

“Bringing All Muslims Together to End Violence Against Minorities”

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Problems in Muslim countries related to sectarian violence have mushroomed in the past few years. There is a lack of peace in Muslim world, even though we vehemently insist that Islam is a religion of peace. We know that these violent practices are contrary to the teachings of Islam. But publicly it is impossible to equate Islam with peace when the very countries that are supposedly practicing Islam have this level of violence.

The ongoing civil war in Syria, invasion of Yemen, Hizbullah's killing in Middle East, attacks on Shia, Sunni, Ahmadi, Ismaili and Christians in Pakistan – are nothing but aggravated versions of sectarian violence. Death of thousands and displacement of millions of all these sects and Christians is the direct consequence. We must plan to protect future American Muslim generations from the scourge of sectarianism by practicing Islamic teachings of peace and tolerance of all faiths.

“As to those who split up their religion and become sects, have thou nothing to do with them; their affair is with God, Hereafter shall He tell them what they have been.” (Q: 6-159)

IQRA (Institute of Quranic Knowledge and inter/intrafaith Religious Acceptance) was established to evoke insightful inter/intrafaith dialogue and serve as the institute that contribute Islamic knowledge to develop peace and harmony among Muslims.

A group of community leaders and Imams representing various denominations and sects are meeting regularly to develop the strategies to achieve our goal. We had 2 Open Forums attended by 100-150 people voicing their opinion in taking concrete steps to develop peace and harmony among various sects of Islam and with people of all faiths.

We agree to raise a strong voice against the killing of the innocent Muslims and other minorities all over the world. The main theme of the second forum was:

“Bringing All Muslims Together To End Violence Against Minorities”

The last open forum was held at Islamic center of Irving, Texas on April 10th 2016. It was attended by Imams and Muslim community leaders representing different Muslim sects and Islamic center. In his opening remarks, **Imam Zia of Irving Masjid** emphasized on the significance of community cohesion beyond all sectarian divides.

Dr M. Basheer Ahmed President Iqra pointed out that during just the last six months, world saw a surge of terrorist killings. This is not counting the killings of Muslims (terrorists and innocent people) by US, Russia, Syria, Iraq, Saudis, Pakistanis, Coalition Forces, etc. Thousands of Muslims, are being killed in the name of Islam by Muslims – for sectarian glory and other reasons. The ever increasing Muslim

bashing by US and Western media and the unabated recruitment of Muslim youth from Europe and the USA to fight for ISIS and other organizations are of serious concern. These are just the precursors of what is to follow – if we do not tend to it proactively.

The Middle East rulers supported and are solely responsible for the surge in sectarian violence. We are still in the comfort Zone and not recognizing the tapings on the door. The press releases and Fatwas did not have any impact. Our efforts are not enough to stop the violence against minorities and innocent people.

The problem of terrorism is very complex. Most of the terrorists call themselves “Muslim” and majority of people killed by terrorists are Muslims. The Qur’an is often being cited by terrorists to justify their inhuman behavior. NOW, they have even started recruiting (through social media) our angry and disenfranchised youth, justifying through religious dogma. Thus, our children, the future Muslim generation, the new minority will have to face the enormous challenges we will be leaving behind. Why should anyone care for them when we never cared for OUR minorities and innocents? **Treat others how you want to be treated. It is time that Muslims be united to face these challenges.**

We should be proactive to teach our children to develop ahmorianous relationship, to show dignity and respect to people of all sects and faiths.

When the Republican front-runner proclaims that Islam “hates us” and “destroys our values” it is portrayed as the opinion of millions of people. This over credence is the root cause of rising Islamophobia. Islam-o-phobes at home and terrorists abroad promote hate and anger. Both are major problems for Muslims. We simply cannot afford to ignore severity of the current state of affairs. We must accept responsibility to stop this bloodshed and promote peace among Muslims so that they are better equipped to cope with even the biggest menace – ISLAMOPHOBIA, which is rising in this election year. **We need NOW a core group of concerned and dedicated Muslims, willing to engage in collective consensus actions so that our community will prevent the turmoil we see today in Europe and the rest of the world.**

Imam Zafar Anjum of Islamic Society of Frisco indicated that the present day terrorism in the Muslim world is nothing new. Glimpses of Islamic History confirm the sectarian violence. Yet, that is not our heritage. Our heritage is based on the examples set by our Prophet Muhammed SAW, who did not allow the killing of even the confirmed munafiqin. In the framework of America we Muslims are still well-off. Granted, there are attacks or desecration of

mosques. Still we should raise the voice of moderation against the growing islamophobia and hatred. The solution is not hatred; accusation and promotion of sectarian divide rather love, caring and acceptance.

