

Khutbah on Partaking in Elections And engaging in Public Life

PART ONE:

إن الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا ومن سيئات أعمالنا ، من يهده الله فلا مضل له ومن يضل فلا هادي له وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله
يا أيها الذين ءامنوا اتقوا الله حق تقاته، ولا تموتن إلا وأنتم مسلمون.

My dear respected brothers / sisters,

As you know, the *Jumuah Khutbah* (Friday Sermon) is one of the ways that we – as a Muslim Community – communicate with each other on issues that affect us and are of concern to us. Today’s topic is one which very much falls in this area. It is about something that affects us all, directly.

If you are living in the UK, then you will absolutely be aware of the fact that we are having a General Election on the 8th of June; and that’s the topic of today’s Khutbah.

We come to *Jumuah* and listen to the *Khutbah* so that we can learn and change our practice. Therefore, this *Khutbah* is about YOU. It’s about the responsibility YOU have; and about your role in doing something as an active member in our society.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

“Indeed, Allah (does) not change the condition of a people, until they change what (is) in themselves.” (Surat Ar-ra’ad, verse 11)

To allow the change, we must know what challenges we are facing. One of them is the misconception of our Identity. Indeed, knowing who we are will shape our mind, our decisions and even our relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

What did the Prophet (ﷺ) teach about engaging?

Participating in public life in the UK is actually following the Sunnah. When the Makkan migrants first arrived in Madina, the Prophet ﷺ ordered them to actively contribute in constructing the Madinian society, which was quickly changing with the arrival of the new migrants. Let’s not forget that at that time, Madinah was inhabited by a wide range of people.

By encouraging the migrants and the people of Madinah to get involved in Societal life, the Prophet (ﷺ) triggered the following:

- Developing a sense of belonging
- Reassuring the people of Madinah, who could see their city changing. [Change can sometimes scare some people in those circumstances.]
- He was encouraging social cohesion
- He encouraged everyone living in Madina to be active in finding a way to learn to live as one society
- He was aware that conflicts due to the differences could happen; and he preached dealing calmly with everyone. The aim being to find a way to accept differences and see them as healthy rather than barriers.

Although Muslims are a minority in the UK, we also are under the spotlight of the media; and in many instances in negative ways. It is only by being positive through our attitude, behaviour and actions that we can counterbalance this tendency. Our neighbours and colleagues will understand what they listen in the media is not true, when they see the reality around them as otherwise. In short: **Actions speak louder than words.**

What does Islam say about engaging in public life?

Ever since the Prophet (ﷺ) became the leader of Madina, he built principles to allow everyone to participate in society, by giving their opinions, their advice and to constructively criticise those in authority.

This became ingrained in the Islamic way of life, as it was part of *Nasiha* (sincere advice) to advise those in authority. Governors were sent to different lands to govern, deal with local issues and send reports about the local situation. However when a citizen wasn't happy with his local governor, they were free to come to see the Head of State to complain. And they were listened to, and their complaints taken on board; and sometimes this may have led to a governor being sacked.

So, Islam has always taught to engage with public life and to use your voice to correct matters.

Participating in elections is an extension of that. For registering to vote, and then voting, means you are fulfilling your duty of carrying out *nasiha*, which is about being sincere in changing things for the better.

The risk of not participating

By not doing anything / not voicing your position, you must realise that you are equally responsible. In fact, when not voting for instance, it can mean some candidates or parties winning elections more easily; and if they have discriminatory policies or attitudes, then that would impact the whole society. So, we shoulder a burden when we decide to not vote. And that is true when dealing with domestic affairs and foreign policies.

You must get involved and encourage your children to get involved. The youth need to feel they are part of a community, a society; and that they are part of a change for improvement. This natural feeling is part of their normal emotional development. Let them be involved in the civic life of our country as there is a risk if they don't get involved, they become disenfranchised. And if they do so, then they are more likely to be attracted to deviant ideologies and people.

When you live in a country for a long period of time, you should feel the sense of belonging to that land. And this attachment will become stronger when we engage with the issues, and participate with them. Similar to how the migrants from Makkah were allowed to go back if they wished, following the conquest of Makkah; however, a vast section decided to remain in Madina, their new home. And indeed the Prophet (ﷺ) chose to remain in Madina, and that's where he is buried (ﷺ), even though his homeland was Makkah, to demonstrate this important reality.

He showed us that religion or faith has no plot of land.

We have enjoyed much freedom in this country, but many things threaten this for us now, whether the rise of the Right Wing in Europe, bans of hijab and niqab in neighbouring countries, a constant threat to halal food, the demonizing of our Islamic practice, and so much more.

This is no longer just scare-mongering. If we do not vote carefully in our local areas and ensure that those who are not suitable to govern or be MPs are removed from power, then we will suffer even more harm. Voting is our key tool to safeguard our rights.

Conclusion:

If we want to see change; and if we have a hope for improvement for us and for the next generations, we simply need to be that change. However: as we can see that some of us are falling into a trap: the trap of victimisation and blaming attitude. In fact, those attitudes don't help. It's quite the opposite. The Prophet (ﷺ) has never seen himself as a victim, but as part of a slow change. He always kept hope, as part of his tawakkul.

