Corruption

Moral Deterioration

International Environment Forum

Youth Discourse - Corruption

Corruption

- The illegal economy from organized crime is now $2 trillion/year, or twice all the world's defense budgets, including $870 billion for international crime syndicates
- Bribery $1.5 tr; counterfeiting and piracy $520bn; drug trade $320bn; human trafficking $44bn; traffic in endangered species $20bn; identity theft $1bn

Political Corruption

- Political corruption is everywhere, 5-6% of global GDP; the vast majority of bribes go to people in rich countries
- 10% of all public health budgets are lost to corruption
- Business participates to buy advantages, for efficiency, out of fear
- This results in market failures, capital loss, ignored environmental regulations, failed resource management

Corruption

Corruption destroys the foundations of human prosperity and the very purpose of governance, making it toxic to growth in both developed and developing countries alike. When the political establishment and the justice system have been captured by corrupt elites, a country is unable to rid itself of corruption.

(Global Governance Forum)

Corruption

Corruption undermines development and prosperity worldwide. Economic growth, investment, and public trust diminish when institutions succumb to corruption.

(Global Governance Forum)

Corruption

Diverting public funds limits government revenue, hindering investment in sustainable sectors such as education, infrastructure, and health. When policies are formulated mainly in the interests of the wealthy, social spending and tax systems are distorted in their favor. Corruption exacerbates economic inequality by enriching the few at the cost of the many.

(Global Governance Forum)

Corruption and Human Rights

Human rights violations can flourish when an elite minority maintains the sole voice in governance. Through distorting society's economic, political, and social factors, corruption in turn violates human rights.

(Global Governance Forum)

Corruption in Government

Money lost to corruption diminishes government resources to fulfill human rights obligations, deliver services, and improve living standards. When significant amounts of public funds are diverted because of corruption, it becomes difficult to uphold the institutions that are the basis for civil and political rights.

(Global Governance Forum)

Corruption and Climate Change

Corruption hinders the ability of the global community to tackle climate change. It is estimated that 7-15% (US$1-2 billion) of the US$13 billion annual climate funds allocated to the water sector are lost to corruption. The top recipients of climate finance—receiving 41.9% of the US$546 billion of funding–also face higher instances of corruption.

(Global Governance Forum)

Corruption and Climate Change

In Bangladesh, it is estimated 35% of climate project funds have been embezzled. Diverted funds from corruption correlate to poor-quality investments to mitigate the effects of rising sea levels, desertification, and natural disasters from climate change.

(Global Governance Forum)

Addressing Corruption

Bahá'ís see the entire enterprise of civilization as a spiritual process involving the progressive awakening of humanity's moral and creative capacities. The creation of a "corruption-free" public milieu consequently depends on the building up of moral capacity within individuals, communities and social institutions.

(Bahá'í International Community, 2001 May 28-31, *Overcoming Corruption in Public Institutions*)

Addressing Corruption

How is it possible to build moral capacity? What are the practical strategies societies can adopt that will raise up from within their populations positive social actors who choose to lead lives of service and probity? Education is an indispensable tool. The fact that the world community is pluralist in character should not deter governments and international agencies from giving serious attention to the question of moral development.

(Bahá'í International Community, 2001 May 28-31, *Overcoming Corruption in Public Institutions*)

Warning about Corruption

But as these people failed to turn wholly unto God, and to hold fast to the hem of His all-pervading mercy at the appearance of the Daystar of Truth, they passed out from under the shadow of guidance and entered the city of error. Thus did they become corrupt and corrupt the people. Thus did they err and lead the people into error. And thus were they recorded among the oppressors in the books of heaven.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, p. 40)

Where are their treasures?

Call ye to mind the people of former ages: whither are they sped, the prideful and vainglorious, the workers of iniquity and unrighteousness? Where are their hoards of treasure, their palaces, citadels and thrones? Reflect upon those bygone days, and the vicissitudes of which they tell, and be ye admonished thereby.

(Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Research Department, *Trustworthiness* 22)

Avoid Corruption

Entreat thou the one true God to sanctify the ears, and the eyes, and the hearts of mankind, and to protect them from the desires of a corrupt inclination.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 96)

Avoid Corruption

Concern yourselves with the things that benefit mankind, and not with your corrupt and selfish desires.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf,* p. 29)

Shake off Corrupt Desires

We enjoin the servants of God and His handmaidens to be pure and to fear God, that they may shake off the slumber of their corrupt desires, and turn toward God, the Maker of the heavens and of the earth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 23)

Avoid Corruption

Forsake thine own desires, turn thy face unto thy Lord, and walk not in the footsteps of those who have taken their corrupt inclinations for their god, that perchance thou mayest find shelter in the heart of existence, beneath the redeeming shadow of Him Who traineth all names and attributes.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, p. 48-49)

The Corrupt

How foolish and ignorant must a man be, how base his nature, and how vile the clay of which he is fashioned, if he would defile himself with the contamination of bribery, corruption and perfidy towards the state! Truly, the vermin of the earth are to be preferred to such people!

('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 344)

The Corrupt

If... he abuse his position through corrupt or mercenary behaviour, he will be held in detestation at the Threshold of Grandeur and incur the wrath of the Abhá Beauty—nay, he shall be forsaken by the one true God and all who adore Him.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 344)

The Corrupt

Some... whose reason has been corrupted by personal motives and the clarity of whose perception has been clouded by self-interest and conceit; whose energies are devoted to the service of their passions, whose sense of pride is perverted to the love of leadership, have raised the standard of opposition and waxed loud in their complaints.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 11)

Corruption of Religion

The beginnings of all great religions were pure; but priests, taking possession of the minds of the people, filled them with dogmas and superstitions, so that religion became gradually corrupt.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 125)

Antidote to Corruption

The spiritually learned are … the sure antidote to the poison that has corrupted human society. It is they who are the strong citadel guarding humanity, and the impregnable sanctuary for the sorely distressed, the anxious and tormented, victims of ignorance.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 33)

Struggle Against Corruption

Only if you demonstrate the rectitude of conduct to which the writings of the Faith call every soul will you be able to struggle against the myriad forms of corruption, overt and subtle, eating at the vitals of society.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2008, paragraph 8)

Overcoming Corruption

The challenge of overcoming corruption in public life is multidimensional in nature. The adoption of administrative procedures and legal safeguards, however important such measures may be, will not bring about enduring changes in individual and institutional behavior.

(Bahá'í International Community, 2001 May 28-31, *Overcoming Corruption in Public Institutions*)

Overcoming Corruption

For governance, in essence, is a moral and spiritual practice whose compass is found within the human heart. Thus, only as the inner lives of human beings are transformed will the vision of a "genuine civilization of character" be realized.

(Bahá'í International Community, 2001 May 28-31, *Overcoming Corruption in Public Institutions*)

Avoid Corruption

For man, praise and glory reside in virtuous and noble qualities; honour and distinction in nearness to the divine Threshold. The world's wealth is, by contrast, the stuff of illusion. Those who lust after it are the followers of evil and, erelong, they shall be plunged into confusion and despair. Which is better—that a man should be thus, or that he should comport himself with consecration and sanctity of purpose and stand out conspicuously for his integrity, uprightness and honesty?

('Abdu'l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 56)

Avoid Corruption

Glory and honour for man are not to be found in fortunes and riches, least of all in those which have been unlawfully amassed through extortion, embezzlement and corruption practised at the expense of an exploited populace. Supreme honour, nobility and greatness in the human world, and true felicity in this life and the life to come—all consist in equity and uprightness, sanctity and detachment.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 55)

Avoid Corruption

If a man would seek distinction, he should suffice himself with a frugal provision, seek to better the lot of the poor of the realm, choose the way of justice and fair-mindedness, and tread the path of high-spirited service. Such a one, needy though he be, shall win imperishable riches and attain unto everlasting honour.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 55)

Avoid Corruption

Anyone who entereth the employ of the government should show forth in all his deeds and actions the highest degree of rectitude and honesty, of temperance and self-discipline, of purity and sanctity, of justice and equity. If, God forbid, he should be guilty of the least breach of trust, or approach his duties in a slack or desultory fashion, or extort so much as a farthing from the populace, or seek to further his own selfish interests and personal gain—then it is certain that he shall be deprived of the outpourings of God's grace.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 52)

