

COMMUNITY *Cohesion*

From an Islamic Perspective

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'the religion of all the prophets'

Our Creator said concerning those who take the lives of innocent people,
"It would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would
be as if he saved the life of all mankind." The Noble Qur'an

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Muslims living in the West find themselves in a pluralistic society made up of individuals of different races, ethnicities and religions. It should be of no surprise that Islam has established definite and clear guidelines on how to co-exist with people of different persuasions and opinions. In this leaflet, my intention is to highlight for the reader, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, that Islamic teachings actually contribute to the stability and harmony of a society. I feel that it is imperative to address this topic in this fashion as we are living at a time where Islam has been misrepresented by the behavior of a tiny minority who profess this faith and also by those who cunningly manipulate unfortunate events and circumstances to malign this great religion.

Islamic teachings contribute to the stability of society because:

Islam Instructs Muslims to be Polite and Courteous

Allaah, the Most High, said:

“And speak to people with good words.” [Al-Baqarah 2: 83]

‘Ataa, a classical scholar of Islam (d. 739), said in explanation of this verse: “[Be polite when speaking] to all people.” (Tafseer at-Tabaree)

This is further emphasized by the Prophetic tradition where Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) instructed one of his noble companions before sending a delegation to the Christians of Yemen:

“Fear Allaah wherever you are. Follow up a bad deed with a good deed and it will wipe it away, and **deal with the people in a good manner.**” (Collected by At-Tirmidhee)

Ibn Abbaas, a relative of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and one of his companions who is regarded as an authority in the exegesis of the Quran, stated: “When you are greeted respond to the greeting whether it is a Jew, Christian or Fire Worshipper because Allaah said:

‘When you are greeted [courteously], respond to it with a greeting that is better, or at least equal to it.’ [An-Nisaa’ 4: 86] (Collected by Bukhari in Al-Adab Al- Mufraad)

Allaah has commanded us as Muslims to treat people justly; Allaah said:

“Allaah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.” [Al-Mumtahinah 60:8]

Islam Teaches Muslims to Fulfill the Rights of their Neighbour

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Whoever believes in Allaah and the last day, let him treat his neighbour well.”

On one occasion, a companion of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) known as ‘Abdullaah Ibn ‘Amr had a sheep slaughtered on his behalf, and when it was brought to him he enquired: “Did you give some of the meat to our Jewish neighbour? For I heard the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) say: ‘Angel Jibreel [Gabriel] kept advising me about the rights of the neighbour to the extent that I thought that they would be made an heir.’” (Collected by Abu Dawud)

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) also said: “The Believer is not one who is full whilst his neighbour is hungry.” (Collected by Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad)

Some scholars of Islam have actually derived from this prophetic statement that it is forbidden (haraam) for an affluent neighbour to leave his poorer neighbours starving.

Prophet Muhammad actually foretold of a time when a man will murder his neighbour; he considered this to be amongst the immoral acts that signify the approach of the Day of Judgment. So what would he say about those who slaughter innocent men, women and children in the name of Jihad?!

He (peace and blessing be upon him) said: “The hour will not be established until a man kills his neighbour...”

Islam Condemns Racism

Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic said:

“O mankind! Surely, We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely, the most honorable of you with Allaah is the one with the most piety. Surely, Allaah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.” [Al-Hujaraat 49: 13]

Therefore, no Arab has superiority over a non-Arab, no non-Arab over an Arab, no black person over a white person, and no white person over a black person, except through piety.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Allaah has created Adam from a handful of soil which He had gathered from all over the earth. That is how the children of Adam came according to the [colour and nature of the] earth. There are white among them, as well as red and black, and colours in between. There are those among them who are of bad nature and good nature, soft as well as harsh.” (Collected by Ahmad)

Islam Teaches Muslims to Respect their Elders and Show Compassion to the Young

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “He who does not respect the elders amongst us nor show compassion to our young is not from us.” (Collected by At-Tirmidhee)

Islam Encourages Muslims to keep their Neighbourhoods Habitable and Safe and to Show Consideration to Others.

