

Leadership in Community Building for Muslims

- 1) Muslims, regardless of whichever country they live in and whatever language that may be the *lingua franca* there, will always have certain commonalities in their lifelong actions. This commonality is driven by their scriptural backgrounds since their childhood. The single word “governance” condenses significant aspects of cultured leadership in community building, especially for Muslims.
- 2) There is a need, however, to scrutinise both the political and religious aspects. It may be argued that mankind is a single nation and therefore: leadership for community building for Muslims, should be conceptually the same, for all other communities. For example, in Fiji all citizens of Fiji shall be known as Fijians, under section 5¹ to Chapter 1 of the 2013 Constitution of Fiji.
- 3) Section 22² to Chapter 2 of the 2013 Constitution of Fiji allows unfettered freedom of religion, conscience and belief. There is no compulsion in religion under the 2013 Constitution of Fiji. This is also very much in alignment to the Holy Qur’an and Hadith and stylistically consistent so. The Holy Qur’an states at **HQ2:256** “*There is no compulsion in religion — the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error. So whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he indeed lays hold on the firmest handle which shall never break. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.*”
- 4) On the contrary, the ethical aspects of merging the supreme laws of the Holy Qur’an with the actual practises, as exemplified in the historically and widely accepted Six Hadiths (*Al-Sihah Al-Sitta*)³, makes leadership in Islam uniquely different from the majority of other faiths. Arguably, some parallels may be found in the Torah and the Bible, based on their historical commonality of the same prophets mentioned.
- 5) Almighty God is the absolute Perfection in governance. For example, mankind must learn from Almighty God’s examples of His Excellences of the entire universe orbital systems, which we already know of, has been most consistent over the last 14.8 billion years, since creation of the universes. Now coming

¹ Citizens of Fiji are all Fijians and should not be described by their visual ethnicity.

² Every person has the right, either individually or in community with others, in private or in public, to manifest and practise their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching. There is no compulsion in religion.

³ This refers to the Authentic Six Hadith: (1) Sahih Bukhari (2) Sahih Muslim (3) Sunan Al-Nasa’i (4) Sunan Abu Dawood (5) Jami Al-Trimidhi (6) Sunan Ibn Majah. Whilst there are various other Hadith, these six are regarded as best correct.

down, back to earth: Leadership in community building in the Holy Qur'an comprises integral elements of -

- (a) Embracing responsibility
 - (b) Volunteering to assist others
 - (c) Listening to others' viewpoints without dictatorship
 - (d) Having confidence in others
 - (e) Eliciting cooperation
 - (f) Inspiring others to correct path
 - (g) Planning and visualizing the future
 - (h) Recognizing gender equality
 - (i) Instilling passion and purpose, and
 - (j) Steering away from hypocrisy.
- 6) Embracing Responsibility: Leaders must accept responsibility with accountability and liability (if any) in their functioning role as community leaders. In the context of the following verse from the Holy Qur'an (**HQ**), the term Messenger is taken to mean the Head of State. **HQ4:59**⁴ *"O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is best and more suitable to (achieve) the end."*
- 7) At this juncture it may be noted that the inscription on the scroll of the Fiji Coat of Arms⁵ has almost identical meaning to this verse in the Holy Qur'an (**HQ4:59**) in terms of democratic governance led by the Head of State. The source of the scroll is not known but the scroll reads (*Rerevaka na Kalou ka doka na Tui* and which means, "Fear God and Honour the King").
- 8) Volunteering to assist others: This is a basic element in community bonding. All peoples within a country's communities do not always have the capacity and capability to achieve all of their lives' objectives on their own. Sometimes they may have lack of experience and knowledge. Other times they may not have resource capability, including lack of financial capability as may be necessary.

⁴ This revelation in the Holy Qur'an was more than 1,400 years ago.

⁵ The Fiji Coat of Arms was adopted by the British Royal Warrant in 1908.

- 9) Listening to others' viewpoints and having confidence in others, without being dictatorial is the next step up. These elements together with eliciting cooperation and inspiring others to the correct path are the basic bricks of community building. Planning and visualizing the future will only be successful if the community remains united. Gender equality⁶ is a matter often overlooked; but leaders must recognize on balance that almost 50% of the community in almost all countries are made up of each gender. Neither gender can survive on its own indefinitely. Both genders also have equal rights in the 2013 Constitution of Fiji. In the same token, both genders require instilling passion and purpose of their belongingness to communities in the nation. Eliciting cooperation and leading others to the correct path, are some of the expected fundamental participations by Muslims.
- 10) It is now necessary to shift over from political to the religious aspects of gender equality in leadership. Leaders must be exemplary in instilling passion and purpose and do not regard community matters below their dignity. This is quoted in the Holy Qur'an at verse **HQ21:73** *"And We made them leaders who guided (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of alms, and Us (alone) they served."*
- 11) A damaging cause to community fragmentation is practicing of hypocrisy by the leaders. Hypocrisy must never become an element with the leader of any community. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at verse **HQ4:81** *"And they say: Obedience. But when they go out from your presence, a group of them plan by night doing otherwise than what you say. And Allah writes down what they plan by night, so turn aside from them and trust in Allah. And Allah is sufficient as having charge of affairs."* However, potential leaders must always be aware of false leaders who will undermine existing leadership. This undermining has been witnessed in several Muslim majority countries, inspired by religious extremists.
- 12) The Holy Qur'an as Muslims' supreme Scripture, is the handbook for excellence in governance about the universe and those other things closer at hand on earth; and accordingly, it is imperative that Muslims fully appreciate on balance the Supremacy of Almighty God and heed to His excellent guidance on leadership. This is given in the Holy Qur'an at verse **HQ2:164** *"In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky, then gives life therewith to the earth after its death and spreads in it all*

