بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

How Islam Deals with Crime and Lawlessness?

Nowadays, there are some prominent conversations about law, justice and security. It is propagated that these matters are amongst the highest ethical and moral issues of the democratic society. Every single government promises to its citizens a safe and just country. But is it really the truth? Are we living today in a time where justice and lawfulness exist as signs of the success of societies, and where humanity lives in peace and harmony? Or is it more that all the countries of the world are under a dark shadow and confronted with crime, lawlessness and lack of security?

If we take a look at even a few examples of the present situation in the world, then we will understand the true picture of the situation that mankind really lives in.

According to the "Global Economy", the average of theft rate for 2016 was 783 thefts per 100,000 people. The highest value was in Denmark with 3949 thefts per 100,000 people. According to "knoema", El Salvador is the top country by homicide rate in the world. As of 2016, homicide rate in El Salvador was 82.8 cases per 100,000 population. The top 5 countries also include Honduras, Venezuela, Jamaica, and Belize. Chile is the top country by burglary rate in the world. As of 2016, burglary rate in Chile was 1,193.9 cases per 100,000 population. The top 5 countries also include Denmark, Austria, Sweden, and Australia. Argentina is the top country by robbery rate in the world. As of 2016, robbery rate in Argentina was 988.9 cases per 100,000 population. The top 5 countries also include Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador, and Paraguay. Sweden is the top country by rape rate in the world. As of 2015, rape rate in Sweden was 56.7 cases per 100,000 population. The top 5 countries also include Iceland, Guyana, the United States of America, and El Salvador. Lebanon is the top country by kidnapping rate in the world. As of 2016, kidnapping rate in Lebanon was 177.7 cases per 100,000 population. The top 5 countries also include Turkey, Canada, Pakistan, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Grenada is the top country by assault rate in the world. As of 2016, assault rate in Grenada was 1,721.9 cases per 100,000 population. The top 5 countries also include Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, France, and Colombia.

These are just a few examples that make it clear that the idea of lawfulness, security and justice is just an illusion under the democratic or any other man-made system. The current dominant system is not compatible with human nature and creates only chaos among the society. Due to the idea of materialism, liberal freedoms, severe poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of accountability, defunct systems, corruption and bribery and other reasons, crime is at epidemic levels in many states today.

The question is how Islam prevents and solves crime, lawlessness and lack of security? We know that the Arab Jahil society of the Quraysh at the time of the Prophet (saw) was also in the dark shade of ignorance. The most remarkable feature of the life of the Arabs before Islam was that they never acknowledged any authority other than the authority of the chiefs of their tribes and they had no specific law and order. The only law of the land was the lawlessness. **Jafar Ibn Abi Talib describes to the Negus of Abyssinia how they were before Islam: "We were a people of Jahiliyyah, worshipping idols, eating the flesh of dead animals, committing abominations, neglecting our relatives, doing evil to our neighbors and the strong among us would oppress the weak…"**

The coming of Islam changed the Arab Jahilliyyah-lifestyle. Islam gives sense to the existence of the human being and represents to him the principle of reward and punishment, for every single action performed. The awareness that Allah (swt) is always watching, awakens the concept of Taqwa in a Muslim. The consequence, unlike in capitalism, is that the human being will be able to control his desires and wishes and not fall into the traps of materialism or liberal freedoms which of course leads to increased immoral action in the society. In this matter the Prophet (saw) forbids the spilling of blood for the sake of tribal or any personal gain, and also prohibited stealing and adultery; that is, he (saw) forbids involvement in all forms of behavior that would threaten the security of the property, life, honor or reputation of the people. Involvement in slander, backbiting and unjust earnings, like interest, black-marketeering, and bribery, was also forbidden. For example, in the Arab society, when a member of a clan was murdered then the clan was able to retaliate by killing as many members of the murderer's clan. But Islam outrightly rejected this tribal custom. According to Islam, only the proven murderer is to face the death penalty since Islam forbids killing without any lawful basis. Another example was slavery. The master-slave relationship was full of oppression, humiliation and exploitation. Islam also changed this relationship. Allah (swt) forbids the exploitation of slaves by their

