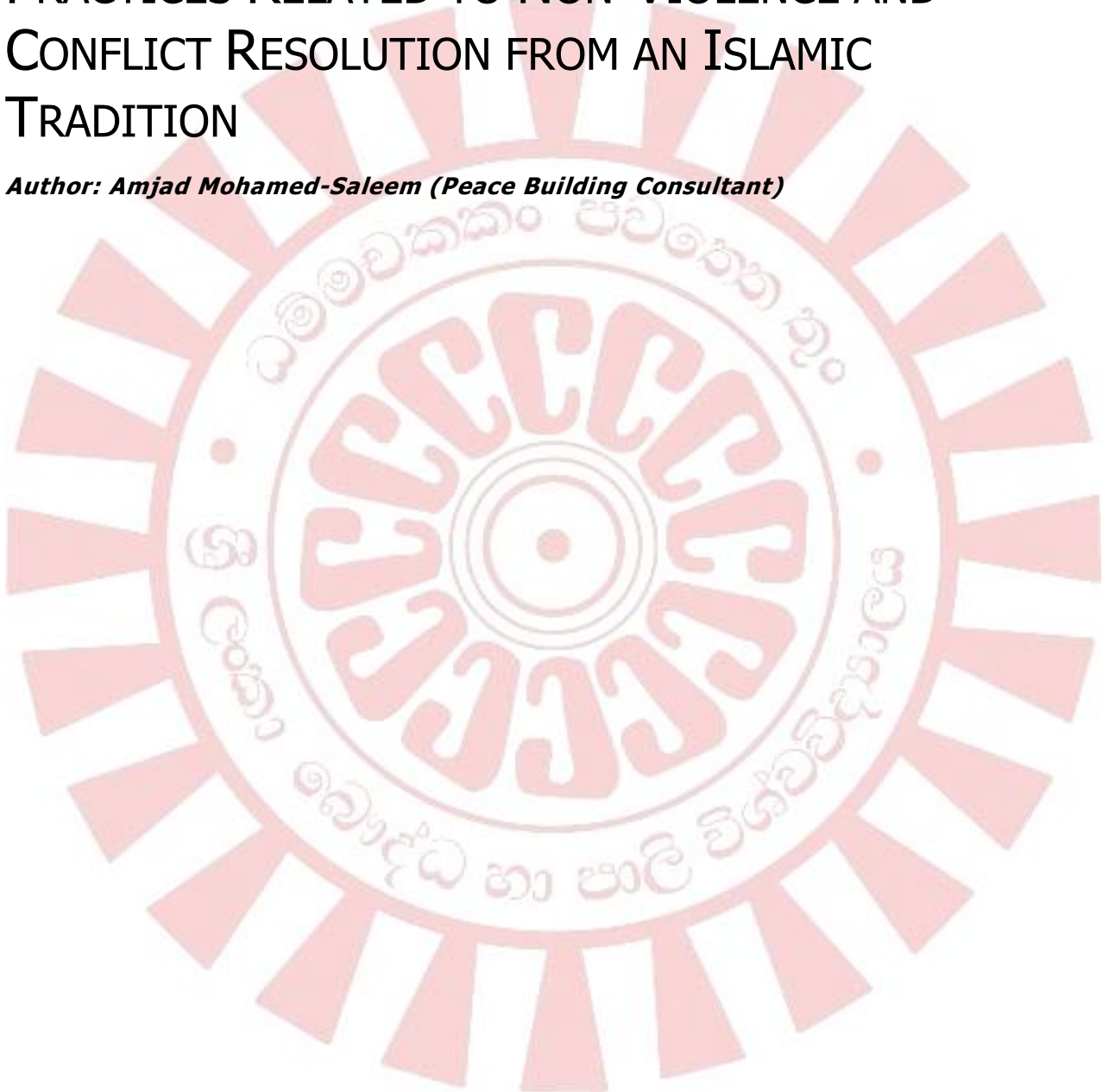

UNDERSTANDING PRINCIPLES AND COMMUNITY PRACTICES RELATED TO NON-VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION FROM AN ISLAMIC TRADITION

