

Seeking Protection from the System or from Allah?

The past year has been a difficult one for Muslim minorities around the world. We have seen an increase in overt hostility from governments in countries like India and China, along with an uptick in a climate of fear and hatred towards Muslims in Europe and North America. Even in Canada we have seen hostilities rise, with a 207% increase in hate crimes against Muslims living in Ontario. Many politicians across the world are using nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric to cement their hold in political power. In such trying times, there are those within the Muslim community who are encouraging Muslims to protect the well-being and interests of our community through engagement in the secular political process.

In the United States, during the first post-Trump midterm elections, two Muslim women ran and won a seat in the US House of Representatives, with broad support from the Masajid, Islamic organizations, and the Muslim community.

In Canada, a few Muslim organizations have encouraged Muslims to “engage in the democratic process” as well. This desire to engage seems to be predicated on the objective of emphasizing the “Canadian-ness” of Muslims in Canada. Thus, we see many Masajid that have held flag raising ceremonies in the Masjid parking lot, and have worked to appease local politicians such as the Community Service Award given to Ontario Premier Doug Ford at MuslimFest in Mississauga. What has been the result of these efforts?

From the outset, it is hard to argue that a statistical minority like Muslims in Canada, who make up just over 3% of the Canadian population and are mostly concentrated in just two or three cities, will be able to have any electoral impact. But this shouldn't be the central discussion related to political participation.

Protecting the interests of the Ummah and political engagement are not neutral terms in Islam that can be separated from the belief and practice of our Deen. Islam clearly defines the interests of the Ummah, and specifies the means Muslims are allowed to take to protect ourselves. So, is aiding and relying on secular politicians consistent with the teachings of our Deen?

As Muslims, it is part of our core beliefs that protection comes from Allah (swt) alone, and that He alone sustains us. As the Messenger of Allah (saw) told us: **«وَأَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْأُمَّةَ لَوْ اجْتَمَعَتْ عَلَى أَنْ يَنْفَعُوكَ بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَنْفَعُوكَ إِلَّا بِشَيْءٍ قَدْ كَتَبَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ»** **“Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you, they would not be able to help you except if Allah had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you, they would not harm you except if Allah had written so.”** [Al-Tirmidhi]

Recognizing this reality allows Muslims to focus on the only true means of protection in their lives, which is their relationship with their Creator. There is no force that can overpower Allah (swt) if Allah (swt) chooses to protect us, and nothing can protect us if Allah (swt) allows it to harm us.

This doesn't mean that we do not take the practical means to protect ourselves, as this is part of our obligations as Muslims. Muslims are commanded to work to protect their lives, their families, and their property from harm, as well as working to protect the weak and oppressed. But we must only work towards protecting these things through means that have been determined to be permissible by Allah (swt), since if we hope for Allah (swt) to protect us, it would be foolish to seek His protection through an act of disobedience to Him.

It is also imperative to note that Muslim interests are not restricted to the protection of our material wealth or well-being. Rather, the primary interest of Muslims in any environment must be enjoining what is good, forbidding what is evil, and calling to the message of Islam.

Allah (swt) said: **«كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ»** **“You are the best Ummah brought forth for mankind; you enjoin what is good (Ma'roof), you forbid what is wrong (Munkar), and you believe in Allah.”** [3:110]

The singling out of this Ummah as the best in the sight of Allah (swt) is conditional upon us fulfilling the characteristics it describes, as was explained by Umar (ra): **«مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْأُمَّةِ، فَلْيُؤَدِّ شَرْطَ اللَّهِ فِيهَا»** **“Whoever likes to be among this (praised) Ummah, let him fulfill the condition that Allah set in this Ayah.”** [Ibn Kathir]

Does our voting for secular politicians, campaigning for them, and seeking their approval conform to the Islamic concept of protection? Does seeking this protection allow us to avoid disobeying our Creator? Do such actions allow us to effectively advocate for our interests? And will such actions allow our community to fulfill our purpose of conveying the justice and guidance of Islam?

Politicians in a secular system, whether they are Muslim or otherwise, are forbidden from referring to what was revealed by Allah (swt) when setting their platforms or making policy decisions. Instead they refer to constitutions, legal theory, and economic concepts that are built on the whims and desires of man.

