



Synopsis of Friday Sermon

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IONA

REPENTANCE

REVITALIZATION OF FAITH
RENEWAL OF COVENANT

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Synopsis of Friday Sermon

Unity in Times of Turmoil and Crisis

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.”

[Aal Imran, 3:103]

At a time of great turmoil and crisis, we are witnessing immense suffering, particularly of our brothers and sisters in Palestine and Lebanon. As they face relentless violence, oppression, and hardship, we are reminded of the critical need for unity. At the same time, we find ourselves in a period of political tension here in North America, where differences in opinions on elections, candidates, and policies have led to divisions within our own communities.

It is essential, now more than ever, that we come together as one Ummah, united in purpose, in faith, and in action. Unity is not just a beautiful ideal; it is a commandment from Allah (SWT) and a crucial principle of our faith. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’an, *“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.”* [Aal Imran, 3:103]

This command is a reminder to cling to the teachings of Islam and to avoid discord that weakens our faith, our resolve, and our influence as a community.

Division among the Muslim Ummah brings about harm and weakness. When we are divided, we become vulnerable to external forces that seek to harm and exploit us. We see this happening globally, where our disunity has left us defenseless in many parts of the world, unable to stand up against injustices that are being perpetrated against our brothers and sisters in Gaza, Lebanon, and beyond.

In these challenging times, it is crucial for us as a Muslim community to stay united and resist any attempts to divide us, whether they come from individuals, organizations, or government agencies. We need to recognize that there is a broader picture - a big picture - that transcends our immediate concerns, interests, or affiliations. Our unity is not simply a strategy; it is a core element of our identity as Muslims. When we stand together, we demonstrate the strength of our faith and our commitment to Allah’s guidance, and we embody the wisdom and values that He has prescribed for us.

Allah reminds us in the Qur'an to cling tightly to the bond of faith. Unity is one of the defining features of a strong community. Although we come from different ethnic backgrounds, speak different languages, have different cultures, and come from diverse regions, we are united by our shared faith in Allah and our love for the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Our diversity is a sign of Allah’s wisdom and mercy, but our shared faith is what binds us together. Our unity goes beyond language, culture, or race; it is founded on our faith, which connects us on a spiritual level that is deeper than any worldly bond.

To emphasize this unity, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) beautifully illustrated the bond between believers by comparing them to a single body. He said, “The believers, in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy, are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever.” (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith shows us that, as believers, we are interconnected and should feel and respond to the suffering of

any member of our Ummah as if it is our own suffering.

This hadith reminds us that the pain, struggles, and challenges faced by any part of our community, whether locally or globally, affect us all. When our brothers and sisters in Palestine or Lebanon are suffering, it is not merely their problem; it is our problem too. Their pain is our pain. Their loss is our loss. If we are truly connected as one body, then their challenges should motivate us to respond with compassion, support, and sincere dua.

In addition to compassion, this unity is a call to action. It means we must prioritize the collective well-being of the community above our individual preferences or personal interests. It means avoiding petty disputes, putting aside differences, and working together with those whose values align with ours, especially in times of political, social, or economic crisis. We cannot afford to allow differences in opinion, political affiliations, or personal ambitions to weaken the unity of our community. Our collective strength and resilience lie in our unity.

By being united, we send a powerful message to the world: we are a people who stand for justice, compassion, and faith. Whether it is through voting, advocating for justice, or raising awareness, every action we take should reflect our commitment to these values. But our choices and actions are more impactful when we are united in purpose.

Ultimately, our faith in Allah (SWT) and our adherence to His guidance are the cornerstones of our unity. When we trust in His wisdom, follow His guidance, and stand together as one, we are empowered to face any challenge, and our community becomes a beacon of light for others. The world needs to see Muslims as united, resilient, and committed to justice. Our unity, especially in times of crisis, is a source of strength, honor, and an embodiment of the mercy and wisdom of Islam. It is only by coming together in solidarity that we can hope to make a meaningful difference.

Unity During Political Tensions and Elections: We may have differences of opinion on which candidates to support or which policies to endorse. These differences are natural; they arise out of varying perspectives, experiences, and priorities. However, we must not allow these differences to divide us or create animosity within our community. Our differences should not compromise the unity of our faith or the cohesion of our Ummah.