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"Faith is a restraint against all violence, let no Mu'min [believer] commit violence".¹

I. INTRODUCTION

Islam as a religion and a tradition is replete with teachings and practices of nonviolence and peace building for example: the nonviolent response to the persecution faced in the first thirteen years of Islam by the early Muslims in Makkah; or by the letters sent by the Prophet (PBUH²) to the great powers of that time which scholars state sought peace and security combined with appeals for voluntary compliance (Crow 2013). "Since its formative years, Muslim communities have been empowered by various Islamic values and principles of peace which has allowed Muslim men and women to resolve their conflicts peacefully and to establish just social, political and economic systems" (Kadayifci-Orellana 2007:85). They have adapted and applied these values and principles to unique day-to-day needs and requirements in their social, political and cultural contexts.

This paper is written to understand broad ethics and teachings on avoiding violent conflict and bloodshed from an Islamic perspective. This paper will thus focus on the Islamic traditions of peace and conflict resolution and argue that nonviolent and the peaceful resolution of conflicts has been an integral aspect of Islamic tradition since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In other words, it seeks to identify the principles which can be used to justify Islamic teachings against violence and a process of resolving conflict.

There are of course, a few caveats that need to be addressed. Firstly, conflict transformation and peace building mechanisms are not owned by any one culture and religious tradition. There is no such thing as 'Islamic' Peace building tools. There are generic peace building mechanisms, tools and theories that have been developed (mainly from the Western perspective), tried and tested. These should be understood and then contextualised for the situation without ignoring or imposing cultural biases. This means that practitioners should be able to utilise religious and social patterns already present in society and integrate that information with appropriate concepts and experiences from the West. This paper recognizes that "Islamic culture is not an 'object' that can be reified into one objective or dimension;" (Abu-Nimer 2003, 5) nor is it distributed uniformly among all Muslims. Culture is not a static entity that can be identified as a constant, but it is always in the making, constantly evolving and changing with the experiences and context of society. Furthermore, there is more than one Islamic culture depending on

¹Sahih Collection of Abu Dawud. See "A Collection of Hadith on Non-Violence, Peace and Mercy" available at <http://www.sufism.org/society/articles/PeaceHadith.htm>

² Peace Be Upon Him

geography and demography as well as various subcultures, within each community. This paper thus recognizes that culture is always psychologically and socially distributed in a group (Avruch 1998). Therefore, conflict resolution practices in different Islamic countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, Afghanistan, and Palestine, amongst others, have various differences due to their unique contexts. Such an understanding of culture allows us to recognize that each Muslim community will have many internal paradoxes, subcultures, and identities. This perspective also recognizes that each Muslim responds to the realities and challenges of life in their own unique way influenced by the many identities and subcultures s/he is a part of. These contextual factors and cultural differences have also led to different understanding of Islamic teachings and practices. In fact, as long as they do not contradict Islamic teachings, local customs (*urf*) are often considered a source of Islamic law.³

In most Muslim communities, Islam plays an important role in social and political life and religion is one of the key components of people's identity both as a cultural framework and as a religious creed. In these societies, Islamic discourse becomes an important source of legitimacy upon which notions of truth, justice and peace are built. Here, Islamic tradition derives its legitimacy by virtue of the sanctity of its roughly 1400-year-old rules and customs derived from its holy texts, such as the Qur'an and the *Sunna* (Prophetic teachings) which contain sacred truths that form the basis for Islamic ethics and inform the actions of the Muslims. Hence resolving conflicts in different Muslim contexts requires an understanding of the dynamic relationship between the Islamic tradition that unites Muslims and the unique geographical, cultural, historical and political contexts of each Muslim community that influences the specific tools employed for resolving conflict in a given situation.

