

THE PEACEFUL MESSAGE OF ISLAM

By

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INTRODUCTION

Today's cancerous attack on Islam, by transnational religious extremists and radicals, needs immediate treatment by the doctors of Islamic sciences (the *ulama*) - through performing direct operation to and providing prescription for the cancer, and through instilling continuous preventive precautions and measures on the dangers of its spread. Man's ignorance of the cancerous state of religious extremism and radicalism could eventually cause him to be afflicted by it. Ill-equipped treatment by Muslim doctors could stir calamitous spread of the deadly tumour to the whole body of true Islam. In the end, if all fail to effectively treat and defy it, Muslims, in particular, will be drenched in the wails of pain and death, while true Islam will lie in a hospice as an outcast patient who live alone, as a *gharib*, a stranger.

Gladly, this bleak and dark reality of religious extremism and radicalism is understood by recognized mainstream scholars of Islam today. Various counter efforts are continuously engaged by the scholars and by the Muslim *ummah* to experiment and provide defences from its spread¹. Significantly, sincere voices and great toils from non Muslims – individuals, communities, institutions and governments - have been heard and manifested to support Muslims in their *jihad* against these corrupters of true Islam.

In finding the rightful prescription to this stark reality, contemporary voices have coined several inferences from Islam's historical heritage for these extremists and radicals. They have been aligned to the Kharijites (*khawarij*), who had dared declared the fourth Rightful Caliph of Islam, Saidina Ali ibn Abi Thalib, as a *kafir* (an infidel)². Others have seen them to possess several features of the *Hashwiyyah* (the extreme traditionalist) faction, who '*explicitly suppressed the pursuit of unfettered reason*

*independent of the sources of revealed truth*³. Such rendezvous with history is one of the more suggestive ways of finding the rightful remedy.

This essay hopes to follow suit such venture into the rich traditional Islamic heritage. This essay hopes to provide a general overview of the awkward relation between terrorism and Islam. This is shown through presenting Islam's universal message of peace and its absolute negation of acts of terrorism. This essay will also try to offer Islamic anecdotes to today's spread of radicalization in the Muslim world so as to provide useful and practicable suggestions towards apprehending the spread of such extremism and radicalism.

TERRORISM AND ISLAM

The study of world history would show that Islam and terrorism are extreme opposites. There is no meeting point between Islam and terrorism as practiced by terrorist groups in different parts of the world. Terrorism involves the indiscriminate use of force to achieve certain objectives. Whereas, the basis of national and international relations in Islam is **peace** and not war as falsely claimed by some people.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the times we live in is the overwhelming presence of violence in our societies. Whether it is a bomb going off in a market place, or the hijacking of an aircraft where innocent people are held at ransom to achieve political ends, we live in an age, where the manipulation and loss of innocent lives has become commonplace. Such is the all-pervasive nature of indiscriminate violence, that "terrorism" is considered as one of the prime threats to peace and security in our societies.

Could it be possible that Islam, whose light ended the Dark Ages in Europe, now propound the advent of an age of terror? Could a faith that has over 1.2 billion followers the world over, actually advocate the killing and maiming of innocent people? Could Islam, whose name itself stands for "peace" and "submission to God", encourage its adherents to work for death and destruction?

The Glorious Qur'an says: (**...take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus do He command you, that you may learn wisdom.**)⁴

Islam considers all life forms as sacred. However, the sanctity of human life is accorded a special place. The first and the foremost basic right of a human being is the right to live. Allah (Exalted is He) says in the Qur'an: (**... if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.**)⁵

Such is the value of a single human life, that the Qur'an equates the taking of even one human life unjustly, with killing all of humanity. Thus, the Qur'an prohibits homicide in clear terms. The taking of a criminal's life by the state in order to administer justice is required to uphold the rule of law, and the peace and security of the society. Only a proper and competent court can decide whether an individual has forfeited his right to life by disregarding the right to life and peace of other human beings.