Indeed the change is slow. But isn't patience a virtue?

Let's keep in mind that patience is not a passive process but is an active one.

والعصر، إن الإنسان لفي خسر، إلا الذين ءامنوا، وعملوا الصالحات، وتواصوا بالحق، وتواصوا بالصبر.

I leave with you with a verse and a hadith, which emphasize our duty and role:

The Verse: Allah says: "Truly, Allah commands you to fulfil the trusts to their owners."

As for the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ who was asked, "When is the Day of Judgement?"

He said, "**When the trust is squandered (lost in waste), then wait for the Hour [for its time is close].**"

They asked, "And how will the trust be wasted?"

He replied, "**When the affairs [of the people] are handed to those who are not worthy of it; then wait for the Hour [for its time is close].**"

We need ALL Muslims to be awake to the issues that are happening around them; and to come together to help with supporting the Muslim Community and British Society.

There are many things that one can do to fulfil their obligation when it comes to the General Election. In the next Khutbah, we will mention some of them.

PART TWO:

إن الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا ومن سيئات أعمالنا ، من يهده الله فلا مضل له
ومن يضلل فلا هادي له وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله

يا أيها الذين ءامنوا اتقوا الله وقولوا قولا سديداً، يصلح لكم أعمالكم، ويغفر لكم ذنوبكم، ومن يطع الله ورسوله، فقد فاز فوزاً
عظيماً.

In the first Khutbah, we spoke about the importance of doing something with regards to the upcoming General Elections. And in this second Khutbah, we will outline some of the things you can do.

- 1) **Educate** yourself and other Muslims about the reality of life in the UK, and about what the upcoming elections mean, in particular. It is important to realise that there is a challenge and there is a need to learn more.
- 2) **Register** to vote before 22nd May. Make sure you are registered to vote; and make sure all the people in your household are registered as well.
- 3) **Encourage** your friends and family to register as well. This must be done before 22nd May; and can be done within 5 minutes online. It is so easy!
- 4) **Initiate** discussion within your circles of family, friends and colleagues about the upcoming elections, and what they mean to you. What are the issues that affect you directly? Housing, Employment, student fees? And what are the issues that affect you as a Muslim that you want your prospective MP to address? Islamophobia? Discrimination? Halal food? Talking about the issues will help you to make an informed decision about who to vote for.
- 5) **Challenge** bad policies and detrimental rhetoric that any of the MPs may hold. Do this by participating in debates and hustings events when you get a chance to do so.

It is important to note that masjid and imams cannot tell you who to vote for. This is a decision that you need to make. But, you have a responsibility to make the right decision, as this will affect you, your community and the whole country.

- 6) **Engage with public life.** Muslims need to be more politically active; vote in elections and participate in supporting parties and contacting their MPs. On the grassroots levels; it is also important to show solidarity to different causes by participating in protests. We encourage engagement with daily politics and daily life. Politics isn't a dirty word; and it is only right that more and more Britons engage to make UK's democracy more reflective of the people. It is vital that we have a proper representative democracy. This can only happen if the constituents (you) get involved and account those who speak on your behalf. This means we must engage politicians - whether councillors or MPs - on taking a robust stand against Islamophobia and other issues which affect the Muslim community.
- 7) **Participate in society** - The attitude of belonging needs to be nurtured into our young and upcoming generations. There needs to be a sense of caring and sharing. It's not about which football team you support or what your favourite food is. But it's about the attitude of belonging. We must not allow the rhetoric that Muslims are alien to Britain, or they belong elsewhere. This can only happen when there is clear rebuttal of the alien culture. We still hear

from ill-informed people that Muslims shouldn't be here. Or "they should go home". However, they are ignorant of the existence of Muslims as part and parcel of British Society.

More arms need to be stretched out to others in dialogue and collaboration. Dialogue breeds understanding and partnerships instil care. Through interfaith work and collaborating with those with shared interests, huge barriers will be broken. There are different aspects of life in which we can work together. These are restricted to matters of religion, but extend to a wide spectrum of issues from human rights to caring about the environment; and from pro-life campaigns to lobbying for living wage. Whatever the issue, it's good to work together.

8) Share your thoughts about this topic on social media websites. This one might be more for young people. It is important that our voices are heard, if not in the realm of the media then at least on social media websites: Facebook, Twitter and even Snapchat! Share your experiences and thoughts about the upcoming elections. Create your own hashtags and try to make them a trend by sharing with all your family and friends online.

Too often we complain about the negative media portrayal; and it's our right to complain. However, to avoid becoming someone who just moans about everything, you must couple your complaints with action. With the explosion of social media and ultrafast broadband, everyone should and can have a say. You can air your views and you can speak about issues. Social media has given you a voice, so use it. And in a world of high volume marketing, we need to learn to market our activities and to sell ourselves.

To conclude: The General Election 2017 is an important avenue for us to partake in British Public life; and to make our voices heard. Let's not waste our votes. Register today, and make your vote count.

May Allah give us the strength to do this.

"O you who believe, If you help aid (the Deen) of Allah, Allah will aid you, and make you stand firm."¹

وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين

¹ Holy Quran: The Chapter of Muhammad