This paper will offer a framework of values, principles and tools to understand peacebuilding and conflict resolution practices in the Muslim world within this dynamic relationship. Lastly while presenting conceptions of peace building, conflict transformation and nonviolence from an Islamic perspective, the paper is cognisant of the fact that currently there is a 'politicised' discourse on 'Islam, Peace and Nonviolence' that has been developed largely by Muslim groups in the West to differentiate themselves from the manifestation of violence and violent rhetoric that has been perpetrated by different Muslim groups (especially since 9/11). Whilst acknowledging this discourse, this paper is not about differentiating between ideologies or contributing to this particular political discourse, rather it is about understanding and recognising the crucial component of conflict resolution and peace building within Islamic practices and traditions.

³ For more details, see Anowar Zahid and Rohimi Shapiee "Customs as a Source of Siyar and International Law: A Comparison of the Qualifying Criteria" in *International Journal of Civil Society and Law* Jan 1, 2010 at www.lawlib.wlu.edu/lexopus/works/265-1.pdf.

II. ISLAMIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF PEACE

Whilst many Muslims recognize that life in the world often involves conflict and that it is inevitable, they also understand that peace is the highest goal.⁴ This itself is seen from examples taken from the life of the Prophet (PBUH) where he was faced with situations of conflict as well as seeking peace. For example, Wahiduddin Khan (1998) notes that there were only three real instances when the Prophet entered into battle (Badr, Uhud and Hunayn) when it became inevitable to engage in physical contact, but the battles lasted for half a day from noon to sun set. Consequently when presented with the chance for peace and to establish the conditions for justice, the Prophet (PBUH) chose to sign the peace treaty known as '*Sulh al-Hudaybiya*' despite unfavourable terms to himself.

Derived from the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, an Islamic conception of peace begins with its attribution as a Divine name since the Arabic word for peace, *as-Salam*, is one of the ninety-nine names of God (Qur'an – Q 59:23). There are many references to peace (*salam, silm, sulh*, etc.) in the Qur'an that suggest that peace, together with justice (*adl*) is a central message of Islam (Q 3:83; 4:58; 5:8; 10:25; 16:90; 41:11; 42:15; 57:25) .

These references also make it clear that peace in Islam is not limited to a negative understanding of peace that is often defined in a passive sense as the absence of war, oppression or tyranny but it actually refers to a process in which human beings strive to establish foundations for interacting with God's creation –human and non-human alike— in harmony and to institute just social, economic and political structures where they can fulfil their potential (Kadayifci-Orellana 2007). Such an understanding of peace thus requires a condition of both internal and external order that encompasses both individual and social spheres as "the individual must be endowed with the necessary qualities to make peace an enduring reality, not only in the public sphere but also in the private domain" (Kalin, 2010: 8). This approach seeks to attain peace through nonviolent means rather than violence. According to proponents of nonviolence in Islam, nonviolence is the preferred method in Islam to address all forms of violence, as the Qur'an commands⁵.

The Qur'anic conception of peace has been best put into practice by Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) attitude towards peace and his diplomacy, which can be epitomised as the "reconciliation of hearts" (Troger 1990, 17). Troger states that "coming to terms with adversaries and enemies and the contractual guaranteeing of agreements were corner-stones of [the Prophet's] policy" (*Ibid.*), and that he preferred peaceful regulation of conflicts and peaceful resolution of enmity.

⁴ Zakzouk, Mahmoud Hamdy (1996) "Peace from an Islamic Standpoint: World Peace as Concept and Necessity" Arab Republic of Egypt , Ministry of Al-Awqaf (Endowments), Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and Center for Islamic Studies and Encyclopedia at http://www.islamic-message.net/admin/Books/Peace_from_an_Islamic_Standpoint.pdf.

⁵The Qur'an states: "*Fight for the sake of those that fight against you, but do not initiate aggression*" (Q 2:190). The message of Islam is summarised by the verse that supports the concept of preserving life: "*And if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved all humanity*" (Q 5:32).

ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

There are various components (values, principles, and practices) that can lead to peace in human life. Adopting, implementing, and living by these values and principles is a necessary part of fulfilling the Islamic faith. All of these values and principles rooted in the Qur'an and put into practice by the Prophet (PBUH), inform the Islamic understanding of peace and nonviolence.