Even in a state of war, Islam enjoins that one deals with the enemy nobly in the battlefield. Islam has drawn a clear line of distinction between the combatants and the non-combatants of the enemy. As far as the non-combatant population is concerned such as women, children, the old and the infirm, etc., the instructions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) are as follows: **"Do not kill any old person, any child or any woman."**⁶ **"Do not kill the monks in monasteries"**⁷. During a war, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saw the corpse of a woman lying on the ground and observed: **"She was not fighting. How then she came to be killed?"** Thus non-combatants are guaranteed security of life even if their state is at war.

Perhaps no other Islamic term evokes such strong reactions as the word 'Jihad'. The term 'Jihad' has been much abused, to conjure up bizarre images of violent Muslims, forcing people to submit at the point of the sword.

The word Jihad comes from the root word *jahada*, which means to struggle. So Jihad is literally an act of struggling. Jihad primarily refers to the inner struggle of being

a person of virtue and submission to God in all aspects of life. Secondly, Jihad refers to struggle against injustice. Islam, like many other religions, allows for armed self-defense, or retribution against tyranny, exploitation, and oppression.

The Glorious Qur'an says: **(And why should you not fight in the cause of God and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from thee one who will protect; and raise for us from thee one who will help!)**⁸

Thus, Islam enjoins upon its believers to strive their utmost in purifying themselves, as well as in establishing peace and justice in the society. A Muslim can never be at rest when he sees injustice and oppression around him. Islam enjoins upon all Muslims to work actively to maintain the balance in which God created everything. However, regardless of how legitimate the cause may be, the Glorious Qur'an never condones the killing of innocent people. Terrorizing the civilian population can never be termed as Jihad, and can never be reconciled with the teachings of Islam.

Even Western scholars have repudiated the myth of Muslims coercing others to convert. The great historian De Lacy O'Leary wrote: *"History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims, sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."*⁹

Muslims ruled Spain for roughly 800 years. During this time, and up until they were finally forced out, the non-Muslims there were alive and flourishing. Additionally, Christian and Jewish minorities have survived in the Muslim lands of the Middle East for centuries. Countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan all have significant Christian and/or Jewish populations.

This is not surprising to a Muslim, for his faith prohibits him from forcing others to see his point of view. The Glorious Qur'an says: **(Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in**

God hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And God hear and know all things.)¹⁰

Far from being a militant dogma, Islam is a way of life that transcends race and ethnicity. The Qur'an repeatedly reminds us of our common origin: **(O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).¹¹**

Thus, it is the universality of its teachings that makes Islam the fastest growing religion in the world. In a world full of conflicts and deep schisms between human beings, a world that is threatened with terrorism, perpetrated by individuals and states, Islam is a beacon of light that offers hope for the future.

In the light of the above, it becomes crystal clear that Islam, the true religion of Allah, doesn't permit aggression, violence, injustice, or oppression. At the same time, it calls to morality, justice, tolerance, and peace.

The war against the twisted and perverted interpretations of Islam that promote the ideology of violence against humanity in the name of Islam must be based on the premises as enlightened earlier.

To combat the current strains of terrorism we require a number of antidotes. We have to fuse together the security approach with the demystification of the ideology of violence, the immunization of the Muslim community against such breeding as well as informing the other communities about what Islam stands for.

ISLAMIC ANTIDOTES AGAINST RADICALISATION

From the quoted Quranic verses and Sunnah of the Prophet above, we have seen an overview of the Islamic position against the terrorist's ideology. Islam is a religion with firm, absolute universal principles and messages, which needs to be understood and embraced with great gentleness, intimacy and tenderness. Islam shall never condone to

one's misled and confused ideology based on their personal and selfish goals. What is necessary now is for us to analyze the Islamic remedy against radicalization. Radicalization, if not apprehended wisely and proactively, will swarm the minds and thoughts of contemporary Muslim and our future generation.

We believe several antidotes should be applied to counter this assault of radicalism on Islam. These antidotes are:

- 1. Exemplify Islam not through faces of terrorists, but through the glorious intellectual Islamic tradition represented by mainstream Muslim Scholars;**
- 2. The Muslim Community needs to strive to be The Justly Balanced Community – the Moderate Community between all Extremities and Deficiencies; and**
- 3. Understanding and Appreciating Islam as a Religion of Ease built on Pillars of Guidance, Moderateness, Peace, Love, Gentleness, Brotherhood, and Harmonious Cooperation.**

Let us examine each of these suggested remedies.

