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(1) On Harmony & Peaceful Co-existence Between the Muslims

by the Grand Ayatullah Sayyid 'Ali Sistani

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful "And hold on to the rope of Allah altogether and do not be divided." [3:103]

The Muslim *ummah* is going through difficult circumstances, and facing great tribulations and serious challenges that affect its present and endanger its future. Under such situations, all realize an urgent need for closing the ranks, eliminating the disunity, distancing ourselves from sectarian slogans and refraining from inciting religious differences—the differences which have lasted for centuries and there seems to be no way of solving them in a way that would be liked and accepted by all.

Therefore, there is no need to stir up the debate on them outside the respectable scholarly discussion, especially when it does not involve the matters of the principals of faith and fundamental beliefs.

All believe in the only One God, in the messengership of the chosen Prophet (s.a.w.), in the hereafter, and in the noble Qur'an —which Almighty Allãh has protected from interpolation— and the noble Prophetic sunnah as sources for the religious laws, and in the love for the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.); and many similar matters which are generally common among Muslims such as the pillars of Islam in the form of prayers, fasting, hajj, etc.

These common points are the strong basis for Islamic unity, and so they should be the focus in order to strengthen the bonds of love and friendship between the children of this *ummah*; at least by acting on peaceful co–existence between them based on mutual respect, and by keeping away from sectarian hatred and abuse in whatever shape or form may it be.

So everyone who wishes for the advancement of Islam and the progress of Muslims should put their utmost effort in bringing them together and in reducing levels of tension that rise from some political leanings so that it does not lead to further division and separation, since that will give way to fulfillment of the goals of the enemies who intend to control the Muslim lands and capture their resources.

Unfortunately, it has been observed that some individuals and entities act in an opposite manner and try to fortify the differences and divisions, to increase the gulf of sectarian differences amongst the Muslims. They have multiplied their efforts in recent times after the escalation in political struggles in the region and increase in the fight for dominance and influence therein.

They have renewed their attempts by highlighting the sectarian differences and publicizing them, rather adding in them from themselves by using methods of deceit and accusation, in order to further vilify a specific sect, to curtail the rights of its followers and to frighten other among them.

As part of this scheme, some media outlets –satellite channels, internet websites, magazines, etc.– occasionally circulate strange fatwas insulting some sects and schools of Islam, and associate that with the respected Sayyid in a clear attempt to tarnish the status of the religious leadership and to increase the sectarian tension for their specific goals.

The fatwas of the respected Sayyid can be obtained from their reliable sources —such as his well–known fatwa manuals certified by his signature and seal— and there is nothing in them that offends the Muslims from other sects and schools of thought. Anyone with even the slightest knowledge of those sources knows the baselessness of these statements and what is being circulated falsely.

Additionally, the stand of the respected marja' and the statements issued from him during the past years about the tribulations that the wounded Iraq is going through, and how he has advised his followers and his muqallidin about interacting with their Sunni brethren on basis of love and respect, and what he has repeatedly emphasized on the sanctity of the life of every Muslim, Sunni or Shi'a, and on the sanctity of his honour, his property, and disassociation with whosoever spills blood from whatever sect he may be – all this clearly demonstrates the stand of the religious leadership about interaction with followers of other sects and their views about them.

If all act according to this method with those who are opposed to them from other sects, things would not be what we see today in form of indiscriminate violence afflicting every location and horrible killings which do not even spare small children, the elderly, and pregnant women. To All®h is our complaint!

We pray to Almighty All®h to guide all to what is best for this ummah and its interest; for He has power over everything.

Office of As-Sayyid As-Sistani An-Najaf al-Ashraf [Iraq]

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