1) PLURALISM, DIVERSITY, AND HUMAN SOLIDARITY THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF *TAWHID* (THE ONENESS OF GOD):

Discrimination based on religious, ethnic, racial or gender differences is often one of the main factors that contribute to conflicts. The Islamic tradition in general and the Qur'anic narrative explicitly states that existence of diversity (e.g. different religions and nations) is God's design that has to be celebrated. For instance the Qur'an states:

"To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what God hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute" (Q5:48)

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into Nations and tribes, that Ye may know each other (Not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you." (Q49:13)

Thus Islamic texts clearly call for solidarity and collaborative action as well. Social solidarity in Islam is reflected in the idea of brotherhood, particularly in the concept of the *ummah* (nation / community) as the following *hadith* highlights "The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion & sympathy are just like one body, when one of the limbs is afflicted, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness & fever"⁶. However, solidarity and collaborative action are not limited to interactions with fellow Muslims only. Islam stresses that the source of creation is one, and thus the whole of humanity is a single family descending from a single mother and father (i.e. Adam and Eve). Therefore all human beings are brothers and sisters in humanity.

The Islamic ideal of diversity, pluralism, and brotherhood is rooted in the Qur'anic principle of *Tawhid* and *Wihdat al Wujud*, (principle of unity of God and all being). Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2003, 31) notes that the term "*Tawhid* has two meanings 'the state of unity or oneness' and 'the act of making one or integration'". While the state of unity, oneness and uniqueness belongs to God only, God's creation participates in multiplicity. Therefore to exist in the world is to live in the domain of diversity (*Ibid.*). At the level of diversity and multiplicity, the second meaning of *Tawhid* signifies integration,

⁶Narrated by: Al-Bukhari, Muslim & Ahmad.

connectedness, and unity. The interdependency and interconnectedness of humans is thus a central aspect of this Islamic value and principle.

Throughout Islamic history, the notion of *Tawhid* encouraged Muslims to integrate both the individual and the society without destroying cultural and ethnic differences. In fact, *Tawhid* reminds Muslims of the connectedness of all beings, particularly all human communities, and calls on Muslims to work towards establishing peace and harmony among them.

It is important to remember that the Islamic notion of *Tawhid* is not just limited to relations within and between human beings only, but among all God's creation, including animals and plants as "human disobedience results in even consequences for the whole of creation." (Chittick 1990, 152).

2) UNIVERSALITY, DIGNITY AND SACREDNESS OF HUMANITY THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF *FITRAH* (THE ORIGINAL NATURE OF HUMAN BEINGS):

From a nonviolence and peacebuilding perspective, each human being has dignity and human life is valuable and must be protected. Islamic traditions affirm the sacredness of human life and recognizes the worth and dignity of each human being. For instance the Qur'an states, "And if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (Q5:32).

According to Islamic traditions, every human being is created in accordance with the form and image of God (al Hakim 1998, 5) and human spirit is of divine origin. This perspective holds that every human being is created "innocent, pure, true and free, inclined to right and virtue and endowed with true understanding about... his [or her] true nature..." (Sharify-Funk 2001, 279). Thus the idea of *Fitrah* rejects notions of innate sinfulness, and recognizes all humans are related and derive from the same pure origin as the Qur'an says:

"O mankind! Revere your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women -- fear Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you." (Q 4:1)

This principle recognizes the goodness that is inherent in each and every human being at birth, regardless of different religious, ethnic, racial, or gender backgrounds (Q 17:70, 95:4, 2:30-34, 33:72). The *Fitrah* does not judge the wrong or right of human faith but rather evaluates the moral righteousness of the actions and thus has the capacity to relate and integrate individual responsibility with spiritual and moral awareness (Abu-Nimer 2003).