1) Exemplify Islam not through faces of terrorists, but through the glorious intellectual Islamic tradition represented by mainstream Muslim Scholars

Mainstream Islamic scholars, past and present, have formulated a systematic intellectual tradition that has shaped much of Islamic intellectual heritage today. The jihad of the scholars in systematizing the message of Islam and its Prophet is a *rahmah* (blessing) for us.

Ibn al-Nadim's attempt to list all written books by Muslim scholars in a systematic index or database highlighted the great scholastic tendency of our classical scholars. In his *Kitab al-Fihrist*, Abu 'l-Faradh Muhammad b. Abi Ya'qub Ishaq al-Warraq al-Baghdadi, popularly known as *Ibn al-Nadim* (d. 995 CE), listed out ten general discourses that the Muslim Intellectual tradition has flourished in his time. The first six of them are detailed bibliographies of books on Islamic subjects: 1. the Holy

Scriptures of Muslims, Jews, and Christians, with emphasis on the Qur'an and hadith; 2. works on grammar and philology; 3. history, biography, genealogy and the like; 4. poetry; 5. scholarly theology (*kalam*); 6. law (*fiqh*) and tradition. The last four discourses deal with non-Islamic subjects: 7. philosophy and the 'ancient sciences'; 8. legends, fables, magic, conjuring etc.; 9. the doctrines (*maqalat*) of the non-monotheistic creeds (Manicheans, Hindus, Buddhists and Chinese); 10. alchemy. He gives the titles only of those books which he had seen himself or whose existence was vouchsafed by a trustworthy person¹².

This great database shows that Islam's contribution to knowledge has expanded rapidly just 400 years after the Prophet's migration to Medina. The torch of knowledge that the Prophet had ignited, have received continuous light in the Muslim world, through the continuous flow of the scholar's ink. Names of Abu `Abd Allah Malik ibn Anas ibn Malik ibn `Amr al-Humyari al-Asbahi al-Madani – famously known as **Imam Malik** (d. 793 CE)¹³, Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Idris ibn al-`Abbas al-Shafi`i al-Hijazi al-Qurashi al-Hashimi al-Muttalibi – **Imam As-Shafi`i** (d. 818)¹⁴, Abû `Abdullâh Muhammad ibn Ismâ`îl al-Bukhârî - **Imam Al-Bukhari** (d. 870)¹⁵, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq - **Al-Kindi** (d. 873)¹⁶, Abu'l-Husain 'Asakir-ud-Din Muslim b. Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naisaburi - **Imam Muslim** (d. 875)¹⁷, Abd al-Rahman ibn Kamal al-Din Abi Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Sabiq al-Din, Jalal al-Din al-Misri al-Suyuti al-Shafi`i al-Ash`ari, - **Ibn al-Asyuti** (d. 911)¹⁸, Abu Nasr Mohammad Ibn al-Farakh - **Al-Farabi** (d. 950)¹⁹, Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa`id ibn Hazm – **Ibn Hazm** (d. 1064)²⁰, Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad, al-Tusi al-Ghazzali al-Shafi`i - **Imam al-Ghazali** (d. 1111)²¹, Fakhr-al-Din Abu-Abd-Allah Muhammad Ibn Umar ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Husayn - **al-Razi** (d. 1209)²², Abdallah ibn 'Umar - **al-Baydawi** (d. 1316)²³, and Abdurrahman bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Al-Hasan bin Jabir bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Abdurrahman - **Ibn Khaldun** (d. 1406)²⁴ are among some of the prominent scholars known throughout the Islamic world. Until today, their works have survived and are consulted daily by millions worldwide for all its richness and guidance.

This tradition of scholarly existence is continued until today. Among many contemporary mainstream scholars, names such as *Sheikh Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi* (b. 1928)²⁵, *Sheikh Yusuf al-Qardhawi* (b. 1926)²⁶, *Sheikh Nuh Ha Mim Keller* (b. 1954)²⁷, *Prof Dr Abdul Hakim Murad* (b. 1960)²⁸, *Dr. Sheikh Aidh al-Qarni* (b. 1958)²⁹, *Prof Dr Khaled Abou el-Fadl* (b. 222)³⁰, and many more, are voices of our contemporary times.