Allah (SWT) reminds us in the Qur'an: *“And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.”* [al-Anfal, 8:46]

This ayah warns us that disputes and divisions weaken our strength and resolve. If we turn against one another over political differences, we will lose the power that comes from standing together. Political issues will come and go, but our unity, our brotherhood, must remain intact.

Let us remember that in voting, our goal is to make informed decisions that align with our Islamic principles and values. We must approach the voting process with sincerity, humility, and respect for one another's choices. Let us engage in civil and constructive discussions without belittling or dismissing those who may differ from us.

It is important to vote and participate in civic life with a focus on conscience, justice, and our collective responsibility toward the oppressed. In Islam, our purpose on earth is not only to worship Allah (SWT) but also to act as His stewards, standing up for justice, supporting the oppressed, and opposing all forms of tyranny.

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) emphasized the importance of standing up for justice, saying: “Whoever of you sees something wrong, let him change it with his hand; if he is not able, then with his tongue; and if he is not able, then with his heart—and that is the weakest of faith.” (Sahih Muslim)

In a modern democracy, voting is one of the tools by which we can "change with our hand" which could mean “the ballot” or at least "with our tongue" the wrongs and injustices we see. Voting gives us a voice in shaping policies and electing leaders who will advocate for issues that matter to us as Muslims, including the cause of justice for Palestine and Lebanon. By choosing the right representatives, we can influence decisions that may impact our brothers and sisters abroad and ensure that our society upholds values of justice and humanity.

Vote Your Conscience : The concept of voting your conscience means voting for candidates who best reflect your values, principles, and beliefs. It involves making informed choices based on a commitment to what is right, even if it means standing against mainstream or popular choices. Allah (SWT) reminds us in the Qur'an, *“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives.”* [al-Nisa, 4:135]

This ayah teaches us that justice should be at the core of all our actions, including the act of voting. When we

vote, we are not simply participating in a civic duty; we are fulfilling a responsibility to Allah (SWT) to promote good and prevent harm. Voting our conscience means that we consider the impact of our choices on the oppressed and the vulnerable, including our brothers and sisters in Palestine and Lebanon, who suffer under occupation, displacement, and violence.

In our political climate, we may not always find a candidate who perfectly aligns with all our values. However, it is our duty to evaluate each candidate's stance, particularly on issues of justice, compassion, and foreign policy. While candidates may not always explicitly advocate for Palestine and Lebanon, we can assess whether their values, policies, and track record suggest a commitment to justice and human rights.

When we support candidates who promote fair policies and uphold justice, we are supporting the oppressed. Whether this means endorsing local candidates who support humanitarian aid, advocate for peace, or stand against discrimination, each vote is an opportunity to advance the causes we hold dear.

The Power of Collective Action in Voting: Voting is not just an individual act; it is a collective one. When Muslims come together and vote with a united voice, we demonstrate our values and make our concerns known. By voting with conscience and a shared commitment to justice, we amplify our impact on issues affecting Muslims worldwide, including Palestine and Lebanon. Our collective action as a community allows us to advocate more effectively for policies that support international human rights, oppose war and occupation, and promote peace and equity.

By aligning our votes with our values, we honor the bond of brotherhood and sisterhood that ties us to the global Ummah.

Balancing Local Needs with Global Responsibility: In the upcoming elections, we may feel torn between our local needs and the global crises that call for our attention. We must remember that our local participation can have ripple effects internationally. By supporting candidates who prioritize human rights, accountability, and fair foreign policy, we create an environment where our government can be a force for good on the global stage.

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW) demonstrated the importance of balancing local duties with global awareness. He worked for justice in his community but was deeply concerned about the broader conditions facing humanity. By voting, we follow his example in balancing our immediate responsibilities with our global obligations.

What are the Practical Steps for Voting with Conscience?

