

Worth Repeating

MUSLIMS REJOICE AS APARTHEID IS BROUGHT DOWN IN SOUTH AFRICA

By: Siddiq Osman Noormuhammad

The *Mustad'afeen*, the oppressed people of South Africa have brought the abhorrent system of apartheid crashing down and Muslims the world over are rejoicing with them in their victory. Make no mistake: it is not F.W. de Klerk, the President of South Africa who somehow turned out to be a good person and removed apartheid. Rather, it was years of struggle, sacrifice and laying down of their lives by the people of South Africa against the oppression, tyranny and state violence of the apartheid regime that brought it down. And Muslims are thanking Allah, the Glorified and Exalted for it, with *du'a* (supplication), and *salawaat* on the beloved Prophet Muhammad, Allah's blessings and peace be on him.

Racial Equality in Islam

To understand any phenomenon, Muslims have to look to the Qur'an, and the Sunnah of the beloved Prophet (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*), and the *seerah* (history) of the Prophet (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*), the *sahaba* (his companions) and the *saleheen* (pious). The Qur'an teaches us about our common humanity, that we are all descendants of Sayyidina Adam (peace be upon him) who was created from clay. It also teaches us racial equality. Two verses of the Qur'an suffice to illustrate this. Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) says:

O mankind! Be in reverential awe of your Lord who created you from a single person and from it created its mate and from these two spread a multitude of men and women. And be in reverential awe of Allah in Whose Name you ask (for your rights), and toward the wombs (that bore you). Surely, Allah is ever a Watcher over you. (4:1)

O mankind! Surely, We have created you from a male and a female, and have made you branches and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you, in the Sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (49:13)

Then again, Rasulullah's (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*) teaching on racial equality in his farewell Khutbah is unique and of great significance in world history. Rasulullah (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*) said, in part: "An Arab is not superior to a non-Arab... Every Muslim is a brother of another Muslim. You are all equal. Nobody has superiority over another except by piety and good action."

And Al-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, also known as Malcolm X, could only marvel at the racial equality in Islam when he went for Hajj. He wrote in a letter:

"There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were all colours from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my

experiences in America had led me to believe could never exist between the white and the non-white.

America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered 'white' - but the 'white' attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colours together, irrespective of their colour.

During the past eleven days here in the Muslim world I have eaten from the same plate, drunk from the same glass, and slept in the same bed (or on the same rug) - while praying to the same God - with fellow Muslims, whose eyes were the bluest of the blue, whose hair was the blondest of the blond, and whose skin was the whitest of white. And in the words and in the actions and in the deeds of the 'white' Muslims, I felt the same sincerity that I felt among black African Muslims of Nigeria, Sudan and Ghana.

We were truly all the same (brothers) - because their belief in one God had removed the 'white' from their minds, the 'white' from their behavior, and the 'white' from their attitude.

I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps they too, could accept in reality the Oneness of Man - and cease to measure, and hinder and harm others in terms of their 'difference' in colour.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds."

The Abhorrent System of Apartheid

So we can understand how abhorrent apartheid must have been to Malcolm X and indeed to all Muslims, a society where blacks were at the bottom, the "coloured" were in the middle and the whites at the top, where people were segregated and discriminated on the basis of race, where there were separate schools for blacks and whites, separate beaches for blacks and whites, separate libraries for blacks and whites... and so on. This was a society where state violence was the order of the day and where Africans were shot down on the smallest of pretext, as if they were of no consequence. First the Muslim countries and countries of Africa, Asia and South America ostracized South Africa. After immense pressure from them, the Western world had to reluctantly follow suit. South Africa was so much ostracized in the international community to the extent that it had only two friends left, the state of Israel, and Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, former British Prime Minister. It had no way out but to remove apartheid laws, release political detainees, lift the ban on political organizations and allow exiles to return home.

Sensing that its economic interests would henceforth be better served by Mr. Nelson Mandela as leader, the western world through its media, transformed him overnight from a "terrorist" to a "saint", comparable to Mahatma Gandhi, they said, just as they had transformed Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of Kenya "from a leader to darkness and death", to "a visionary with fierce determination"!