Worryingly today, names and photos of terrorists and radicals are gaining superior limelight and continuous media attention worldwide. Today, due to advancement of the internet and 24-hour cable news, sadly, the image of Islam is more visible through the faces of these terrorists and radicals. These terrorists and radicals are not scholars of Islam. They are not accepted by Muslims worldwide to be the spokespersons of Islam. Allah's Apostle (peace and blessings be upon him) said, **"When honesty (amanah) is lost, then wait for the Hour."** It was asked, **"How will honesty be lost, O Allah's Apostle?"** He said, **"When authority is given to those who do not deserve it, then wait for the Hour."**³¹

Today, our mainstream Muslim scholars (*ulama*) hold an important key, to step forward, to be the visible voice of Islam. Our scholars need to play an exemplary, continuous and earnest role in watering this 1400-year tree with the best natural and technologically manufactured fertilizers. This tree of Islam needs to continue providing shade to the world. Our scholars need to weed out the tree from these unwanted radical elements. Attentive focus must be given to the shadiness of the tree. The radical elements must be stopped from receiving unwanted attention.

The Apostle had reminded the Muslim *ummah* that the scholars (*ulama*) are the heirs to the prophetic divine message³². Islam's great esteem for knowledge and books must be continuously harnessed, while swords and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) must never be allowed to picture the image of Islam.

Islamic civilization is represented by its intellectual tradition among scholars and institutions of learning. The traditional mosque *halaqahs* (study circles), the famous

Nizamiyyah colleges, the *zawiyahs* (monastic complexes), the *jaamiahs* (universities), and the *pasantrens*, have always become centres of Islamic civilization and learning. Islamic civilization will never allow itself to be replaced and represented by terrorist organizations and radical associations.

2) The Muslim Community needs to strive to be The Justly Balanced Community – the Moderate Community between all Extremities and Deficiencies

The Muslim community is declared by God as the Justly Balanced Community (*ummah wasat*). Allah (Exalted is He) says in the Qur'an: **(Thus have We made you a nation justly balanced, that you may be witnesses over the people and the Messenger a witness over yourselves).**³³ It becomes a *jihad* for Muslims, wherever they may be, to become this justly balanced community. Islam thus present the moderate way against both extreme and deficiency. This moderate way is *al-Sirat al-Mustaqim* (the straight way), where each Muslims seek continuously in their daily prayers. It becomes obligatory, 17 times a day, for Muslims to recite this divine wish of **“guide us to the Straight way, the way of those upon whom You have bestowed Your grace, not those whose (portion) is wrath nor those who have gone astray”**³⁴.

In Islam's intellectual history, mainstream Islamic theological and legal discourses were shaped through adopting this mean. In theology, the Ash'arite school is the mean against the extremes of the literal traditionalist and the rational Mu'tazilites. In our legal schools, the *Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah* (Sunnis) becomes the middle way between the Raafidhites and the Kharijites.

On an ethical level, al-Ghazali (d. 1111) had formulated an ethical system based on this idea of *al-wasat* (just balance/moderation/Golden Mean). This ethical framework is developed by using the Islamic theological and legal discourse to formulate an inner individual system of checks and balances, to assure that each individual will be adorned with the best and beautiful virtues propagated by Islam.

According to al-Ghazali, the principle of *al-wasat* is the mean or middle way between two opposite character traits, each of which is an extreme. It is the furthest point

from both extremes. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) had said: “**The best in all things is the mean**”³⁵. Thus, according to al-Ghazali, to achieve good and beautiful character, one needs to strike the mean or middle way. Each individual must aim to achieve these four virtues of wisdom (*hikma*), temperance (*‘iffa*), courage (*shaja’ah*) and justice (*‘adl*). Achieving perfect harmony in moderation is almost impossible, yet possible, according to al-Ghazali, agreeing with Aristotle.³⁶ Al-Ghazali asserted that one who attains perfect harmony and balance between all his human faculties, will exemplify the Prophet’s character in himself. Al-Ghazali believes that through **habituation**, guidance by **rightful religious authority**, and **divine guidance**, one will be able to achieve this moderation³⁷.