Allah (swt) warns us in the Qur'an: ﴿وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾ **“And whoever does not rule with what Allah has revealed, they are the oppressors”** [5:45] And He (swt) said: ﴿وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾ **“And whoever does not rule with what Allah has revealed, they are the corrupt.”** [5:47]

To aid these politicians in their act of wrong doing and disobedience by campaigning or voting for them means that we are sharing in their sin of legislating man-made laws. And what kind of protection is worth the anger of Allah? What kind of security is worth jeopardizing our standing with Allah when we meet Him?

And how could we convey the justice and mercy of Islam while supporting those who actively work against it? How could we call to the Islamic social system that is built upon a strong family unit and uncompromising morality, while standing with politicians who support selfish individualism and promote homosexual relationships and transgenderism? How could we share the Islamic vision of an economy centered around the fair distribution of wealth and Halal economic transactions, while campaigning for politicians who endorse the ruthless Capitalist system that is built on debt slavery, the rule of elite corporations, and the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the very few?

If Muslims wish to be a voice for justice, our Mimbars should be a podium to convey Islam's vision of society, not a stage for secular politicians to collect votes. Our Masajid should be sanctuaries for our youth, where they can find an atmosphere of Iman and learn about the guidance of Allah (swt) and the Sunnah of His Messenger (saw), not the political agendas of those who reject the guidance of Allah (swt). Our advocacy should be on behalf of those who are voiceless, calling for the abolishment of enslavement to man, replacing it with service to the Most Merciful and Wise Creator.

And these politicians aren't even good at protecting the most obvious of our interest; instead they are absorbed by the system of Capitalism that has pointed the weapons of its military industrial complex and the financial slavery instruments of its economic system towards the rest of the world – especially in the Muslim lands. In just the past few weeks, we learned that Ilhan Omar, the first Hijab-wearing woman elected to US Congress, spoke out against the Boycott-Divest-and-Sanctions (BDS) Movement – a movement dedicated to boycotting the Zionist occupiers for their crimes against the Muslims of Palestine.

Allah (swt) warns us: ﴿مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنَ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ **“The example of those who take other than Allah as allies and protectors is like that of the spider who takes a (web) as a home. Truly, the most lowly of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew”** [29:41]. Trusting in Allah (swt) is the default state of a Muslim, and a requirement of belief. Allah (saw) says: ﴿وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ **“And trust in Allah, if you are truly believers.”** [5:23]

A heart that relies upon its Creator alone makes no room for the greed, two-facedness, opportunism, and moral cowardice that is characteristic of secular politics. Rather, the heart of the believer is committed to the selflessness, sincerity, consistency, and unshakable morality that is characteristic of the Messenger of Allah (saw), the Rightly Guided Khulafaa, and Mujaddideen (renewers) of this Ummah who stood for what was right even if the majority people were against it. Did the Messenger of Allah (saw) cancel the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah because it was unpopular? Did Abu Bakr (ra) change his stance on those who refused to pay the Zakat because he was worried about remaining in power? Unlike secular politicians, they stood for the Truth because that is what Allah (swt) will hold them – and us – accountable for.

A community that refers to Allah alone in all its judgments – even in times of fear when belligerent voices are demanding compromises on one's principles – is forged on the Adab (good manners), Akhlaq (good character), and guidance of the Messenger (saw) and his Companions (ra) who faced torture and death with courage, steadfastness, compassion, and conviction. It is also a community that is able to be a righteousness compass for the Canadian society as whole, as it seeks no benefit from the systems of oppression; rather, it only seeks to guide both the oppressor and the oppressed.

And an Ummah that relies on their Lord alone, not relying on any man-made solution to solve its fundamental problems can raise a call that is heard around the world: a call for the return of the complete Islamic way of life that will be a shield for the believers, and a sanctuary for the oppressed and the seekers of truth all over the world. May Allah hasten its return.

﴿وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ * الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ * أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ﴾

“We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives, and crops. And give good news to those who are steadfast - those who, when afflicted with a calamity, say 'To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.' They will be given blessings and mercy from their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided.” [2:155-157]

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