﴿وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّىٰ يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ masters: خَيْرًا وَآتُوهُم مِّن مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ وَلَا تُكْرِهُوا فَتَيَاتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاءِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِتَبْتَغُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَن يُكْرِههُّنَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مِن بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾ "**And those who seek a contract [for eventual emancipation] from among whom your right hands possess - then make a contract with them if you know there is within them goodness and give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you. And do not compel your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity, to seek [thereby] the temporary interests of worldly life. And if someone should compel them, then indeed, Allah is [to them], after their compulsion, Forgiving and Merciful.**" [24:33]

Another example is robbery. In the Waddan valley, which connects Makkah to the outside world, lived the tribe of Ghifar. Ghifar were notorious for raiding trade caravans and for invading weaker neighboring tribes. So lawless were they that they did not even respect the four sacred months held inviolable by all Arabs, in which they did not allow killing. All in all, their interests were focused on ways to rob others. However, when the tribe embraced Islam, they abandoned this criminal behavior for the Deen shuns theft. In fact, the Qur'an specifies that the thief, male or female, should have their hand cut off "as a requital for what they have done. ﴿وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾ "**And (for) the male thief and the female thief - [then] cut off their hands (as) a recompense for what they earned (as) an exemplary (punishment) from Allah. And Allah (is) All-Mighty, All-Wise.**" [5:38]. Prophet Muhammad obligated halal earnings and forbade the things that were earned in a haram way. He frowned also on deception and when he discovered that some wheat, which appeared dry on top, was actually wet, he said «ليس منا من غشنا» "**Those who deceive are not of us.**" (Muslim). The concept of Rizq, that one's provision in life is set by Allah (swt) before birth, is a another important Islamic belief. It prevents people from being seduced into increasing their wealth through theft, robbery or fraud. In addition, the just Islamic economic system offers each and every citizen a secure and equitable standard of living that minimises the possibility that one part of the society falls into poverty and the other part lives in prosperity which can also lead to corruption and other immoral financial behaviour.

The other issue was creating security within the society. The construction of the first masjid was an important component of the foundation of brotherhood, and was an important step in providing closeness, affection, love, cooperation and security among Muslims. In addition, the political structure that came about in Medina provided mutual security in the relationship between the state and the people. The Prophet (saw), who was the head of state in Medina, treated both Muslim and non-Muslim according to the principle of justice and equality in guaranteeing of their rights, that was enshrined in this Islamic constitution for the state. In addition, there is a general and strong Islamic public opinion in the Islamic society towards good moral behaviour and away from corrupt and criminal actions. This discourages the population from engaging in a criminal or an immoral act.

All this one mentioned above bad social norms and moral customs vanished as Islam took domination. This shows how Islam radically reformed the worldview of the Arab society it ruled over, as well as other lands that came under its rule, eradicating Jahilliyyah practices and replacing them with the sublime beliefs, norms and practices of Islam, including accountability in one's actions to a Higher Authority, Allah (swt). Islam minimised crime, lawlessness and insecurity in every land where it was implemented as a system. It transformed the society it governed into an honorable, glorious nation and world leadership that offered security and protection to every single citizen. It is precisely this illumination and change that humanity needs today. Just as Islam brought the light to the Arab jahil society and stripped it from the dark shadow of ignorance, in the same manner only ISLAM can liberate the mankind from today's epidemic of crime, lawlessness and lack of security in the world.

﴿قُلْ هَٰذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

"Say 'This is my way: I call to Allah with sure knowledge, I and whosoever follows me. And Glorified and Exalted is Allah. And I am not of the Mushrikeen." [Yusuf: 108]

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Amanah Abed