

Khutbah on Islamophobia

PART ONE:

إن الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا ومن سيئات أعمالنا ، من يهده الله فلا مضل له ومن يضلل فلا هادي له وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله يا أيها الذين ءامنوا اتقوا الله حق تقاته، ولا تموتن إلا وأنتم مسلمون.

My dear respected brothers / sisters,

As you know, the *Jumuah Khutbah* (Friday Sermon) is one of the ways that we – as a Muslim Community – communicate with each other on issues that affect us and are of concern to us. Today’s topic is one which very much falls in this area. It is about something that affects us all, whether directly or indirectly. And it is a big danger to our society. Today’s topic is about Islamophobia; and how we should, and can respond to it. This month is Islamophobia Awareness Month. It is a significantly important month, in which we can further highlight the dangers of Islamophobia, and promote good responses to it. It is very important because Islamophobia is **real** and it affects lives, on a daily basis.

We come to *Jumuah* and listen to the *Khutbah* so that we can learn and change our practice. Therefore, this *Khutbah* is about YOU. It’s about the responsibility YOU have; and about your role in doing something about this growing disease in our society.

We consider Islamophobia a *growing* disease; because like any disease, if left untreated, it can further spread and cause irreversible damage.

What is Islamophobia? Basically, Islamophobia is a manifestation of racism and xenophobia¹. It falls in the same category as ALL types of discrimination against people who are different. It comes from the same source. It starts out as fear. Fear leads to hatred. Hatred manifests as abuse, which includes violence.

Islamophobia is when people give Muslims a real hard time, because they **are** Muslim. Whether this is done by ridiculing them, inciting people against them, bullying them, or even attacking them, just because that person identifies herself/himself as a Muslim – and it is on the rise. And it’s getting **worse**.

I say “herself” before “himself”, because Muslim women are targeted more, especially because of their clothing which makes them more identifiable as Muslims.

I am not going to give you examples of Islamophobia, or tell some of the horrific stories reported, because time is short. You can access these stories widely by reading the news or searching the internet.

Why do we need to act?

The Prophet (ﷺ) said²:

“The believers, in their mutual mercy, love and compassion, are like a (single) body; if one part of it feels pain, the rest of the body will join it in staying awake and suffering fever.”

We cannot sit back, because it isn’t happening to us personally.

We cannot ignore the problem, because our children, parents, families and relative are not victims.

Muslims are compassionate for everyone, and should be sympathetic to human sufferings. Islamophobia is one of those sufferings.

¹ prejudice or hatred against people of “other” countries

² Narrated by Muslim

Why should you be concerned?

- Because Islam was revealed to bring about benefit for society and to remove harm.
- Because the message of Islam is about engagement in society to partake in solving the problem
- Because, you cannot wait for others to solve your problems for you.

Do not be passive as that will lead to bigger problems.

The Prophet (*salla Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said this about the importance of change:

“Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand [by taking action].

If he cannot, then with his tongue [by speaking out]

If he cannot, then with his heart – and that is the weakest of faith.”³

Britain is *not* racist, but people can be - Coexistence is to really care for the land you belong to. As Muslims in Britain, we are here to stay. Some thought that voting for Brexit meant Muslims would be asked to leave. No one explained to them that those who are British will not be asked to leave. We believe that Britain (as a country) isn't racist, Islamophobic or xenophobic. However, people can act that way.

What is important to understand is that people come and go. Societies change and develop. That is the message of *Surat ul Kahf* (which we read every Friday). Those young men slept for 309 years, only to wake up to a completely different tolerant society.

If we want society to change and develop, we have to believe in ourselves and those around us. A cup of tea and a short chat can do wonders for community relations (as demonstrated by York Mosque). So, let us not lose hope in people.

So whatever you do, you have to do SOMETHING. Doing nothing is NOT an option.

And what you do is based on your ability, things which you really CAN do. No-one is going to ask you to do the impossible. But what you WILL be told is to work together to make sure that the threat of Islamophobia doesn't reach an acceptable state. If we all don't do something to change the status quo, if we don't get out there and create our own narrative as per the Book of Allah, then those who hate us will create that narrative for us!

Allah (ﷻ) has created every one of us; and has given each of us strengths and abilities. On the Day of Resurrection, He (ﷻ) will question you about how you used your abilities to help others. He (ﷻ) will question you about how you utilised your strengths to empower the weak and helpless; even if it is as little as speaking out, when you have the ability to do so.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **“Let none of you despise themselves!”**

They asked, “How would one of us despise themselves, O Messenger of Allah?”

He replied, **“You see a situation which requires you to speak out, yet you are silent. On the Day of Judgement, Allah will ask you, ‘What prevented you from saying such-and-such when you had a chance?’**

The person will say, ‘I feared other people.’

Allah will say, ‘Rather, it is Me, you should have feared’.”⁴

We need ALL Muslims to be awake to the issues that are happening around them; and to come together to help with supporting the Muslim Community and British Society.

There are many things that one can do to fulfil their obligation when it comes to a problem like Islamophobia. In the next Khutbah, we will mention some of them.