Avoid Corruption

In discharging the functions of the office to which thou hast been appointed, thy conduct and actions should attest to the highest standard of trustworthiness and honesty, to a degree of sincerity that is altogether above suspicion, and to an integrity that is immune to the promptings of self-interest. Thus shall all know that the Bahá'ís are the embodiments of probity, and the very essence of spotless virtue. If they accept office, their motive is to render service to the whole of humanity, not to seek their own self-interest; and their object is to vindicate the cause of truth, not to give themselves over to self-indulgence and base ingratitude.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness §53)

Avoid Corruption

Those persons who are selected to serve the public, or are appointed to administrative positions, should perform their duties in a spirit of true servitude and ready compliance. That is to say, they should be distinguished by their goodly disposition and virtuous character, content themselves with their allotted remuneration, and act with trustworthiness in all their doings. They should keep themselves aloof from unworthy motives, and be far removed above covetous designs; for rectitude, probity and righteousness are among the most potent means for attracting the grace of God and securing both the prosperity of the country and the welfare of the people.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 55)

Avoid Corruption

If any of the friends should enter into the service of the government, they should make their occupation a means of drawing nearer to the divine Threshold: they should act with probity and uprightness, rigorously shun all forms of venality and corruption, and content themselves with the salaries they are receiving, taking pride, rather, in the degree of sagacity, competence and judgement that they can bring to their work.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 56)

Avoid Corruption

If one of the friends ... be appointed to a high administrative office, he should strive diligently to perform the duties committed to his charge with perfect honesty, integrity, sincerity, rectitude and uprightness. If, however, he abuse his position through corrupt or mercenary behaviour, he will be held in detestation at the Threshold of Grandeur and incur the wrath of the Abhá Beauty.... So far from acting thus, he should content himself with his salary and allowances, seek out the way of righteousness, and dedicate his life to the service of state and people. Such must be the conduct and bearing of the Bahá'ís. Whoso transgresseth these bounds shall fall at length into manifest loss.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 57)

Avoid Corruption

Let them perform their services with complete sanctity and detachment, and on no account defile themselves by receiving bribes, harbouring unseemly motives, or engaging in noxious practices. Let them be content with their wages, and seek distinction in truthfulness, straightforwardness, and the pursuit of virtue and excellence; for vanity in riches is worthy of none but the base, and pride in possessions beseemeth only the foolish. To attain to true glory and honour, man should exercise justice and equity, forbear to act in an oppressive manner, render service to his government, and work for the good of his fellow-citizens. Were he to seek after aught else but this he would indeed be in manifest loss.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 60)

Avoid Corruption

Those souls who are employed in government departments should approach their duties with entire detachment, integrity and independence of spirit, and with complete consecration and sanctity of purpose. Content with the wages they are receiving, they should see that they do not stain their fair character through acts of bribery and fraud.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 58)

Avoid Corruption

Were one of the friends in this day to misappropriate so much as a single penny, the sacred mantle of God's Cause would become sullied by his action and the shame of it would attach to the whole community. Heaven forbid! Nay, rather, the government and people should come to repose such trust in the Bahá'ís as to wish to commit all affairs of state throughout the provinces into the chaste, pure hands of God's well-beloved.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, Compilation on Trustworthiness § 58)

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a vital characteristic of governance; it is the source of true accountability. Bahá'u'lláh describes trustworthiness as the "*greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people*," and "t*he supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world*." "*All the domains of power,*" He avers, "*…are illumined by its light.*"

(Bahá'í International Community, 2001 May 28-31, *Overcoming Corruption in Public Institutions*)

Truthfulness and Honesty

Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not treacherously with any one. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures, and the emblems of His generosity amidst His people. They that follow their lusts and corrupt inclinations, have erred and dissipated their efforts. They, indeed, are of the lost....

(*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, sec. 136, p. 297)

Trustworthiness

They who dwell within the Tabernacle of God, and are established upon the seats of everlasting glory, will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands, and seize unlawfully the property of their neighbour, however vile and worthless he may be. The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the will of God, to forbearance and kindliness, to uprightness and wisdom.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Cited in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 24)