Moulana Irteza Naqvi of Institute of Quran & Ahlulbait, Carrolton said, the state of sectarian divide is at a stage that probably only the “kuffar” are calling us “Muslims”. We consider only “OUR” sect as “developed and enlightened”; while other sects of Islam are even ruled out of Muslim umma. Consequently, sectarian rights, especially if in minority, are compromised. One possible way to bring a change can be by integrating our discussion in these forums with our Khutbah every Friday.

Sr. Hind Jarrah President Texas Muslim Women's Foundation emphasized the need for strong participation by all in our DFW area community, but specifically that of our women. Our women are educated, committed, with many recognized as over achievers. Effective participation by our children requires Muslim women to participate.

Br. Azhar Aziz, president ISNA, provided valuable insight into their organizational achievements in improving intra-Muslim understanding, coordination and cooperation. He appreciated the approach taken by IQRA at local level and strongly suggested that they capitalized the work already done by ISNA on national and international levels.

Sr. Fatima Biviji of Bohra community recommended that ladies should exchange contact information and help community to “stick together”. Also suggested that during our religious observation days we should open door to non Muslim neighbors. She shared an experience when one community invited her to their Easter mass. **Br. Qadir Wariach of Ahmadiya community** stated that a majority of US population has no knowledge of Islam or Muslims. It is very important that we involve ourselves and our children with the community at large. Learn about what we each believe correct misunderstandings. Raise voice when necessary. Elaborate on topics like jihad and loyalty.

Br. Aftab Siddiqui of MCC & American Muslim Caucus, reported about the superb cooperation and accommodation of Muslim issues by some legislators. Unfortunately that our Masjid are not taking these issues and political issues.

The revert Muslim Br. Harun Evans quoted a Quranic Ayat and **Br. Asghar Naqvi** quoted **Iqbal** to make the same point, i.e. Allah Doesn't change condition of any nation which doesn't change itself.

Mr. Mujeeb Kazi, Mr Murtuza Sardarwala iqra board members and Other community leaders agreed strongly with goals of IQRA and recommended that we

should. Advertise and promote the already adopted policy by majority of area masjid that their doors are open to all Muslims for prayers (salat), without any distinction of and any questioning about sectarian affiliation. Lack of Media Coverage was questioned. Lot of work remains, before we publish, seek individual or collective recognition. Need for proactive participation by mothers and youth and some practical approaches were discussed and emphasized. This forum is not and will not undertake any intra-faith differences. We should agree to disagree, yet showing unity based on humanity. Differences should not cause animosity. Proactive participation in local elections, community work and other activities of national interest were suggested and strongly recommended.

It was recommended that we proactively participate in National activities, such as Eid, 4th of July and New year's celebration. Let's arrange a large interfaith gathering at Eid (also coinciding with July 4th) hosted by AI Muslims from DFW area.

Imam Zia proposed that if we are successful in achieving our short term goals in DFW area, we should launch a national project. Some notable Imams and community leaders attended were:

- Imam Zia of Irving Masjid,
- Dr M. Basheer Ahmed President Iqra
- Imam Zafar Anjum of Islamic Society of Frisco
- Br. Moazzam Syed Secretary Iqra
- Br. Azhar Aziz, president ISNA
- Moulana Irteza Naqvi of Institute of Quran & Ahlulbait, Carrolton
- Sr. Hind Jarrah President Texas Muslim Women's Foundation
- Sr. Fatima Biviji of Bohra community
- Br. Qadir Wariach of Ahmadiya community
- Br. Aftab Siddiqui of MCC & American Muslim Caucus
- Br. Harun Evans
- Br. Asghar Naqvi
- Br. Aijaz Ahmed Islamic Center, Frisco.
- Dr. Yoshua Sodiq Professor of Islamic studies TCU
- Br. Shah Siddiqui Journalist, poet
- Br. Murtuza Bohra community
- Br. Abdul Hafiz Gamel Ex FBI
- Br. Mujeeb Khalil President/ceo Austin SSI
- Br. Hadi jawad Peace Center Dallas
- Br. Aslam Khan President Islamic Association of Tarrant County
- Br. Muhammed Paracha Proactive & a concerned Citizen, Mid-Cities
- Br. Rizwan Sheikh President & Ameer Islamic Center Frisco Br.
- Muhammad Br. Asil Khan Islamic Association of Plano
- Dr Jari Khan Ahmedia Community
- Sr. Almas Muscatwala Ismaili community
- Dr. Abdool Razack Islamic Association of Tarrant county