أقول قولي هذا، واستغفر الله لي ولكم، فاستغفروه، إنه هو الغفور الرحيم.

³ Narrated by al-Bukhari

⁴ Narrated by Ahmad, al-Bayhaqi and al-Tabarani

PART TWO:

إن الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا ومن سيئات أعمالنا ، من يهده الله فلا مضل له
ومن يضل فلا هادي له وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله

يا أيها الذين ءامنوا اتقوا الله وقولوا قولا سديداً، يصلح لكم أعمالكم، ويغفر لكم ذنوبكم، ومن يطع الله ورسوله، فقد فاز فوزاً
عظيماً.

In the first Khutbah, we spoke about the importance of doing something with regards to Islamophobia. And in this second Khutbah, we will outline some of the things you can do.

- 1) **Educate** yourself and other Muslims about the reality of hate crime in general, and about Islamophobia, in particular. It is important to realise that a problem exists and to understand more about what is happening and how frequent it is going on.
- 2) **Encourage** people to report every crime to the Police. Islamophobic incidents must be reported to the police. The Police have recognised this category of hate crime, and have a duty to report it as such.
Why is that important? Because, there are still people who still try to deny such a disease exists. By recording the incidents, we can have the facts as quantifiable statistics; which can be traced back to certain events, political statements, policy decisions, and other factors. This will allow different institutions and organisations to better address the problem.

- 3) **Initiate** Public Awareness to help non-Muslims understand the impact of Islamophobia and hate crime on individuals and on communities.
It is important to allow others to understand that Islamophobia is a problem for EVERY society, not just Muslims. Racism which exists in any society is a smear on that society, especially when nothing is done about it. Everyone needs to understand the importance of having a cohesive society. This can't happen when discrimination is rife.

This means we must, as Muslims, not only portray our *deen* correctly and positively, but reach out to non-Muslims by organising informal meetings with friends and family, and then more formal open days and events, and you need to speak, engage, educate etc.

- 4) **Challenge** hate speech and rhetoric when you notice it. I read to you the hadith of not belittling oneself by being silent. It is important that we will not be silent and remain ignored. This means we must comment and challenge hate speech.

On the other side, we must also thank and show gratitude to good practice within the media, as appropriate. This will be important in encouraging responsible reporting and journalism.

- 5) **Engage with public life.** Muslims need to be more politically active; vote in elections and participate in supporting parties and contacting their MPs. On the grassroots levels, it is also important to show solidarity to different causes by participating in protests. The MCB encourages engagement with daily politics and daily life. Politics isn't a dirty word; and it is only right that more and more Britons engage to make 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, (**you**), get involved and account those who speak on your behalf. This means we must engage politicians - whether councillors or MPs - on taking a robust stand against Islamophobia.
- 6) **Participate in society** - The attitude of belonging needs to be nurtured into our young and upcoming generations. There needs to be sense of caring and sharing. It's not about which

football team you support or what your favourite food is. But it's about the attitude of belonging. We must not allow the rhetoric of 'Muslims are alien to Britain', or 'they belong elsewhere'. This can only happen when there is a clear rebuttal of the 'alien culture'. We still hear from ill-informed people that Muslims shouldn't be here. Or "they should go home". However, they are ignorant of the existence of Muslims as part and parcel of British Society.

More arms need to be stretched out to others in dialogue and collaboration. Dialogue breeds understanding, and partnerships instil care. Through interfaith work and collaborating with those with shared interests, huge barriers will be broken. There are different aspects of life in which we can work together. These are restricted to matters of religion, but extend to a wide spectrum of issues from human rights to caring about the environment; and from pro-life campaigns to lobbying for living wage. Whatever the issue, it's good to work together.

- 7) Be Strong** - Do not be afraid of practising and displaying your religion. Do not be afraid of wearing the hijab or growing your beard. Our religion was sent as a mercy to mankind. We should not be afraid of practicing Islam, even when we have become victims of an increasing hatred. The MCB believes that practicing Islam is a positive influence in making the Muslim individual a better citizen, working for the common good. Having said that, do not put yourself in an unnecessary danger. It is important to assess each and every situation. Being cautious and vigilant goes hand in hand with being strong.
- 8) Share** your thoughts about this topic on social media websites. This one might be more for young people. Islamophobia Awareness Month should not be side-lined as 'just another month'. 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 even Snapchat! Share your experiences and thoughts about how Islamophobia has affected you and in what peaceful ways we can respond. Create your own hashtags and try to make them a trend by sharing it with all your family and friends online. Explore existing online campaigns and join them to support in disseminating your dissatisfaction about Islamophobia.

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, you must couple your complaints with action. With the explosion of social media and ultrafast broadband, 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. And in a world of high volume marketing, we need to learn to market our activities and to portray ourselves more positively.

To conclude: Islamophobia is a growing disease and we need to do what we can to counteract the problem. I have outlined many avenues in which each one of you can help to do something. 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."⁵

وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين

⁵ Holy Quran: The Chapter of Muhammad