Through **habituation**, using all available means and ways, this message of moderation in Islam will be grasped, understood and felt. It is important thus for our Muslim world today to promote this message of moderation. This continuous process of habituation in promoting the message of moderation will, in the long run, reach out to more and more people. As more and more people, Muslims and non Muslims alike, recognize this message of moderation, the message and image of Islam will flourish.

As mentioned earlier, **rightful religious authority** must step forward to cure the community from its dilemmas and problems. The high status of Islamic *fatawa* (religious edicts) must be upheld. *Fatawa* by unqualified pseudo Islamic voices must be apprehended widely and visibly. Religious authorities in minority Muslim communities should work towards embracing nationalistic vision not contradictory to Islamic universal values and principles. They must show that being a Muslim means being a good, proactive, contributing citizen. Religious authority too should continuously engage with issues of extremism and radicalism, and if possible counsel and guide these terrorists and radicals towards rightful understanding and appreciation of Islam.

Finally, all Muslims must raise their hands, not in protest, but in humility towards God, shedding tears in prayer, humbly and sincerely, seeking God’s **divine guidance** for us and for the peacefulness of our world today and for our generation to come. Allah (Exalted is He) has said: (**And if My servants ask thee about Me - behold, I am near; I**

respond to the call of him who calls, whenever he calls unto Me: let them, then, respond unto Me, and believe in Me, so that they might follow the right way)³⁸.

3) Understanding and Appreciating Islam as a Religion of Ease built on Pillars of Guidance, Moderateness, Peace, Love, Gentleness, Brotherhood, and Harmonious Cooperation.

When radicalization, extremism and terrorism came rushing, uninvited, into Islam and upon the Muslims, how many of us bring to mind the Prophet's warning that **“the *mutanattaun* are destroyed”**³⁹? Ibn Mas'ud, a companion of the Prophet, narrated that the Prophet exclaimed this warning three times. This showed the urgency and danger that will befall the *muttanataun*. Who are these *muttanattaun*? Imam al-Nawawi explained that *“the mutanattaun refers to those who go into depths, extremes, and go beyond the proper bounds in their speech and actions.”*⁴⁰

The Glorious Quran says: **(Allah does not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete His favour upon you, that you may be grateful)**⁴¹. It is necessary to note that Islam is a religion that facilitates ease, and not hardship. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) had asserted that **“verily, this religion is easy. No one overburdens himself in the religion except that it overcomes him”**.⁴²

Like most religions, Islam is colored with kindness, tenderness and gentleness. The Prophet's **“verily, God loves *ar-Rifq* (tenderness/kindness/gentleness) in every matter”**⁴³ and **“whoever denies *ar-Rifq*, denies all of goodness”**⁴⁴ are examples of Islam's great emphasis on promoting beautiful adornment of the human character, against the current of corruption and darkness that could inflict him.

Among others, the Islamic belief system is built upon pillars of guidance (*hidayah*) not compulsion, moderateness (*wasat*) not extreme, peace (*amn*) not war, gentleness (*rifq*) not harshness, love (*mahabbah*) not hate, ease (*yusr*) not hardship, harmonious cooperation (*ta'awun*) not disassociation and brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*) not enmity. These values are principles that embody the legal maxims in Islamic

jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the faith ordinances in Islamic theology (*aqidah*), and moral virtues in Islamic ethics (*akhlaq*).

These beautiful virtues are seen in the exemplary character of the Prophet. In the famous event of the Bedouin urinating in the Prophet's Mosque, the Prophet instructed his companions to **“leave him and pour a container or vessel full of water over his urine. Certainly, all of you have been sent (as a community) that makes easy (on the people), and not (as a community) that be hard (on them).”**⁴⁵

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) himself gave a clear message on his role and his methodology. He wisely exclaimed: **“Allah did not send me as someone causing hardship or one who seeks out their mistakes and wrongs, but Allah has sent me as a teacher and one who brings ease.”**⁴⁶ It is thus appropriate that all Muslims strive to learn and understand these virtues inherent and preach by Islam. We need to reinvigorate into our zeal to learn Islam, with the desire to adorn ourselves with these beautiful virtues and conduct. Our approach to Islamic education must be accompanied with the intention of appreciating the beauty of the peaceful message of Islam.

