

International Day of Peace

As-salámu ‘alaikum wa rahmatul láhi wa barakátuh!’

“A-úthu billáhi minash shaytánir rajeem. Bismilláhir rahmánir raheem.

Al hamdu lillahi nahmaduhu wanasta’eenahu, wanastagh-firuhu, wanatoobu ilayhi, wana’oothu Billaahi min shuroori an-fusinaa, wamin sayyi aati a’maalinaa.

May- Yahdillahu fa huwal muhtad, wa may- yudlill falan tajidaa lahu waliyan murshida. Wa ash-hadu an Laa ilaaha ill-Alláh, wahdahoo laa shareeka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhoo warasooluh”

In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The International Day of Peace is a day recognising the efforts of those who have worked hard to promote peace and end conflict. This day was celebrated this week when people from around the world come together to organise events and various public activities including peace prayers, interfaith ceremonies, art exhibitions promoting peace, picnics and peace walks. Through the teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, as Muslims we know that striving for peace and tranquillity is an important element of being a righteous Muslim. We know that these practices to mend broken relationships and strengthen universal peace values should not only be practised on one day but every day of the year. Therefore today our khutbah will be about peace. We will be discussing what the Qur’an says about maintaining peaceful relations and will be analysing its teachings about reconciliation and restraint.

The ‘root’ of the word ‘Islam’ in Arabic is ‘*salama*’ which originates from the words for ‘peace’ and/or ‘submission’, that is, submission to God and peace with all of humanity. Thus, it is no coincidence that the Qur’an teaches to greet each other with: ‘*Al-Salamu Alaikum*’, meaning ‘Peace be upon you’.

Before we seek to discuss peace on a larger societal or global scale, it may be worth looking at the personal need for peace within every individual and how personal peace helps bring harmony not only to that one individual but also to the communities and circles around them.

An individual human being is the basic unity of humanity. Bring individuals together and they make communities, societies, nations, and continents. Therefore the qualities that individuals possess have a larger effect in the world in which they live. Think of a brick wall for example. It is made of individual bricks which need to be strong to support and hold the wall together. Numerous strong bricks would build a tall, strong wall, whereas jagged and imbalanced bricks would weaken the foundations of the wall, causing it to topple. Like the wall, we need to be strong and level-headed individuals so that we can support humanity. If we can seek for peace and tranquillity within, we will be able to pass our serene good natures to the people around us too.

Islam encourages peace regardless of the context and situation. A Muslim only fights when forced to after trying all peaceful reconciliatory methods. Islam makes it compulsory for a Muslim to adopt any opportunity for peace if it arises and to extinguish any unsettled flames whenever possible. The Qur’an says:

O you who have believed, enter into peacefulness completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy. (Al Baqarah, 2:208)

'But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and (put your) trust in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.' (Al-Anfal, 8:61)

Not only does Islam forbid any kind of violent behaviour, it also prohibits backbiting and badmouthing people behind their backs, as this breaks friendships and families. At times the Satan can be very tempting and cunning at tricking mankind into believing that it is acceptable to retaliate to certain situations unkindly if somebody has committed an act worthy of such a response. For example, an acquaintance may boast about fooling their wife into thinking that he had an extended meeting when in reality he was out with friends enjoying himself. A Muslim man would not like this as lying is prohibited in Islam, however the Satan would tempt the Muslim to talk about this man's unacceptable behaviour behind his back. The people he speaks to may tell their wives, who happen to know the lying man's wife, eventually relaying this information to her. Such processes have led to family arguments and breakups. Whilst what the man did was wrong it would have been wiser to speak to him and explain that what he had done was wrong instead of talking about his wrongdoings to others behind his back. He could have pointed out that the Qur'an says:

"Truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies." Ghafir 40:28

Again, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: "Do not ever lie, because lying leads to very abhorrent sins and those in turn lead to hell fire." (Narrated by Ibn Majah)

Life is challenging and we must work hard to build bonds between people and maintain good relationships between our peers. Speaking without thinking on impulse is another temptation from the Satan generally derived from anger and frustration. It is important to recognise such situations and consider the consequences of your actions.

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "The Muslim is he from whom people are safe from his tongue (insults) and hand (actions)".

Allah (SWT) is most merciful and will inshallah forgive us all for our sins as long as we remember to make *tawbah* (repentance/asking for forgiveness). We must learn to love, respect and honour one another as equal individuals as in Islam there is no difference between rich and poor, black and white, slave and lord. We must persevere to understand the true meaning of peace, live it in our own lives and spread its beauties to all.

"It may be that Allah will bring about love between you and those of them with whom you are now at enmity... Allah forbids you not respecting those who have not fought against you on account of your religion, and who have not driven you out from your homes, that you be kind to them and deal equitably with them; surely, Allah loves those who are equitable." – Holy Qur'an, 60:8-9