The *Fitrah*, moreover, recognizes that each individual, irrespective of his or her gender, is furnished with reason and has the potential to be good and to choose to work for the

establishment of harmony. Thus reason must be honoured since reason is the mechanism by which moral choices of right and wrong are made. According to the Qur'anic tradition, this faculty enables human beings to accept the 'trust' of freedom of will, which no other creature is willing to accept (Q33:72). Reason is also one of the ways through which humans understand the divine message and can implement it⁷ (Senturk 2004, 14) and hence the rational mind rooted in *Fitrah* is one of the sources of guidance for human beings. Whilst it is hard to singularly find examples of where the concept of *Fitrah* has been singled out as a 'cause' for preventing or de-escalating conflict, the story of 'The Imam and the Pastor' (Henderson 2009) speaks volumes to the concept of going back to the source to understand commonality and to discover common approaches that question the cost of violence.

As a central principle of peace and conflict resolution, the *Fitrah* reminds Muslims that, irrespective of gender, religion, race, etc, all human beings are created in the image of God, therefore they are all sacred. It also reminds Muslims that, only God knows the heart of a human being, and therefore He is the only judge (*Hakeem*), and that at any point in his or her life time, each individual, no matter what they have done in their lifetime, has the potential to repent and turn to God. As such, it is a safeguard against killing, torturing and dehumanizing the "other".

3) SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT BY DOING GOOD (KHAYR AND IHSAN) THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF KHILAFAH (STEWARDSHIP):

Peacebuilding requires the involvement and social empowerment of community members to take action to transform the conflict. "Social empowerment and involvement through *ihsan* and *khayr* are also important paths to justice and peace in the Islamic tradition" (Abu-Nimer 2003: 55). Kalin (2005) notes that in the context of Islamic theology and philosophy the questions of peace and violence are treated under the rubric of good and evil (*husn/khayr* and *sharr/qubh*). He adds that, "war, conflict, violence, injustice and discord are related to the problem of evil" (Kalin 2005, 339). It is the responsibility of human beings to do good and strive to ward off evil.

The Qur'an recognizes the capacity of human beings to do good in the face of adversity and evil and to change their conditions as it is stated in the Qur'an "*surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition.*" (Q13:11) This therefore empowers them to change their condition by doing good and shunning evil. This is also supported by the Qur'anic verse (9:71) that clearly urges Muslims to forbid evil and do good. The *hadith* "*Whoever sees something evil should change it with his hand. If he cannot, then with*

⁷ The rational mind (Aql) is only one of the ways through which a believer understands truth and the message of Islam. Other ways include the Qalb (heart) (Surah 53:11) and the Lubb (heart of hearts, pure intellect, inner most core, through which a believer understands Truth) (Surah 3:190),

his tongue; and if he cannot do even that, then in his heart. That is the weakest degree of faith"⁸, also emphasizes the importance of social empowerment to do good and forbid evil.

Social empowerment and involvement to do good is closely tied to the Qur'anic principle of *Khilafah* (stewardship or vicegerency). According to Islamic theology, when God created human beings, He made them His vicegerents or representatives on earth as the Qur'anic verse "*God has promised to those among you who believe and do good that He will establish them as (His) vicegerents*" (Q24:55), clearly shows. Thus each individual as a representative of God on earth (*khilafat Allah fi l-Ard* (Q2:30, see also 33:72)) is responsible for the order thereof⁹ and to contribute towards bringing all creatures under the sway of equilibrium and harmony and to live in peace with creation (Chittick 1990).

Islamic teachings regard peace work as a collective responsibility. In fact, as Abu-Nimer (2003, 71) states, "peacebuilding in Islam is based on a framework of deeply embedded religious beliefs regarding individuals' responsibility for their actions and their active participation in larger social contexts". Muslims are thus expected to further maintain good and honourable interpersonal relationships (*Ibid.*). The Qu'ran "promotes social responsibility and positive bonds between people because of their common ethical responsibility towards one another" (Sachedina 2001, 76). Nasr (2004, 159-160) supports this view when he notes that in the Islamic tradition, "human community is judged according to the degree to which it allows its members to live a good life based on moral principles".

4) PURSUIT OF JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF *ADL* (JUSTICE)
Peacebuilding perspectives recognize that justice (*adl*) is central to establishing sustainable peace. As a form of structural violence, unjust social, political and economic systems often deprive communities of their basic needs and rights and lead to grievances and resentment. As such, they are often a major cause of conflict. Therefore, just social, political and economic systems and institutions are a prerequisite for resolving conflicts.