From examples of past scholars, who were students of Islam, their zeal alongside their sincere attitude towards knowledge and truth, moulded them into rightful contributing voice of Islam and to the world. Their great toils in knowledge were wisely balanced with a great sense of humility and respect to knowledge and its diverse sciences. Never were they ever heard of declaring that their works and fatawa represent the voice of Islam and the Muslim world. The art of coining all their views with the golden term *“Wallahu a’lam”* (And God knows best) espouses this true understanding and appreciation of the vastness of God's knowledge. *Imam al-Shafi'i*, as an example of great humility and beautiful exemplary conduct towards God and knowledge, after revising and re-reading four hundred times of his *Risala*, then said: *“Only Allah's Book is perfect and free from error”*.

CONCLUSION

Radicalism has no place in this world. Radicals, extremists and terrorists must be checked and their ideology must be countered to deter them from destroying innocent minds, bodies and property. They need to understand the gruesome implication of their twisted ideology of hate and terror to Islam and the Muslims. Efforts to bring them back into the mainstream fold of Islam need to be widely supported. It is through rehabilitation efforts adopted by many countries today, as one of the methods, that will bear its fruits in the near future. Most importantly, these radicals must first dare to question themselves on the correctness of their understanding and appreciation of Islam. *“Start from your own self”*, the Prophet has been quoted as saying. This is a clear indication for us to evaluate and review our current status and check for its correctness with the rightful owners of knowledge.

In our digital age world today, human interaction has reached a new dimension. Communication has connected us far and wide in a matter of seconds. Verbal communications are challenged with the advancement of short message services (SMS), emails and blogs. These are important tools that help our daily existence. Moderate voices need to maximize usage of these tools for furthering their cause of making life in this world peaceful and fulfilling. Our youths must be engaged and encouraged through these tools with messages of peace, tolerance and harmony.

While Mankind must today strive to build bridges of understanding and tolerance among each other, regardless of faith, race and nationality, we must not disregard the importance of nationhood. We need to continuously encourage feeling of love and loyalty to one’s nation and country. We need to understand the reality of our present time and the importance of becoming citizens of each of our nation.

Radicals, extremists and terrorists need to view their utopian ideals of living in the blessed time of the Prophet. All Muslims love their Prophet. Yet, most believe the message of beautiful conduct exemplified in his physical life must be learnt, understood, felt and practiced. To ascribe one’s simplistic and misrepresented view of the Prophet’s

message, arrogantly believing that they are the rightful inheritors and followers of the Prophet, and forcing upon others to subscribe to their twisted understanding, becomes a heinous crime to God, the Prophet and Islam.

Living in a pluralistic society, Muslims must shower their non-Muslim neighbours, colleagues and friends with the beautiful message of Islam by exemplifying the conduct of the Prophet of Islam. Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and many others have always shared and appreciated living with Muslims in many parts of the world, in the past until today. This harmonious relationship is an Islamic commandment of *ta'awun* or harmonious cooperation literally espoused through the Holy Quran. Islam is a religion that builds bridges of love and peace with all created beings of God. Muslims are beautifully ornamented pillars of love and peace, strengthening mankind's existence in this world. We believe this world is a creation of God, and it is our duty to flourish it. Mankind are creation of God, and we believe we have to foster and appreciate its blessed nature.

¹ For contemporary, mainstream Islamic scholars work towards eradicating this phenomenon of religious extremism and radicalism, see <www.radicalmiddleway.org.uk>.

² See Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Authoritative and Authoritarian in Islamic Discourses* (Lanham, Maryland, University Press of America, 2001); Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (Cambridge, Oneworld Publications, 2001).

³ See Karim Douglas Crow's paper entitled '*Kalashnikov Islam' and the Deformist Mentality* presented at the International Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations and the Construction of Peace on 26th March 2005 at University Malaya, Malaysia.

⁴ Al-An'am 6: 151.

⁵ Al-Ma'idah 5: 32.

⁶ Recorded by Abu Dawud.

⁷ *Musnad* Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

⁸ Aal-Imran 3: 75.

⁹ De Lacy O'Leary, *Islam at Crossroads* (London, 1923), p. 8..

¹⁰ Al-Baqarah 2:256.

