



جمعية علماء سريلانكا ALL CEYLON JAMIYYATHUL ULAMA

(Incorporated by Act of Parliament No.: 51 of 2000)

Declaration of the Council of Cooperation & Coordination Operating under All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama Regarding Coexistence among the Communities of Sri Lanka



With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very Merciful

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The development of close human relationships beyond the boundaries of countries has turned the world into a global village. The contribution of such relationships towards human development cannot be denied. Indeed, the success and the prosperity of mankind depend heavily on the strengthening of good qualities, and the upholding of humanity and brotherhood.

Our motherland, Sri Lanka, is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. The progress and the prosperity of this country depend on good relationships among the different communities. There had been a historical record of maintenance of good relationships for centuries, among Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims alike, until the recent past; wherein the country experienced a bitter war due to unraveled ethnic relationships. At present, the country has recovered from three decades of atrocious war, to the state of peace. Efforts are being made for the coexistence of the different communities. However, one can still observe bitter feelings, enmity and doubtfulness prevailing among communities at certain levels.

The biggest challenge for every patriot, today, is making effort in building good relationships among the communities, for the success and prosperity of the country. Particularly, every Muslim should make an effort in strengthening the existing relationships with the people of other communities. Thus, the first stage in this effort is to introduce ourselves to one another; the second stage is to build better understanding between each other; the third stage is to create a state of tolerance between each other; and the forth stage is to create the support in the state of cooperation in the agreeable subjects.

Islam spreads peace and tranquility in the world. The word "Islam" stems from the word "Salaam", which means peace. Thus,

one of the supreme objectives of this religion, as it indicates, is strengthening peace between individuals and amongst groups of people. In fact, great emphasis is laid upon maintaining peace in the world and unity amongst human beings.

An Islamic Perspective on Relationships with Other Communities

The approach towards non-Muslims in Islam is very transparent. Islam speaks very elaborately of the rights and the facilities enjoyed by non-Muslims living with Muslims. These have not merely been written in words or as ideologies; but its proven through history that wherever an Islamic reign existed, there had been a number of incidents recording how well Islam has classified the principles of human rights and has implemented them very successfully as a model to the rest of humanity.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was sent to this earth as a blessing to humanity, had led as an example in providing justice to all, regardless of the caste, creed or religion they represented. Therefore, along with Muslims, the non-Muslims were always given complete assurance of protection by the Prophet (PBUH). Consider the following Al-Hadeeth:

"Whoever commits injustice to one (non-Muslim) under a Treaty or disregards his rights or burdens upon him responsibilities beyond his capability or obtains anything from him against his will, I shall be his opponent on the Day of Judgment." (*Abu Dawood*)

The above mentioned Al-Hadeeth uses a very strict approach whilst referring to the prohibitions. It can be observed that a strong warning is given to those transgressing in committing injustice to a non-Muslim or instructing to do something beyond his capability or snatching his reasonable rights.

"Whoever kills a non-Muslim under a Treaty will be deprived even of the fragrance of Heaven. Verily, the smell of the Heaven prevails at a distance of forty years." (*Sahih al Bukhary*)

Islam, as a religion of solidarity, prohibits even the interference in the rights of non-Muslims or causing injustice to them, and considers such acts as severe offences and major sins.

The Treaty between the Christians of Najran and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is another proof of the assurance of protection to non-Muslims in Islam. The Treaty reads as follows:

"The people of Najran and those with them shall come under the protection of Allah Ta'ala and the responsibility of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This protection and responsibility is not restricted only to their lives, religion, land and property, but is also effective in their places of worship & ritual prayers; and applies to those present and not present alike. Further, no clergy or hermit shall be banished from his state; and, no person shall be stopped from fulfilling his religious obligations. Whatever they possess legally, whether small or big, shall remain under their ownership."

(Thalayilun Nubuwwa - Kudhumu Lamam Ibnu Da'laba)

"Further, one shall not be punished for the offence of another. Allah and His Messenger are bound to act according to the Treaty, until Allah's commandment is revealed. This Treaty shall be effective until they do not commit injustice among themselves."

(Kithabul Kharraj Abu Yusuf - Khissathu Najran Wa Ahliha)

The statement in this Treaty, "One will not be punished for the offence of another", renders a very important meaning; i.e. if an individual or few people belonging to a community commit an offence, the whole community cannot be punished. This is the basic concept given to the present world.

The expectation of Islam is that one should live peacefully maintaining good relationships with people of all religions and communities bearing in mind that all are under the protection of Allah Ta'ala.

"And if they tilt towards peace, you too should tilt towards it, and place your trust in Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing". *(Al-Quran: 8:61)*

The above is the commandment of Allah to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) through Al-Quran. The Verses of Al-Quran, mentioned below, clearly indicate that Muslims should live peacefully and amicably with those non-Muslims who do not attack the Muslims and wish to live

amicably; on the other hand the Muslims should disconnect relationships with those non-Muslims who fight them.