Justice is an integral aspect of the Islamic discourse of peace, since the Qur'an clearly states that the aim of religion is to bring justice: "*We sent aforesaid Our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the book and the balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice.*" (Q 57:25). Thus the Qur'anic conception of peace cannot be attained unless a just order is first established. Kadayifci-Orellana (2007, 102) observes that, "justice is the overriding principle and it must transcend any consideration of religion, animosity, race, or creed". From an Islamic point of view without justice, there can be no peace "for peace is predicated upon the availability of equal rights and opportunities for all to realize

⁸ On the authority of Abu Sa'id (R.A).

⁹ Kadayifci-Orellana, forthcoming p.102.

their goals and potentials” (Kalin 2010:8). Muslims are asked to resist and correct the conditions of injustice, which are seen as a source for conflict and disorder on earth (Q 27:52). Justice is the essential component of peace according to the Qur’anic message, therefore it is the responsibility of all Muslims to work towards the establishment of justice for all, including social and economic justice (Q4:135; Q 57:25; Q5:8; 2:178; Q2:30; Q16:90). This notion of justice extends to both men and women, Muslim and non-Muslim, and cannot be achieved without an actively, socially engaged community.

The Qur’an constantly reminds Muslims about the value of justice, which is a Divine command, and not an option. The Qur’anic notion of justice is universal and valid for all human beings with the universality of justice being clearly expressed in the following Qur’anic verses:

"O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah even as against yourselves, your parents or your kin, and whether It be (against) the rich and poor..." (Q4:135);

"...To fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just for it is Next to Piety..." (Q5:8);

The Prophet (PBUH) calls Muslims to mobilize and act against injustice, even if a Muslim originates the injustice (Abu Nimer 2003). The universality of justice for all, not only for Muslims, is critical for the resolution of conflicts and developing peaceful relations as it calls upon Muslims to be self-reflexive, self-critical, humble and to accept responsibility for one’s actions.

5) TRANSFORMATION OF RELATIONSHIPS AND REHUMANISATION THROUGH THE PRINCIPLES OF *RAHMAN AND RAHIM* (COMPASSION AND MERCY)

Conflict and violence often involves the creation of an enemy through the process of dehumanization, where the opponent is stripped from his or her human qualities. Dehumanization makes atrocities such as rape, murder, torture and mutilation, among others, possible during conflicts, as the ‘opponent’ is no longer viewed as a human being. Scholars and practitioners of conflict resolution agree that transforming this relationship from one of enmity to a peaceful coexistence requires a re-humanization of the ‘other.’ The Qur’anic principles of *Rahman* (Compassion) and *Rahim* (Mercy) are two main tools that can facilitate this process.

Rahman and *Rahim* are invoked by every Muslim before they take any action when they recite: “*Bi-ism-i- Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim*” (“We begin in the name of Allah Who is Compassionate and Merciful”) as a reminder that actions must be dedicated to God, who is Himself merciful and compassionate. The centrality of compassion and mercy is evident in the Qur’an as almost all chapters start with this recitation and God states “*My mercy extends to all things*” (Q 7:156). Moreover, according to a famous *Hadith Qudsi*, God states:

"Without doubt My mercy precedes My wrath," which is one of the crucial principles of Islamic thought.

Mercifulness and compassion are key qualities of the Prophets as well. The Qur'an refers to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as "*Mercy to the World*" (Q 21:107), thus, as the Messenger of God, he represents Universal Mercy. Besides pointing out that God is most forgiving, compassionate and merciful, the Qur'an asks Muslims to be merciful and compassionate to all creatures: animals, plants and humans (Q 17:18). As the *Hadith*—"God is not merciful to him who is not so to mankind" indicates, especially those seeking God's mercy should be merciful themselves. Thus, a true Muslim must be merciful and compassionate to all human beings, irrespective of their ethnic, religious origins, or gender.

