

***The utilisation of Islamic principles in the transformation of our society.***

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In the name of Allah, all merciful and compassionate.

Praise is to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and may Allah bestow his blessings and peace upon our master Muhammad, and his family, and his companions.

The action adopted by the trustees of the National Awqaf Foundation of South Africa in initiating this community programme to commemorate the second century of the unbanning of Islam; and religious freedom in South Africa is not only proper but also commendable. As citizens of this wonderful country, we celebrate not only our religious freedom but also a decade of political freedom. The mercy of the Almighty Allah, coupled with the magnanimous gesture of the present government, implore pertinent, constructive and proactive contributions from the Muslim community, a community which unreservedly shares and enjoys the rich and vast resources that we are blessed with.

As a cultural movement, Islam rejects the static view of the universe, and promotes a dynamic exposition. As an emotional system of unification Islam recognises the worth of every individual, and rejects any notion of supremacy. The psychological foundation of human unity is only possible with the realisation that all human life is spiritual in its origin. The dawning of such a realisation is creative of fresh loyalties without the need for ceremonial rewards to keep us alive; and this makes it possible for humanity to emancipate itself all of creation from all forms of subjugation.

The true and supreme function of Islam is the liberation of humanity. The torch bearers of this wonderful faith have at all times shown the

path of righteousness and piety, justice and fair play, to humanity which has been groping in darkness and superstition.

There is no dichotomy in Islam between the temporal and the spiritual; the structure of Islam is essentially religio – political. Thus, Islam has always refused to recognise the artificial compartmentalisation of life into spiritual and temporal sectors. It has treated life as a totality and has considered no aspect of human life too profane to remain within its jurisdiction. It has sought to reform, enable, spiritualise and enrich human life, in its entirety. It is for this reason that Islam has always been not merely a religion in the commonly understood sense of the term but also an ethical ideal plus a certain kind of polity, which is a social structure by a legal system and articulated by a specific ethical ideal. It is primarily for the same reason that according to Allama Iqbal, “Islam has furnished those basic emotions and loyalties which gradually unify scattered individuals and groups and finally transform them into a well defined people.”

These are the very same principles that are espoused in the constitution of our country. The distinguishing features of the constitution is its far reaching commitment to the principle of interdependency of all human beings, and all human rights – civil as well as political, not forgetting economic social and cultural rights. This principle is explicitly endorsed in a number of human rights declarations and resolutions adopted by the international community. It embraces the notion that human rights should be treated holistically in order to promote substantive human welfare and self realisation. This notion finds expression in the principle of interdependency.

The comprehensive social disciplines implored as a way of life through Shar’ia embraces the whole of Muslim life, both in the individual and social spheres. It is the Shar’ia which preserves the essential unity of Islam; which maintains the Muslim as the most law abiding member of society both in private as well as public relations, and insists that the fundamental human values common to all religions must be developed without which life is meaningless.

It is now imperative that the Muslim community proactively generates plans of action where these divine injunctions and noble values can

be shared with the rest of our compatriots. We must never forget that we are emerging from a period in our history during which the humanity of the majority of the inhabitants of this country was denied. They were treated as not having inherent worth, as objects whose identities could be arbitrarily defined by those in power rather than as persons of infinite worth. In short, they were denied their inherent dignity.

As an integral player in the shaping of the destiny of this country, we share an indivisible obligation in transforming the lives of the millions of our compatriots who are beckoning us on a daily basis.

I thank you.