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Faith has seventy-odd branches, the highest of which is the saying ‘None has the right to be worshipped except Allaah,’ and the lowest is removing something harmful from the road. Modesty is also a branch of faith.” (Collected by Muslim)

Removing a harmful object from the street is a part of faith because in Islam faith consists of speech, belief and actions. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings) be upon him said: “Avoid the actions of two people who are cursed [by others].” His companions asked: “What are the acts that will cause a person to be cursed by others?” He responded:

“It is the act of the one who relieves himself in their pathways or in their places of shade.” (Collected by Muslim)

More than 1400 years ago Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) prohibited urinating or defecating in central areas like paths or places where shade is sought from the heat of the sun. Why? One of the underlying reasons behind this prohibition is because this behavior could possibly harm or obstruct other members of the community.

Therefore, it is obvious from the above that all types of vandalism, whether it is graffiti or the damage of public and private property is forbidden in Islam.



“Allaah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.” [Al-Mumtahinah 60:8]

Islam forbids Crime and Criminality

The divine legislation of Islam, which of late is the object of much unfair criticism, revolves around five primary objectives. They are: the preservation of the religion, the preservation of life, the preservation of the intellect, the preservation of wealth and the preservation of lineage and progeny.

Murder is considered a major sin in Islam because the preservation of life is one of the five primary objectives of Islamic law.

Allaah said concerning those who take the lives of innocent people:

“It would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind.” [Al-Maa'idah 5: 32]

Islam forbids the consumption and sale of narcotics - everything that blunts the senses and intoxicates is forbidden.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “Every intoxicant is forbidden.”

The devastating effects of illegal drugs upon the individual, family, and the society as a whole have been witnessed in many communities all over the World.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) referred to intoxicants such as alcohol as: **“The mother of all evil.”** (Collected by At-Tabaraanee in Al-Awsat)

Similarly, stealing is deemed to be a major sin.

Allaah said:

“O Prophet! When the believing women come to you to give you the pledge of allegiance, that they will not associate anything in worship with Allaah and that they will not steal.” [Al-Mumtahinah 60: 12]

A famous scholar of Islam, advising Muslims living in Western societies, said: “Do not be tricked by the fools who say: ‘Those people are non-Muslims, so their wealth is lawful for us [i.e. to misappropriate or take through unlawful measures].’ For by Allaah, this is a lie and a lie

about Allaah's religion.

O Muslims. Be truthful in your buying and selling, renting and leasing, and in all transactions because truthfulness is from the characteristics of the Believers, and Allaah, the Most High has commanded truthfulness:

'O you who believe! Be afraid of Allaah, and be with those who are true [in words and deeds].' [At-Tawbah 9: 119]

And the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) encouraged truthfulness by saying: 'Adhere to truthfulness because truthfulness leads to goodness, and goodness leads to Paradise. A person will continue to be truthful and strive to be truthful until he will be written down with Allaah as a devoutly honest person.'

In addition he warned against dishonesty by saying: 'Beware of lying because lying leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire. A person will continue lying and striving to lie, until he is written down with Allaah as a habitual liar.' (Collected by Bukhari and Muslim)

Islam Encourages Employment and Education

Allaah said:

"Then when the [Friday Prayer] prayer is finished, disperse through the land, and seek the Bounty of Allaah [by working or through trade], and remember Allaah much, that you may be successful." [Al- Jumu'ah: 10]

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "It is far better for you to take your rope and go to the mountain and return with firewood upon your back, which you then sell. This allows you to save face and refrain from begging the people, whether they give you or refuse." (Collected by Bukhari)

He also said: "[Prophet] Zakariyya [Zachariah] was a carpenter." (Collected by Muslim)

Based upon these texts and others, providing for one's family according to Islam is compulsory, and the scholars of Islam unanimously agree upon this.

It also shows that working and having a trade is something honorable, as this was the way of the Prophets and they are the best of the creation.

Conclusion

This a glimpse at some of the texts of the primary sources of Islamic law, the Quran and the Prophetic teachings, which undoubtedly establish for any fair-minded and truthful individual that the teachings of Islam lay important foundations required to enable people within a society to interact fairly and to deal with each other accordingly.

In closing, I would like to draw your attention to a magnificent verse in the Quran where Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic said:

“Say [O Muhammad]: ‘O people of the Scripture: Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allaah, that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allaah.’ Then, if they turn away, say: ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims.’”
[Aal-‘Imraan 3: 64]

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