The salience of these values, together with the principle of sacredness of life, re-humanises the other by reminding Muslims that all human beings are sacred and must be protected. Therefore, a true Muslim cannot be insensitive to the suffering of other beings (physical, economic, psychological, or emotional), nor can one be cruel to any creature, and torture, inflicting suffering or wilfully hurting another human being or another creature is unacceptable according to Islamic tradition.¹⁰

6) RECONCILIATION AND HEALING THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF *AFU* AND *MUSAMAHA* (PARDONING AND FORGIVENESS)

Peacebuilding processes require reconciliation and the healing of wounds and painful memories of war and conflict. Reconciliation and healing are key elements in Islamic traditions of peace. In this process, the Qur'anic principle of *afu*, or pardoning (which is a term that does not just mean forgiveness but something more comprehensive), plays a central role.

The principle of *afu*—considered as an act of *ihsan* (goodness)—is repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'an which urges Muslims to adopt *afu* as a way to reconcile. The Qur'an stresses that forgiveness is of a higher value than maintaining hatred or vengeance as the believers are urged to forgive when they are angry (Q42:37). Said, Funk, and Kadayifci (2001, 8) note that, "there is a clearly articulated preference in Islam for nonviolence over violence, and for forgiveness [*Musamaha*] over retribution" (Said et al. 2001, 8)." The Qur'an relates that human life on earth started with an act of forgiveness by God (Q2:36-38). The Qur'anic verse, "*the recompense of an injury the like thereof: but whosoever forgives and thereby brings about a reestablishment of harmony, his reward is with God; and*

¹⁰ For more information on this see: Ralph H Salmi, Cesar Adib, Majul, and George K. Tanham. '*Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practices*' (University Press of America. Lanham. 1998), and Majid Khadduri. '*Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani's Siyar*.' The John Hopkins Press. Baltimore. MD. (1966)

God loves not the wrongdoers" (Q42:40), advocates sincere forgiveness as the preferred path to establish God's harmony on earth.

Islamic principles of forgiveness also urge Muslims to acknowledge their own wrongdoing, repent and ask for forgiveness because the Qur'an informs Muslims that serving the Divine is the way to implement repentance (*tawba*), through which "the arrogant and jealous self, melted in the furnace of self-reproach, reforms in remorse and turns toward God by seeking the forgiveness of one's fellow human beings" (Sachedina 2000). Even the Prophet (PBUH) himself was told by God to forgive in the Qur'anic verse "*Keep to forgiveness (O Muhammad) and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant*" (Q7:99).

Muslims have recognized that "The most gracious act of forgiving an enemy is his who has the power to take revenge" (Saiyidain 1994). The centrality of forgiveness was illustrated by the Prophet (PBUH) himself when he forgave all those who previously had persecuted and fought him, when he entered Mecca and stated "There is no censure from me today on you (for what has happened is done with), may God, who is the greatest amongst forgivers, forgive you."¹¹ It is this attitude of forgiveness which was the basis of his reconciliation efforts to establish peace between the Muslims and the Meccans, who had fought them previously, which allowed him to win over friends among his former enemies.

7) NONVIOLENT AND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF *SABR* (PATIENCE)

Another critical value, which informs the Islamic conception of peace, is patience (*sabr*). Patience is the focus of about 200 verses of the Qur'an and is referred to indirectly in many others. It is one of the core subjects of the Scriptures and "is a virtue of believers, who are expected to endure enormous difficulties and still maintain a strong belief in God" (Abu-Nimer 2003, 73). The Qur'an urges Muslims to suspend judgment and be patient as the verse states, "*And endure patiently whatever may befall thee.*" (Q 31:17). God asks believers to be steadfast and promises deliverance to those who endure these difficulties with patience: "*And We made a people, considered weak (and of no account), inheritors of lands in both the east and the west, - lands whereon We sent down Our blessings. The fair promise of thy Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel, because they had patience and constancy, and We levelled to the ground the great works and fine buildings which Pharaoh and his people erected (with such pride)*" (Q7:137). In another verse the Qur'an has all the Prophets speak: "*And we shall surely bear with patience all the harm you do us*" (Q14:12-13).

