**PRESS RELEASE**

Restoration of Haifa’s Best Known Landmark

HAIFA, Israel, 23 November 2008:  Starting this week, preparatory works are being undertaken for the repair and upgrading of Haifa’s best known landmark.  The golden-domed Shrine of the Báb, which stands at the center of the Bahá’í Gardens in Haifa, will undergo a complete restoration that will ensure its stability and lasting beauty far into the future. The preparations undertaken this week will make it possible for the work to begin in January 2009.  Starting in May or June next year, the structure will be covered with scaffolding and canvas sheeting for about two years.

“We are very conscious of the importance of this site for tourism,” said the Secretary-General of the Bahá’í International Community, Mr. Albert Lincoln, “and special measures will be taken to ensure that the Shrine will be kept open for visitation by the Bahá’í pilgrims and the general public the entire time the work is going on, except for the summer months (July to October).  In fact, the arrangements for continuous access are one of the reasons the project will take such a long time.  We feel sure that everyone will be pleased with the appearance of the Shrine when the work is finished and hope they will bear with us in the meantime.”

The superstructure of the Shrine comprises a colonnade surmounted by an octagonal clerestory, a drum and a dome covered with gold-plated ceramic tiles. This structure was erected during the period of 1948 to 1953, using granite and marble quarried and carved in Italy while that country was still reeling from the effects of the Second World War.

Fifty-five years after its completion in October 1953, the building is in need of a major overhaul including structural reinforcement against possible earthquakes, restoration of the stonework, replacement of iron elements with stainless steel, upgrading of the electrical system and refurbishment of the dome with new tiles.  There will be no change in the design, use or general appearance of the building.

The entire project will take about four years.  It will provide work for a number of Israeli contractors and up to 50 local workers at any given time, in addition to the Bahá’í volunteers who will contribute their services.  The project cost of approximately NIS 25 million will be financed entirely by donations from the Bahá’í communities around the world.