- 1. Research Candidates and Their Policies:** Learn about each candidate's stance on issues that affect our community, including foreign policy, human rights, and humanitarian aid. Look beyond rhetoric and examine their voting records, past actions, and endorsements to understand their commitment to justice.
- 2. Prioritize Justice and Compassion:** Choose candidates who promote policies of compassion, fairness, and human rights, even if they don't directly address all our concerns. A candidate's general commitment to justice is likely to impact how they address international issues.
- 3. Vote in All Levels of Government:** Don't just focus on the presidential or high-profile races; vote in local elections as well. Local officials, such as mayors and city council members, can influence policies on law enforcement, community support, and local investments that ultimately affect our unity and strength as a community.
- 4. Engage in Dialogue and Encourage Unity:** Encourage other Muslims to vote with their conscience and to consider the well-being of the global Ummah. When we discuss the importance of voting, let's remind each other of our responsibility to the oppressed and of our potential to make a difference through unified action.
- 5. Make Dua for Guidance and Success:** Finally, pray for guidance in making the right choices, and ask Allah (SWT) to bring about leaders who will be just and fair. As we cast our votes, let us do so with a sincere intention to please Allah and to fulfill our duty to humanity.

Conclusion: Our Responsibility to Act for Justice

As Muslims, we cannot be indifferent to injustice, whether it is happening within our own borders or abroad. The suffering of Palestinians, Lebanese, and others around the world is a painful reminder of our duty to stand for justice, to raise our voices, and to act. Voting is one of the ways we can fulfill this duty, by choosing leaders who have the power to influence policies that promote justice and uphold human dignity.

Let us remember the words of Allah (SWT), “*And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.*” [al-Ma'idah, 5:2]

May Allah (SWT) guide us to make wise choices, to stand firm in the cause of justice, and to support our oppressed brothers and sisters wherever they are. May He unite us in purpose, strengthen our resolve, and accept our efforts for His sake.

Standing United for Justice and the Oppressed

As we witness the suffering of our fellow Muslims in Palestine, Gaza, and Lebanon, we cannot afford to let our differences hold us back from taking a stand for justice. Again, Allah (SWT) says, “*O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives.*” [al-Nisa, 4:135]

Justice is a fundamental value of Islam, and standing united in support of justice is a responsibility upon us. The plight of the Palestinians and Lebanese is not just their struggle; it is our struggle, our responsibility. As long as they are oppressed, we too are oppressed. As long as they suffer, we too must feel that suffering and work to alleviate it.

Our Prophet Muhammad (SAW) emphasized this unity and responsibility when he said, “The believers are like a single structure, bricks of a building, each part strengthening the other.” (al-Bukhari)

Our strength lies in our unity. We are bound by the same principles, the same values, and the same faith. When we stand together, we become a powerful force for change and justice. When we are divided, we lose that strength.

Practical Steps to Foster Unity

- 1. Maintain a Spirit of Respect and Understanding:** Remember that differences in opinion are natural, but they should never lead to hostility. Be respectful and compassionate towards those who may have different views, and remember that we are united by our faith, which is greater than any political difference.
- 2. Engage in Constructive Dialogue:** Engage in meaningful discussions about issues facing our community. Avoid gossip, backbiting, and rumors. Instead, focus on building understanding, finding common ground, and working together toward solutions.
- 3. Prioritize the Collective Good:** During elections and in any decision-making, prioritize what is best for the community and the Ummah as a whole, rather than what serves individual or partisan interests.
- 4. Support Humanitarian Efforts for Palestine and Lebanon:** Use our unity to support those in need. Contribute to relief efforts, raise awareness, and advocate for policies that promote justice and an end to oppression in Palestine, Lebanon, and all areas where Muslims are suffering.

Pray for Unity and Guidance: Make dua for unity in our community and for Allah’s guidance. Seek His help to keep our hearts united and to give us strength in these difficult times. The Prophet (SAW) taught us to make this dua, “O Allah, bring our hearts together and set aright our mutual affairs. Guide us to the paths of peace and save us from the darkness to the light.” (Abu Dawud)

In conclusion, let us remind ourselves of the words of Allah (SWT), “*Indeed, this Ummah of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship (and obey) Me.*” [al-Anbiya, 21:92]

Unity is not just an option for us; it is a command from Allah (SWT). “*And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.*” [Aal Imran, 3:103]

It is the foundation of our strength, our resilience, and our ability to face the challenges of this world.

Let us not allow political differences, disagreements, or external pressures to fracture our community. Let us stand together in solidarity, supporting one another, advocating for justice, and standing firm in our faith.

May Allah (SWT) unite our hearts, strengthen our resolve, and guide us to what is best in this world and the Hereafter. Ameen.

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