The support that Muslims across the world gave to the people of South Africa has not been lost on them, and support and vigilance has been enhanced. To give only one example, when Mr. Nelson Mandela visits Muslim countries, he receives a 21-gun salute. But everything has not been won yet. The about-to-be-removed racist government of South Africa is using delaying tactics.

But as the colonial history of one country after another in Africa has shown, such delaying tactics in the end always come to nothing. Nature (*Fitra*) prevails and *shura* (consultation) has to take place as Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) says:

And those who answer the call of their Lord (Sustainer) and establish the Prayer, and whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation, and who spend (in Our Way) of what We have provided them. (42:38)

And if the natural state of events is to exist, people should be allowed to give allegiance (*bay'a*) to leaders of their choice just as the *sahaba* (*Rady Allahu 'Anhum*) swore allegiance to the Prophet (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*) out of love, as Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) says in the Qur'an:

Indeed, Allah was well pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you (O Beloved Prophet) beneath the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility on them, and has rewarded them with an imminent victory. (48:18)

In the event of the present continued state violence against the people, Muslims can remind the South African Government of the Hadith of Rasulullah (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*) as narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari:

"Narrated Ibn 'Abbas (*Rady Allahu 'Anhu*): The Prophet (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*) sent Mu'adh (*Rady Allahu 'Anhu*) to Yemen and said, 'Be afraid from the curse of the oppressed as there is no screen between his invocation and Allah'".

Spiritual Vision

In the meantime, the oppressed people of South Africa have produced a Bill of Rights, are asking that a Constituent Assembly be set up, that there should be an Interim Government elected by the people, that there should be one-person, one-vote and that sanctions should not be lifted until all this is achieved. From their policy pronouncements, it is clear that they have an economic and political vision but, alas what they lack is a spiritual vision.

Winston Churchill also had a vision but it was flawed. He said, "May the British Empire live a thousand years..." but the British Empire vanished within 20 years after he said this. Karl Marx had an economic vision... that the State would wither away... and that communism would prevail over the whole world. As I have explained in greater detail in another article, the Jihad of the Muslims of Afghanistan against the U.S.S.R relegated communism to the wastepaper basket of history. When the countries of Eastern Europe saw that a poor country like Afghanistan could defeat a giant like Russia, they gained the courage to rise up against the unnatural state of affairs and overthrew communism.

Only Islam has stood the test of time, based on the worship of One God, Allah (*Subhanahu wa*

Ta'ala), love of His blessed Prophet Muhammad (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*), belief in Allah's revelation, the Qur'an, following the Sunnah of His Beloved Prophet (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*), belief in all the Prophets of Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*), *taqwa* (piety), *Iman* (faith), *adl* (justice), *ihsan* (goodness, spiritual excellence), and *haqq* (truth). If the people of South Africa are to avoid any and all contradictions and to attain spiritual progress, the only way open is to accept Islam. So, in fulfillment of my duty as a Muslim, I call upon them to accept Islam. I call them to the Islam of total submission to the Will of Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*), the love of His Prophet (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*), the love of the Khulafa ar-Rashideen, the Rightly guided Khalifas of the Prophet (*Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*), and the love of the Ahlul-Bayt and the Sahaba (*Rady Allahu Anhum*), in other words to the universal Islam of tolerance and respect, to the Islam of *Shura* (mutual consultation), as lived by the *awliya* (saints) like Shaykh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani, Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali Ba-Alawi, Mawlana al-Haddad, Sayyid Ahmad Rifa'i and Mawlana Mu'inuddin Chishti, may Allah be pleased with them all. May Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) keep us among them, *Aameen, Yaa Rabbal 'Alameen*.

Source: This article was first published in **Iqra: The Islamic Journal**, Issue Number 24, Ramadan 1412 / March 1992, Memon Jamat Nairobi, Kenya, p. 35-37. It is reproduced here for the benefit of our patrons worldwide.

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