¹¹ Al-Hujrat: 49:13.

¹² According to its brief preface, *Kitab al-Fihrist* is meant to be an index of all books written in Arabic, whether by Arabs or non-Arabs. The *Fihrist* was published in 987-8 CE. See <<http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ei2/nadim.htm>> .

¹³ Imam Malik is the second of the four major *mujtahid* imams, whose school filled North Africa, al-Andalus, much of Egypt, and some of al-Sham, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, and Khurasan. He is the author of *al-Muwatta'* ("The Approved"), formed of the sound narrations of the Prophet from the people of the Hijaz together with the sayings of the Companions, the Followers, and those after them.

¹⁴ Imam al-Shafi'i is among the great *mujtahid* imams and jurisprudent *par excellence*. He is famous for his piety. He laid down the foundations of *fiqh* in his *Risala*.

¹⁵ Imâm al-Bukhârî ranks as the most eminent of those pious people who have conferred endless bliss upon the Ummah of the Holy Prophet sallallâhu `alayhi wa sallam. The greatest evidence of this is the book of *Ahâdîth an-Nabawî* he compiled, commonly known as *Sahîh al-Bukhârî*.

¹⁶ Al-Kindi is the father of Islamic Philosophy. He was also a scientist of high caliber a gifted Mathematician, astronomer, physician and a geographer as well as a talented musician.

¹⁷ Imam Muslim is among the famous *muhaddithun*, who wrote many books and treatises on Hadith, but the most important of his works is the collection (*Jami'*) of his *Sahih*. Imam Muslim took great pains in collecting 300,000 Traditions, and then after a thorough examination of them retained only 4000. He was a student and contemporary of Imam al-Bukhari. Amongst his other books are *Kitab al-Musnad al-Kabir 'Ala al-Rijal*, *Jami' Kabir*, *Kitab, al-Asma' wa'l-Kuna*, and *Kitab al- Wijdan*.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Asyuti is a foremost hadith master, jurist, philologist, and historian and the co-author of the famous *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*.

¹⁹ Al Farabi is the philosopher who introduced Plato and Aristotle to Muslim philosophy. He was called the "Second Teacher" (al-Mu'allim al-Thani) - with Aristotle being the "First". Among his famous works are *Al-Madina al-fadila* and *Kitab al-Musiqa*.

²⁰ Ibn Hazm is a Muslim theologian, psychologist and man of letters. He authored, among others, the *Fisal, Al-ahkam fi usul al-ahkam, Kitab al-muhalla* and *Kitab al-akhlaq wa-al-siyar*.

²¹ Al-Ghazali is one of the greatest Islamic Jurists, theologians and mystical thinkers. He was appointed head of the Nizamiyyah College at Baghdad in AH 484/AD 1091. Among his works are *al-Qistas al-mustaqim, Ihya' 'ulum al-din, al-Munqidh min al-dalal, al-Iqtisad fi'l-'tiqad, Minhaj al-'Abidin* and many others.

²² Al-Razi is a philosopher, historian, mathematician, astronomer, physician, theologian and exegetist. Al-Razi's works on theology and on Kalam include the books *al-Arba'in fi Usul al-Din* and *al-Mas'il al-Khamsun fi Usul al-Din*. His *Tafsir al-Kabir* is among the famous Quranic exegesis available today.

²³ Al-Baydawi is a scholar, judge, writer and a *mufassir*. His major work is the commentary on the Qur'an entitled *The Secrets of Revelation and The Secrets of Interpretation (Asrar ut-tanzil wa Asrar ut-ta'wil)*.

²⁴ Ibn Khaldun is a famous historiographer, sociologist, historian, and a theologian. He was a prime minister to the Hafsid Sultan in Bougie, Africa. He wrote the history of the world in his *al-Kitab al-'Ibar* in

7 different volumes; the first was called *al-Muqaddimah*, viewed by many as one of the first works of sociology.