⁶ Section 26 (3) of the 2013 Fiji Constitution constitutes gender neutrality under fundamental rights of Fiji citizens. All Fijians, as citizens of Fiji and regardless of gender, have equal rights and opportunities under this Constitution. The Holy Qur'an reflects similarly in several quotations, giving women and girls equal rights as men and boys.

(kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between heaven and earth, there are surely signs for a people who understand.” The immaculately faultless governance of the universe has been in continuous motion for 14.8 billion years, without failure of planetary orbits.

- 13) Muslims are also reminded in their Scripture of the earliest record of disobedience in humanity, which has become a hallmark for slyness: This is given in the Holy Qur’an at verse **HQ20:120** *“But the devil made an evil suggestion to him; he said: O Adam, shall I lead you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which does not decay?”* This devil-inspired culture has followed downstream into humanity to this very day, as you read this, and sadly there are many people who relish in misleading communities and causing chaos to administrations of various communities. The descent of Islam has been downstream from Ishmael, elder son of Prophet Abraham. This is given in the Holy Qur’an at verse **HQ3:68** *“The nearest of people to Abraham are surely those who follow him and this Prophet and those who believe. And Allah is the Friend of the believers.”*
- 14) The impact of the devil successfully taking control of leaders within communities to mislead the communities and intentionally bringing chaos to everybody is clearly witnessed in the Holy Qur’an at verse **HQ4:47** *“O you who have been given the Book, believe in what We have revealed, verifying what you (already) have, before We destroy the leaders and turn them on their backs, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers. And the command of Allah is ever executed.”* The verses quoted so far show that one of the values for good leadership in community building is not getting misled by devil-inspired ideas.
- 15) Democracy is the essences of leadership and Muslim communities must respect the Head of State, regardless whether or not that person is a Muslim.
- 16) Rather than communities of people quarrelling amongst themselves and weakening the population base, there has to be a system of arbitration to hear both sides and deliver a balanced judgment. Whilst there are different ethnicities and cultures present in a country, humanity is a single community before Almighty God the Creator, and Almighty God has clarified so in the Holy Qur’an at verse: **HQ23:52** *“And surely this your community is one community, and I am your Lord, so keep your duty to Me.”* Almighty God has brought about values for leadership in Scriptures by civilizations’ progress and given as case studies of past Prophets.
- 17) Muslims’ supreme Scripture (the Holy Qur’an) has several historical case studies, especially of past prophets and their communities and how these prophets demonstrated their values of community building. All communities had leaders.

Within those communities there were smaller pockets of people who were honest and sincere to prophets and they were promised reward in Heaven. Within the same communities were larger pockets of people who were driven by frauds, traitors, conspirators and hypocrites; these people were promised the fire of Hell. An example is King David, who was also a prophet, quoted in the Holy Qur'an at verse **HQ38:26** *"O David, surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between people justly, and do not follow desire that it should lead you astray from the path of Allah. Those who go astray from the path of Allah, for them is surely a severe punishment because they forgot the day of Reckoning."* Muslims' community leaders must respect everybody's cultures.

- 18) Governance also requires establishment of welfare systems, orphanages, charity and care of the underprivileged as one of several values; the quote is in the Holy Qur'an at verse **HQ9:60** *"(The due) charity is only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer it, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth), and (to free) the captives, and those in debt, and in the way of Allah and for the traveller — an ordinance from Allah. And Allah is Knowing, Wise."*
- 19) The establishment of Department of Social Welfare in the country is definitely a necessary value in community leadership. The lesser privileged are also people and who form the community base. Another value in community leadership is setting up a system of Public Trustee. This is quoted at **HQ4:58** *"Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to those worthy of them, and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice. Surely Allah instructs you with what is excellent. Surely Allah is ever Hearing, Seeing. "*
- 20) In conclusion, the Holy Qur'an has always been the handbook for values in community building and shall continue to be so. However, sometimes people choose to ignore excellent advice available. Muslims are required to develop leaders and maintain seamless participative cooperation of the communities with their democratically elected leaders.
- 21) It is for all correct thinking Muslims to guide and assist other Muslims; the Holy Qur'an has sanctioned that correct advice shall be given to those who need to be guided. This is given in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ3:104**, as *"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful."*

-End of Document-

Fiji