"Allah does not forbid you as regards those who did not fight you on account of faith, and did not expel you from your homes, that you do good to them, and deal justly with them. Surely Allah loves those who maintain justice. Allah forbids you only about those who fought you on account of faith, and expelled you from your homes, and helped (others) in expelling you, that you have friendship with them. Those who develop friendship with them are the wrongdoers". (Al-Quran: 60:8, 9)

The Scholars of Islam say that the abovementioned Verses could be used as an Islamic Constitution in regard to relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. The word "Bir" in the first Verse, translated as "*you do good to them*", is the same as the one used in "*do good to parents*", in another Verse of Al-Quran. Moreover, whilst enjoining the maintenance of Justice, the word "Qist" (which gives a deeper meaning of justice) is used instead of the word "Adhl" (which would commonly be used to express justice).

The Islamic principle in regard to Allah's relationship with mankind and society further strengthens the agreeable stand of Islam on the people of other religions.

It is the basic principle in Islam that everything that exists is the creation of Allah and Allah is the sole Creator of all living beings; and it is Allah who sustains all human beings, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is the opinion in Islam that every child is born with the quality of absorbing good things called "Fithra".

According to the Islamic perspective there is no difference of caste in a society. The opinion of 'master race' is rejected in Islam. Islam says that the whole of mankind was created from one man and a woman. Consider the following Verses:

"O men, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul, and from it created its match, and spread many men and women from the two. Fear Allah in whose name you ask each other (for your rights),

and fear (the violation of the rights of) the womb-relations. Surely, Allah is watchful over you". (Al-Quran: 4:1)

"O mankind, we have created you from a male and a female, and made you into races and tribes, so that you may identify one another. Surely the noblest of you, in Allah's sight, is the one who is most pious of you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware". (Al-Quran: 49:13)

The following Verse of Al-Quran and the Al-Hadeeth encourages justice towards non-Muslims also:

"Malice against a people should not prompt you to avoid doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to Taqwa". (5:8)

"Fear the supplication of one caused to injustice, even if he be a non-Muslim. There is no screen between that and Allah". (Musnad Ahmed)

It is significant to know how far the above opinions were practiced in the history of Islam.

- During Hijrah, the guide named Abdullah Ibn Uraikith, who was entrusted with the task of guiding the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to Madinah, was a non-Muslim. (Saheeh Al Buhary)
- The event of the Prophet (PBUH) taking a loan from a Jew is well-known. (Saheeh Al Buhary)
- The Prophet (PBUH) accepted the gifts from non-Muslim Kings whole-heartedly. (Musnad Ahmed, Sunan al-Thirmidhi)
- Once the Prophet (PBUH) got up and stood for a dead body of a Jew that was carried past. When asked, he replied: "Isn't it a human soul?" (Saheeh Al Buhary)
- At the time of the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), he had pawned one of his belongings to a Jew. (Saheeh Al Buhary)

Hazrath Omar (Ral) in his last sermon pointed out the following:

"I advise the next Caliph to maintain good relationships with the "Dhimmis" (Non-Muslims who have a peace Treaty with Muslims). Act according to the Treaty you have had with them, fight for them and do not over-burden them with responsibilities beyond their capabilities." (Abu Yusuf, Kithabul Kharaaj, page 136, Abu Ubaid, Kithabul Amwaal, page: 127)

Caliph Umar Ibnu Abdul Azeez (Rah) instructed Ade'e' Ibnu Ataa' to collect Jizya (Tax) only from those who are capable of paying it, and to provide financial support, from Baithul Maal, to those elderly Dhimmis who are feeble and unable to work. He showed the following incident as the proof for his decision.

Once, Caliph Omar (Ral) saw an elderly man from amongst the Dhimmis, going from house to house begging. Upon this, the Khalifah remarked, "We have not done Justice to you. We collected Jizya from you when you were young, and have left you unattended in your old age". Thereafter, he ordered that needful funds be granted to him from the Baithul maal. (*Abu Ubaid, Al Amwal, Pg: 48*)

The above incident is a good example of how non-Muslim minorities were given protection and assurance during the early days of Islam. In old age, poverty, sickness, unemployment and other calamities, the non-Muslims, in an Islamic society, were given complete assurance by the Islamic Regime. Another proof could be seen in the Treaty signed by Khalid bin Waleed (Ral) who captured an area of Iraq.

"Jizya (tax) shall not be collected from those who are unable to work due to old age or have become victim to any disaster, or when a rich becomes a poor, if his religious community had been supporting him through donations. On the other hand he will be offered a financial support from the Baithul Maal" (*Abu Yussuf, Kithabul Kharaaj, Pgs: 155, 156*)

Hereunder, the extent of religious freedom given to minorities in the Islam is further elaborated.

Imam Thabari points out the freedom given by Caliph Umar (Ral), to the Christians of Quds, in the following message that was circulated by him:

"None should reside in their churches. The churches shall not be destroyed, nor shall any part of them be broken down". (Al-Thabari)
When a delegation of Najran (who were Christians) came to meet the Prophet (PBUH), he hosted and entertained them in the Masjid; and allowed them say their prayers in one side of the Masjid.
(*Al-Bidhaya Wannihaya – Kithabul Wufud*)

"Everyone is equal in the eyes of law" is one of the principles of the Islamic Jurisprudence, and it is amazing to see how it was implemented. Shari'ah Law treats everyone equally, regardless of caste, creed, religion or social and economic status. Justice prevails in Islam for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Once a Jew was alleged to have stolen something, but Verses of Al-Quran were revealed confirming his innocence.