²⁵ Muhammad Sayyid Tantawy (born 28 October 1928) is the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque and Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University. He has been described as "perhaps the foremost Sunni Arab authority", "acknowledged as the highest spiritual authority for nearly a billion Sunni Muslims", and "a supreme authority." He completed a seven thousand page exegesis of the Qur'an (*Al-tafsir al-waset*). This Tafsir took over ten years to complete. He has also written *Banu Israel (Jacob's Son's)* and *Mu'amalat Al-bank (Bank's Dealings)*

²⁶ Yusuf al-Qaradawi (born September 9, 1926) is an Egyptian Muslim scholar and preacher best known for his popular al Jazeera program, *ash-Shariah wal-Hayat* ("Shariah and Life"), and IslamOnline, a website that he helped to found in 1997. He has also published some fifty books, including *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* and *Islam: The Future Civilization*.

²⁷ Sheik Nuh Ha Mim Keller, is an American Muslim translator of Islamic books and specialist in Islamic Law as well as an authorised sheikh in tasawwuf in the Shadhili Sufi order. Born in 1954 in the Northwestern United States of America, he was educated in philosophy and Arabic at the University of Chicago and University of California at Los Angeles. He converted to Islam in 1977 at al-Azhar in Cairo, and later studied the Islamic sciences of hadith (Prophetic traditions), Shafi'i and Hanafi schools of Islamic jurisprudence, legal methodology (*usul al-fiqh*), and tenets of faith (*ʿaqidah*) in Syria and Jordan, where he has lived since 1980.

²⁸ Timothy Winter (also known as Abdal-Hakim Murad) is a lecturer in Islamic studies in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge and a leading British Islamic scholar. He was educated at Westminster School and graduated with a first-class honours MA in Arabic from Cambridge in 1983.

²⁹ Dr Sheikh Aidh al-Qarni is a Rector of Riyadh University, Saudi Arabia. He has written about 80 books on Hadith. His most famous book to date is entitled *Laa Tahzan* (Don't be Sad), which have been translated into 29 different languages.

³⁰ Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl is an accomplished Islamic jurist and scholar. He is Professor of Law at the UCLA School of Law where he teaches Islamic law, Immigration, Human Rights, International and National Security Law. Dr. Abou El Fadl previously taught Islamic law at the University of Texas at Austin Law School, Yale Law School and Princeton University. He holds degrees from Yale University (B.A.), University of Pennsylvania Law School (J.D.) and Princeton University (M.A./Ph.D.). Dr. Abou El Fadl also received formal training in Islamic jurisprudence in Egypt and Kuwait. He is the author of ten books and over fifty articles on Islamic law and Islam. His recent books include *The Search for Beauty in Islam: A Conference of the Books* and *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*.

³¹ Recorded by Al-Bukhari.

³² Sunan Ad-Darimi.

³³ Al-Baqarah 2: 143

³⁴ Al-Fatiha 1: 6-7

³⁵ Narrated by al-Baihaqi from Mthraf bin Abdillah. See al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, *al-Durar al-muntathira fi'l-ahadith al-mushtahira*. Ed. K.M. al-Mis. Beirut, 1404/1984.

³⁶ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

³⁷ For a full account of al-Ghazali's ethical system of moderation, please refer to his *Mizan al-'amal*. Ed. Abu'l-'Ala 'Afifi. Cairo, 1964. Also refer to his *Ihya 'ulum al-din, Kitab Riyadat al-nafs*. Cairo, 1347 AH. Trans. by T.J. Winter, *On Disciplining the Soul* (Cambridge, The Islamic Texts Society, 2005).

³⁸ Al-Baqarah 2:186

³⁹ Recorded by Muslim, Abu Daud and Ahmad

⁴⁰ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, vol. 16, p.220.

⁴¹ Al-Maidah 5: 6

⁴² Recorded by al-Bukhari and al-Nasaai

⁴³ Recorded by al-Bukhari.

⁴⁴ Recorded by Muslim.

⁴⁵ Recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi and Abu Daud.

⁴⁶ Recorded by Muslim.



Brief Biodata of Ustaz Hj Ali Hj Mohamed

Ustaz Haji Ali Haji Mohamed is a Council Member of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), a member of the Fatwa Committee of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS).

He is one of the Core Personnel of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), and a member of the Inter-Agency Aftercare Committee (Aftercare Group).

He is also the Chairman of the Accreditation of Asatizah (Religious Teachers) of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) and the Chairman of Khadijah Mosque Management Board.