

## **Khutbah on Partaking in the 2019 General Election**

### **PART ONE:**

Al-salamu `alaykum,

We thank Allah (swt) for the opportunity He gives us every Friday to communicate with each other on issues that affect us and are of concern to us. Today's topic is one that very much falls in this area and is about something that affects all of us directly.

As residents of the UK, we should all be aware that we are having a General Election on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December.

We hope that when we come for Salat al-Jumu`ah and listen to the Khutbah we will learn lessons that will help us change our practice and transform our lives. Today's lesson is about all of us. It is about the responsibility we all have. It is about our collective role in doing something by being an active member of our British society.

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

*"Indeed, Allah (does) not change the condition of a people, until they change what (is) in themselves."* (Al-Ra`d (Thunder), 13:11).

### **What did the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) teach about engaging politically?**

Participating in public life in the UK is actually following the *sunnah* and tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). When the *muhajirun* (Makkan refugees and migrants) first arrived in Madinah, the Prophet ordered them to actively contribute in forming the Madinan society. Remember that at the time, diverse communities lived in Madinah. It was now becoming more and more diverse with the new arrivals.

By encouraging the *muhajirun* and the people of Madinah to collectively get involved in society and community life, the Prophet helped them all:

- To develop a sense of belonging
- To feel safe in a dramatically changing society. We know that change can sometimes frighten people and make them feel insecure.
- To feel like a stakeholder in creating social cohesion
- To live in harmony as one society with all its diversity
- To resolve conflict and disagreement through dialogue and with wisdom and humility
- To accept differences and see them as a fundamental and healthy ingredient in every society

As Muslims, we are a minority faith community in the UK. We are constantly under the media spotlight and in most instances portrayed negatively. It is only by being positive through our attitude, behaviour and actions that we can counterbalance this injustice. Our neighbours and colleagues of other faiths or no faith will then realise that what they hear and see in the media is not true. It is up to all of us to show them a positive image of Islam and of Muslims - **actions speak louder than words!**

Participating in elections and using our vote is a very influential way of getting involved in societal life. It ensures that we are actively engaged and using our voice in a positive way.

### **The risk of not participating**

On the other hand, if we do not participate and use our vote we will be responsible for the unhealthy outcomes of any elections. Our failure to vote for the right candidates can mean that some others will win the elections easily; and if they have discriminatory policies or attitudes, then that would impact the whole of society, including Muslims.

Whenever we decide not to vote we are contributing to the erosion of the moral and ethical values of our country's socio-economic and political policies, both domestic and foreign.

It is vital that we get involved and encourage our children of voting age to get involved. The youth need to feel that they are part of a community, a society; and that they are part of a change for improvement. This natural feeling is part of their normal emotional development. Support them to be involved in the civic life of our country otherwise there is a real risk that they will become disenfranchised. And if that happens, then they are more likely to be attracted to deviant ideologies and evil people.

When we live in a country for any period of time and make it our home where we work and raise our families, we should all naturally feel a sense of belonging to that land. This attachment to the land will become stronger only when we engage with the issues that face us all, and participate in the systems through which our country is governed. The *muhajirun* felt a very strong sense of belonging to Madinah, their new and adopted home. When Makkah was liberated, they were free to return back to their place of birth yet many chose to remain, as did the Prophet himself and it is there in Madinah that he was buried after his death. He demonstrated to all of us that religion or faith does not bind anyone to a geographic piece of land. A believer can make a home and belong to any society.

*Alhamdulillah*, we enjoy many freedoms in our country. Sadly, the rise of certain politicians with divisive agendas in the UK and in Europe is threatening these freedoms. The restrictions on Muslim dress codes, Muslim dietary requirements and the constant demonization of Islamic practices are a growing reality in many countries including our own. Let us not ignore this menace and brush it off as just mere scare mongering. We can and must use our vote carefully in our local, national and European elections to ensure that those candidates who are most suitable and who will serve us best get our votes. That is a sure way of ensuring that candidates who are not suitable to govern and represent us are removed and stopped from power. Voting is a most vital tool to safeguard our rights.

### **If we want to see change**

If we want to see change and improve the situation for ourselves and for our future generations, we have to become that change. We have to avoid falling into a mind-set of victimhood and always pointing the finger at others. We ourselves have to bring about this change for all of society. The Prophet (pbuh) never saw himself as a victim, but rather as part of a gradual movement for change in which he played his part.

