowning by sea level rise from historic emissions

(David Obura. 2024. "Equity in action: global to local". pp. 11-14 in *Global Catastrophic Risks 2024*)

Environmental Justice

The planet is giving us a new definition of justice:

- maintain the environmental conditions that make life possible
- minimise human suffering from physical causes
- achieve material and environmental well-being for the greatest number

Justice at Local Level

A critical challenge is to make these global initiatives relevant to the lives of the most vulnerable people. These injustices disadvantage poorer communities and poorer countries. Using science to define the local dimension of critical planetary boundaries leads to nature-based solutions within the capacity of local people and for locally-determined benefits, addressing multiple dimensions of justice.

(David Obura. 2024. "Equity in action: global to local". pp. 11-14 in *Global Catastrophic Risks 2024*)

Justice at Local Level

Equity must drive decision-making, identifying the fair direction of resource flows, and turning nature- negative activities to nature- and people- positive ones. Where there are places and contexts with a justice deficit, resources should be redirected to redress these, with a focus on natural assets as the foundation for resilience and welfare.

(David Obura. 2024. “Equity in action: global to local”. pp. 11-14 in *Global Catastrophic Risks 2024*)

Justice at Local Level

We also need food security, and depend on a constant supply of adequate and nutritious food for our survival. Some may be produced locally, or even through our own efforts, but much probably comes from elsewhere through complex supply chains from producers who may or may not be sustainable in their agricultural or harvesting practices, raising justice issues.

Similarly, our individual behaviour has impacts that can hurt others in our own community and elsewhere

Individual application of Justice

Collective prosperity can be advanced through justice and generosity, collaboration and mutual assistance.

Every choice one makes—as employee or employer, producer or consumer, borrower or lender, benefactor or beneficiary—leaves a trace, and the moral duty to lead a coherent life demands that one's economic decisions be in accordance with lofty ideals, that the purity of one's aims be matched by the purity of one's actions to fulfil those aims.

Individual and community action

Everyone can make their own individual and collective contributions to economic justice and social progress wherever they reside

(Universal House of Justice, To the Bahá'ís of the World, 1 March 2017. Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa.)

International
Court of
Justice



A Just Civilisation

- requires coherent societies
- depends on moral and ethical values
- achieving our true purpose and spiritual potential
- maximising love and selfless service
- opening a whole new dimension of social systems
- enabling an ever-advancing civilisation
- requiring justice with the natural world
- integrating human communities into the ecosystems and resources appropriate to each locality
- on this diverse and complex planet