

Tolerance

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 God, Most merciful, Most compassionate.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

“Say: ‘Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger: but if you turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him and you for that placed on you. If you obey him, you shall be on right guidance. The Messenger’s duty is only to preach the clear (Message)” (An-Nur 24:54).

“If then they turn away, We have not sent you as a guard over them. Your duty is but to convey (the Message)...” (Ash-Shura 42:48). In another place Allah says, **“Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. Your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance”** (An-Nahl 16:125).

“There is no compulsion in religion” (Al-Baqarah 2:256).

“If anyone harms (others), God will harm him, and if anyone shows hostility to others, God will show hostility to him.” Sunan of Abu-Dawood, Hadith 1625.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

All these verses give note that Muslims do not coerce people; they must present the message to them in the most gentle and clear way, invite them to the truth and do their best in presenting and conveying the message of God to humanity. But it is up to people to accept or not to accept the message for themselves. Allah says, **“And say, ‘The truth is from your Lord, so whosoever wants let him believe and whosoever wants let him deny”** (An-Nahl 16:29). Muslims are allowed and encouraged to keep good relations with non-Muslims. Allah says, **“Allah does not forbid you that you show kindness and deal justly with those who did not fight you in your religion and did not drive you out from your homes...”** (Al-Mumtahinah 60:8).

Islam teaches tolerance on all levels: individual, group and state. It should be a political and legal requirement. Tolerance is the mechanism that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), and the rule of law. The Qur’an says very clearly: **“To every People have We appointed rites and ceremonies which they must follow, let them not then dispute with you on the matter, but do invite (them) to your Lord: for you are assuredly on the Right Way. If they do wrangle with you, say, ‘God knows best what it is you are doing.’ ‘God will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning the matters in which you differ’ ”** (Al-Hajj 21:76-69).

Dear Brothers and sisters,

Intolerance is on the increase in the world today, causing death, genocide and violence as well as confrontations on different levels. Sometimes it is racial and ethnic, sometimes it is religious and ideological, at other times it is political and social. In every situation it is evil and painful. How can we solve the problem of intolerance? How can we assert our own beliefs and positions without being intolerant to others? How can we bring tolerance into the world today? The first question that must be raised at this stage is: "What is tolerance?"

Literally the word "tolerance" means "to bear." As a concept it means "respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of the world's cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human." In Arabic it is called "tasamuh". There are also other words that give similar meanings, such as "Hilm" (forbearance) or "'afu" (pardon, forgiveness) or "safh" (overlooking, disregarding).

Tolerance is a basic principle of Islam. It is a religious moral duty. I would like to discuss some of these issues from an Islamic point of view.

Muslims have been generally very tolerant people. We must emphasize this virtue among us and in the world today. Tolerance is needed among our communities: we must foster tolerance through deliberate policies and efforts. Our centres should be multi-ethnic. We should teach our children respect of each other. We should not generalize about other races and cultures. We should have more exchange visits and meetings with each other. Even marriages should be encouraged among Muslims of different ethnic groups.

With non-Muslims we should have dialogue and good relations. If some people mistakenly and unknowingly do something that is touchy for us we should inform them gently and tolerantly what is acceptable to us and what is not, offering more information. In this way and respect, tolerance and more cooperation will surely be developed.

In order to shed light on this subject from a different perspective, let's assume for the sake of argument that the Prophet is alive today and some acts of so-called blasphemy are committed so that we can learn something from him. This assumption should not seem unreasonable as Muslims believe in the tradition of the Prophet and should do the same as their Prophet would do. Therefore, I imagine the following acts as blasphemous from the point of view of Muslim sensibility happening to the Prophet of Islam before the eyes of Muslims who have chosen to take to the streets in protest:

- A Bedouin arrives and starts beating the Prophet; everyone rushes to stop him...
- Another Bedouin arrives and desecrates the Prophet's place of worship in response to nature's call. Everyone rushes to beat him up...
- People of 'Taif' valley stoned him in response to his invitation to Islam and he bleeds so profusely from head to toe that his shoes are filled with his blood. Even heaven and earth could not take it anymore and angel Gabriel descends from heaven to offer to punish the blasphemous beings.

- A woman is so sick of prophet that she starts throwing her daily household waste on him.
- People mock at him; call him a magician; and a liar...
- People make fun of him in every possible way...
- Last but not least they make caricatures of Prophet in newspapers...

All the blasphemy scenarios except the last – which has just occurred– happened in his lifetime and the only thing he offered in response was mercy.

- He forgave the Bedouin who wanted to beat him.
- He let the Bedouin finish attending to nature's call and after that ordered his companion to wash and clean the Masjid. The only thing he said to the Bedouin was this is not a place to relieve oneself.
- He not only refused the punishment offered by angel Gabriel to people of Tiaf but remarked as well that they don't know what they are doing.
- One day the woman did not throw anything on him so he knocked at her door to inquire if she was alright. He found out that she was ill and he took care of her and cleaned her house.
- In all the other events he did not let emotions run over; rather he stayed calm and remained merciful.

By the way, while for the majority of Muslims having the first name Mohammad shows their love or reverence for the prophet, Muslims name their sons Mohammad XYZ apart from the fact that many of them even don't know about the teachings of their own religion. Imagine, unfortunately, hundreds of Muslims are in UK prisons for drug use or stealing, murder, injury, robbery and so on. And their names are Muhammad as well. Our main problem is surely this. Why don't we protest about this issue? Why don't we recognise this situation as an insult to the prophet of Islam? Many Muhammads are in prison as killers, drug dealers or robbers. This must be more offensive than unknowingly naming a teddy bear.

Dear brothers and sisters,

I'd like to finish my khutba with a saying of a very well known Islamic scholar, Yunus Emre:

I am not here on earth for strife,
 Love is the mission of my life.
 Hearts are the home of the loved one;
 I came here to build each true heart.
 Let us love and be loved,
 The world shall be left to no one.

Alhamdu lillahi Rabbil 'Aalameen. Was-salaatu was-salaamu alaa Khayril mursaleen. Muhammadin-nabeey-yil Ummiy-yee, wa-'alaa aalihee, wa sahabihee, aj-ma'een.

Ammaa ba'ad:

Innalláha wa malaaiikata yusallúna alan nabi. Yá ay yuhal latheena ámanu sallú alayhi wasalli mú tas leema. Allahumma salli alá Muhammad, wa ala áli Muhammad, kama salayta ala Ibrahim, wa ala ali Ibrahim. Allahumma barik ala

*Muhammad, wa alaa áli Muhammad, kama barakta ala Ibrahim, wa ala ali
ibrahim. Fil ála meen, innaka hameedun majeed.”*