Yet, the Qur'an does not ask Muslims to remain passive in the face of oppression and injustice. On the contrary, it asks Muslims to engage in active struggle (*jihad*) to establish peace and harmony. However, Muslims must not transgress in their struggle and must

¹¹ Based on Ibn Sa'd. *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, Vol II., p. 142 Beirut 1957 cited in K. G. Saiyidain *Islam: The Religion of Peace* 2nd edition. (New Delhi: HarAnand Publications, 1994), p. 93.

also be patient. The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said during the Farewell Pilgrimage: "The fighter in the way of God is he who makes jihad against himself (*jahada nafsa*) for the sake of obeying God." Taming their tendency to transgress, these *mujahidin* (people who undertake *jihad*) exert energy to overcome the selfish promptings of their egos. For this reason, the Qur'an equates them with "the patient ones" (*sabirin*): "We shall put you on trial so that We know those among you who strive in the cause of God (*mujahidin*) and are the patient (*sabirin*)" (Q 47:31).

Patience (*sabr*) according to Wahiduddin Khan (1988), makes a person capable of finding a positive and successful solution to a problem. He states that "patience is set above all other Islamic virtues with the exceptional promise of reward beyond measure" (Wahiduddin Khan 1988, 1). He further states that the entire spirit of the Qur'an is in consonance with the concept of patience. Patience, he states, implies a peaceful response or reaction, whereas impatience implies a violent response. He continues, adding that the word *sabr* expresses the notion of nonviolence as it is understood in modern times. As such it is the opposite of violence. In this context, "jihad" refers to nonviolent activism, while "*qital*" is violent activism. To support this view he invokes the Qur'anic verse "perform jihad with this (i.e. the word of the Qur'an) most strenuously." (Q 25:52). Since the Qur'an is not a sword or a gun, but a book of ideology, performing *jihad* could only mean an ideological struggle to conquer peoples' hearts and minds through Islam's superior philosophy (*Ibid*).

8) QUEST FOR PEACE THROUGH THE *HUBB* AND *MAWADDA* (PRINCIPLE OF LOVING-KINDNESS)
Islam obligates its believers to seek peace in all aspects of their lives, for the ideal society that the religion seeks to create is not only just but peaceful. Loving-kindness is an important component of peacebuilding as it helps transform former enemies into friends and establish healthy relations based on respect and understanding.

Loving-kindness is an important aspect of peacebuilding in Islam that is rooted in the conceptions of *Hubb* (love) and *Mawadda* (loving-kindness). Since *al-Wadud* (the Loving-kind) is one of the 99 names of God, the source for humans to love one another and all creation is rooted in the loving nature of God Himself. This perspective contends that *love* is the function of human beings. The Sufi poet Rumi alludes to the significance of love in his famous *Masnawi* as the attraction that draws all creatures back to reunion with their Creator.¹²

Love comes from God and is often associated with peace, mercy and forgiveness and is a sign to be reflected upon. For example, the Qur'anic verse Q30:21 reads: "And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love [*mawadda*] and mercy between your [*hearts*]: Verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." Transforming enmity into love is a sign of mercy of God and emphasizes the

¹² First 18 verses of Masnavi

importance of transforming hostile relations into love and friendship. The Qur'anic verse (Q60:7) states: *"It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship) [mawadda] between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For Allah has power (over all things); and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."* Linkages between peace and God's love are also clear in other verses that call for restraining anger, forgiveness, and justice, all key components of peace according to Islamic tradition (Q3:134; Q5:96; 60:8).

III WAY FORWARD

This paper has thus focused on the Islamic tradition of conflict resolution and peacebuilding and analysed some the main Islamic values and principles that inform this tradition.

Based on the above discussed selected set of values and principles, the Islamic understanding of peace can be defined as a process in which human beings can establish foundations for interacting with each other and with nature in harmony, instituting just social-economic structures where human beings can flourish and fulfil their potential.

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