

Address to the AWQAF SA NGO TAX SEMINAR 12 MAY 2002

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Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi-wabarakatu. All praise is due to Allah Who has guided us to this.

The National Awqaf Foundation of South Africa (AWQAF SA) takes pleasure in welcoming you to this NGO Tax Seminar, its first public seminar. Inshallah, with your help and cooperation, many more seminars of interest to the Muslim community will be held in the future.

AWQAF SA is an independent, inclusive, community-based trust providing a range of developmental and financial services designed to empower communities.

The primary aim of AWQAF SA is to establish the Prophetic institution of Waqf throughout the length and breadth of South Africa with the cooperation and collaboration of local communities in all provinces and towns.

The institution of Waqf played a major role especially in the health, education, and welfare sectors of Muslim society across the globe over the glorious history of Islam, as it still does today. However, as a civil society institution, the awqafofmany countries have been absorbed or nationalised and in some instances confiscated by colonial and Muslim governments. In South Africa we are indeed fortunate that it has not happened, The institution of Waqf is not new to South Africa. It is the foundation upon which the Muslim community in South Africa has been built. The story of Muslims in South Africa is an impressive story about the deep commitment of a small minority who have sought to sustain the deepest aspirations of their faith, over a period of more than 300 years, through their own autonomous resources originally generated by Muslim slaves imported in the Cape, indentured labourers of Natal and small traders and hawkers, in the settlements of the northern provinces.

It is indeed a story of deep conflict and trauma for a minority and triumph of the human spirit.

According to the Qur'an, man has a dual responsibility to discharge. One is in relation to himself; the other is in relation to his external world. The one is to acknowledge in thought and action what is styled as huquq Allah or the rights of Allah; the other is to acknowledge equally well huquq-al-ibad or huquq-an-nas, or the rights of the external world of creation.

The former has to express itself in a process of self-development- physical, intellectual and spiritual. In other words, man's primary responsibility is to honour his individual obligations to Allah. The other responsibility lies in developing social conscience and in caring for the welfare of others. This is respecting in one's life and activity the rights of others.

The two terms: *Huquq Allah and Huquq-al-ibad* - may as well be styled as 'obligations to oneself and 'obligations to society'. The two types of responsibilities are not to be regarded as exclusive. They are merely two facets of one and the same attitude towards life, of the same activity proceeding from it. When harmoniously blended, these responsibilities fuse to form amal-l-saleh or righteous work.

This principle of Amal-l-Saleh has manifested itself in the countless charitable endeavours for which the Muslim community of South Africa is renowned. It is also reflected in the simple actions of ordinary people - the unsung heroes and heroines- who

have toiled relentlessly over the years to improve the lot of their brethren, Muslim and non-Muslim.

The contribution of the Muslim community, despite its relatively small size, to the development of a vision of a free and democratic South Africa has been recognised by government and civil society. As with other faiths, Muslims enjoy religious freedom, and are entitled to the fundamental human rights, so long denied to them, and now shared by all citizens. While we share much with our fellow Muslims in Palestine, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, India, Pakistan, indeed with Muslims all over the world, we also possess a unique identity-that of South African Muslims- an identity forged by our common struggle with other South Africans.

However, Muslims are finding that another, more menacing, struggle has replaced the struggle against apartheid. The struggle of increasing poverty in the midst of plenty; the scourge of diseases; rising unemployment; spiralling levels of crime.

The list goes on.

These conditions pose challenges to the Muslim community. We can choose to ignore or dismiss these challenges as diverting us from what we interpret to be adherence to our faith. In so doing, we run the risk of being judged harshly by current and future generations, and by Allah, when we are called to account for our deeds.

Or we can choose to fulfil our spiritual and secular obligations in an integrated ethos of *amal-l-saleh*-unswerving commitment to all human beings, irrespective of race, colour and creed, in the country which we call home- a commitment, which, Inshallah, will yield countless benefits and profound contentment in this world and the Hereafter.

The commitment to which I refer is both at the individual and the collective levels.

AWQAF SA hopes to harness the considerable energy and commitment we believe exists within the Muslim community, and within all of you.

With these few words, we trust that you will enjoy and benefit from this seminar and provide us with positive and constructive feedback. We also make dua that Allah grants us success in all our endeavours. We also ask our Creator to forgive us and grant us the guidance, the will, and the ability to implement the Qur'an and the Sunnah in its totality. We ask Allah to help all Muslims and oppressed people all over. Inshallah Ameen.

Acknowledgements:

The Mind Al-Qur'an Builds

Dr. Syed Abdul Latif

Writings of the late Chief Justice Ismail Mahomed