He remained hopeful, patient and steadfast knowing that change was slow. Indeed, patience is a virtue. This hadith emphasises our duty and our role as active citizens:

*The Prophet (pbuh) was asked, "When is the Day of Judgement?". He replied, "When the trust is squandered then wait for the Hour." They asked, "And how will the trust be wasted?" He replied, "When the affairs (of the people) are handed to those who are not worthy of it; then wait for the Hour [for its time is close]."*

We need Muslims in all our communities to be awake to the issues happening around us. We need to come together and exercise our right to vote in the upcoming General Election on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December.

## **PART TWO:**

Having been reminded about the importance of participating in the upcoming General Election on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December, let us now look at some of the wider things we can all do to be engaged ourselves, as well as encourage our family members and friends also to be engaged.

### **Practical steps**

1. **Educate** ourselves and other Muslims about the reality of life in the UK, and about what the upcoming elections mean to our future. It is important to realise that there is a challenge and there is a need to learn more.
2. **Register to vote** before 26<sup>th</sup> November. Make sure we are all registered to vote; and make sure all the eligible members within our household are also registered. If anyone has a) moved address or b) changed their name since the last election, then they may need to register to vote again. This can be done online at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)
3. **Encourage** our friends and wider family to register as well. This must be done before 26<sup>th</sup> November; and can be done within 5 minutes online. It is so easy!
4. **Initiate discussion** within our circles of family, friends and colleagues about the upcoming elections, and what they mean to you. What are the issues that affect you directly? Housing, Employment, student fees? And what are the issues that affect you as a Muslim that you want your prospective representative politicians to address? Islamophobia? Discrimination? Housing? Employment? Talking about the issues will help us make an informed decision about who to vote for.
5. **Challenge bad policies** and detrimental rhetoric that any of the politicians may hold. Do this by participating in debates and hustings events when you get a chance to do so. It is important to note that *masajid* and *imams* **cannot** tell you who to vote for. This is a decision that you need to make. But, you have a responsibility to make the right decision, as this will affect you, your community and the whole country.
6. **Engage with public life.** Muslims need to be more politically active; vote in elections and participate in supporting parties and contacting their MPs. At grassroots level; it is also important to show solidarity to different causes by participating in peaceful demonstrations whilst always keeping within the law. Encourage engagement with daily politics and daily life.

Politics is not a dirty word; and it is only right that more and more Britons engage to make the UK's democracy more reflective of the people. It is vital that we have a proper representative democracy. This can only happen if the constituents, that means you and I, get involved and hold to account those who speak and make decisions on our behalf.

7. **Participate in societal life** - the attitude of belonging needs to be nurtured into our young and upcoming generations. There needs to be a sense of caring and sharing. It's not just about which

football team people support or what their favourite food is. But it's about the attitude of belonging. We must not allow the rhetoric that Muslims are alien to Britain, or that they belong elsewhere. This can only happen when there is clear rebuttal of these claims.

We must all reach out to others in dialogue and collaboration to help them see that we are not alien but that we belong here and are proud to call this country our home. Dialogue builds understanding and partnerships instil care. Through inter faith work and collaborating with those with shared interests, huge barriers can be broken *insha'Allah*. There are just some areas of life in which we can work together with others.

These are not just restricted to matters of religion, but extend to a wide spectrum of issues from human rights to caring about the environment; and from healthy lifestyle campaigns to lobbying for a living wage. Whatever the issue, it's good to work together.

8. **Share your thoughts** about this topic on social media websites. This one might be more for young people. It is important that our voices are heard, if not in the realm of the media then at least on social media websites: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram! Share your experiences and thoughts about the upcoming elections.

Too often we complain about the negative media portrayal; and it's our right to complain. However, to avoid becoming someone who just moans about everything, we must couple our complaints with action. With the advancement of social media and ultrafast broadband and mobile data services, everyone should and can have a say. You can air your views and you can speak about issues. Social media has given you a voice, so use it.

## **CONCLUSION:**

To conclude: the 2019 General Election on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December is an important avenue for us to partake in British Public life; and to make our voices heard. Let's not waste our votes. Register today, and make your vote count.

May Allah give us the strength to do this.

**“O you who believe, If you help aid (the Deen) of Allah, Allah will aid you, and make you stand firm.”<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Holy Quran: The Chapter of Muhammad