"Surely, we have revealed to you the Book with the truth, so that you may judge between people according to what Allah has shown you. Do not be an advocate for those who breach trust. Seek forgiveness from Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. Do not argue on behalf of those who betray themselves. Surely, Allah does not like anyone who is a sinful betrayer. They feel shy before people, but do not feel shy before Allah. He (Allah) is with them when they make plans at night to give a statement He (Allah) does not like. Allah encompasses whatever they do. Look, this is what you are! You have argued for them in the worldly life, but who shall argue for them with Allah on the Day of Judgment, or who shall be their defender?" (4:105-109)

Ali (Ral), who was the Caliph of that time, filed a case against a person (a non-Muslim) who had stolen his shield; but the Judge, Shuraih, did not pass a verdict in his favour, as there wasn't sufficient evidence to prove his allegation; which is historical. Furthermore, the non-Muslims were given freedom to carry out their personal affairs according to their religion. If something was prohibited in Islam, whilst being permissible in their religion, they would not have to adhere to the prohibition. This has been the practice from the time of the Prophet (PBUH) throughout the Islamic history.

Our history proves that the above mentioned Islamic guidance has been adhered to by our elders and ancestors, whilst living in this country with the majority community and other communities. The Book, authored by Dr. Lorna Devaraja, named "The Muslims of Sri Lanka - One Thousand Years of Ethnic Harmony", highlights the National contribution of the Muslims of Sri Lanka and their coexistence with the other communities. Muslims have served as advisors of parliament, ministers, ambassadors, and as personnel in the Force, etc. in the past. They have been actively involved in the

fight and struggles against foreign rulers like Portuguese, Dutch and British when they colonized our country. It is remarkable that Muslim leaders were also amongst those who raised their voices for the freedom of the country. No one can deny the fact that Muslims have contributed greatly to the country's economic growth and have gone to great extents in protecting the sovereignty and solidarity of the country.

The manner in which the contemporary Muslim society, following the way of its ancestors, has rendered its contributions to the motherland and maintained coexistence with other communities, whilst protecting its religious solidarity, symbol and principle, is something which has to be appreciated. However, it has been observed, in the recent past, that a group of people are making efforts that could be detrimental to religious harmony and could bring about communal clashes. Any showing true patriotism to the country would not support such efforts, which would result in communal disharmony.

The Council of Cooperation and Coordination serving under the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, whilst emphasizing upon the points mentioned below, requests the government, high officials, religious leaders, including civil and community leaders, and others, to make sincere effort in continuing and developing the peaceful situation and coexistence in this country. The Council expects, especially the Muslims, to strengthen better ties with the other communities, and to take interest and make effort in following the points mentioned hereunder:

- Participating in the pleasure and sorrow of people from other religions.
- Hosting and entertaining those from other religions to functions, ceremonies and events held by Muslims.
- Participating in common functions, and wishing and offering gifts when participating in such functions.
- Helping the poor, orphans, widows, handicapped and sick people of other societies.
- Participating in common Shramadana activities, environmental preservation activities and other demonstrations supporting social benefits in common.

- Helping hospitals and public rest houses.
- Making arrangements for people from other religions to visit our Masjids and observe religious activities, if they wish to do so.
- Being mindful of inconvenience to others in the neighborhood, whilst using loud-speakers, etc. in the Masjids and in any religious institutions.
- Adhering to the Islamic rules and regulations in regard to handling of animals and the tools used for slaughter, and showing kindness towards animals, when sacrificing animals for Qurban, etc. The feelings of the people of other religions should not be aroused by neglecting the abovementioned.
- Guiding the younger generations to respect the religious feelings of people of other religions, and to follow the expected discipline in the event of visiting places of importance to other religions.
- Being well disciplined while using public transport without inconveniencing fellow passengers in any way.
- Showing honesty and generosity in business dealings.
- Maintaining simplicity at ceremonies, functions, events, etc. and not being a hindrance to pedestrians thereby.
- Maintaining Islamic ethics when mingling with people of other religions; trying to remove their misunderstandings in regard to Muslims through our behaviour, and by sharing the teachings of Islam with them.
- Showing patriotism and the National interest in the country in all situations, whilst preserving our religious beliefs and our cultural dimensions.
- Being very vigilant in following our basic beliefs and safeguarding religious boundaries, whilst mingling with people of other religions for building better relationships, as per the guidance mentioned above.

This Council requests all Sri Lankan Muslims to turn to Allah, increase in good deeds and come out of all bad deeds; and to make excessive Thowba & Isthi'far; and to make dua for the protection of the society, the peace & tranquility of the country.

May, Allah Ta'ala, the Almighty, protect the society and our country from all dangers; and, give us success in this world and the Hereafter.

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