

By Yusuf Abdullahi

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In the name of Allah who states “Shall We treat those who believe and work deeds of righteousness the same as those who do mischief on earth? Shall we treat those who guard against evil, the same as those who turn aside from the right?” Q38:28

May the everlasting peace and blessings of Allah be upon His noble servant, our master Muhammad (S) and his exceptional progeny.

Undoubtedly, most important thing that draws the attention of the world at this time is the forthcoming 40th day mourning of Imam Husain (AS), at Karbala - Iraq, where millions faithful annually converge at the largest gathering on earth. Beside hospitable reception and utmost healthcare provision put in place for the pilgrims, security is jointly ensured. Also, significant role is played by the religious authorities, government, scholars, nongovernmental organizations and individuals in the symbolic journey in search of reward of Allah in the services.

The event, observed across the world including Nigeria where millions symbolically trekked to Husainiyyatu Baqiyyatullah, Zaria where the revered leader of the Islamic Movement would deliver speech before its destruction in 2015. This is in line with narration of Imam Ja'far (AS) that equated visit to their rightful followers to that of A'immah, for those faithful incapable of the distant journey. In contrast to the unscientific and narrow-minded thought that Ashura was a bygone historic tragedy, it is an everlasting warfare between right and wrong, truth and false and of course justice and oppression. This was the lesson maintained by the late Imam Khomeini in his popular expression, every day is Ashura and every place is Karbala! Looking at the increasing attention focused on the oppressed progeny of the noble prophet (S), the way some people try to misguide the Ummah on baseless allegations is not only surprising but very disheartening.

LOVE OF THE PROPHET'S PROGENY

The love of the progeny of the noble prophet is mandatory on the Ummah. Allah stated "... no reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin...” Q42:23. It is good to stress the fact that the companions of the prophet were the first generation of Muslims obliged to love, respect and pay allegiance to them. So they were in no way equal to them. With higher degrees, the progeny were elevated above the companions. It is pertinent to stress the fact that love of the Ahlul-bait cannot be merged with that of their enemies. In fact, the unfortunate Ashura tragedy is directly linked with the episode of Saqeefa. The prophet (S) said “Husain is from me and I am from Husain, O Allah do love he who loves Husain". As he set out on the path of his grandfather for a reform, the Imam described the mission “I have not risen up, but to safeguard the religion of my grandfather, the Prophet!” But for the great sacrifice of the Imam and his followers, Islam would have been a thing of history! The most illogical, unscientific and paradoxical expressions are those equating the two conflicting parties together! It is completely impossible to claim the love of Imam Ali and that of Mu'awiya or Imam Husain and Yazid, son of the leader of unjust group!

DENOUNCING OPPRESSION

Certainly, the murder and mutilation of Imam Husain was the worst atrocity in human history. However, some people try shelter-skelter to exonerate the culprits from their deliberate atrocity. It is in line with baseless claims they created the widely circulated political joker accusing the Shi'ah of abusing the companions of the prophets. Evidently, the Shi'ah are known world over as the vanguards of the noble messenger and Islam entirely. Those against Shi'ah equate Imam Ali with Mu'awiya, and some even exonerate Yazid from his devilish action. They attack the way Shi'ah mourn the Karbala tragedy and speak against them in the name of keeping off from the acts of predecessors. There is no wisdom in such assertion because Allah has given us the holy Qur'an as a yardstick to differentiate right and wrong and justice and oppression. Allah has prohibited oppression upon Himself, condemned it among His servants and strongly warned against it. Then why should we remain silent against oppression? Why can't we speak against oppressors and mischief-makers? "Is then the men who believe no better than the men who are rebellious and wicked? Not equal are they"; Q32:18

Certainly, we were taught to do right, enjoined to avoid injustice and speak against it "And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the fire touch you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped"; Q11 :113. Islam is generally opposed to oppression even against animals. That is why the Shi'ah are always against it from whichever angle it comes. Allah states "Shall We then treat the people of Faith like the people of sin? What is the matter with you? How judge ye? Q68:35-36

SUPPORT FOR JUSTICE

Our denouncement of oppression expresses our quest for justice at the same time. "You are the best community raised for the good of mankind. You enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong, and you believe in Allah" Q3:110. The love of Ahlul-bait condemns oppression and promotes justice. This was the philosophy behind the first trek to Karbala by Jabir ibn Abd- Allah al-Ansari, a renowned companion of the Holy Prophet on the 40th day of Imam's martyrdom where he coincidentally met the surviving members of the prophet's family under Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen and his audacious Aunt Sayyida Zainab! Unavoidably, one must sympathize with either of the two parties. And regardless of all inclinations, people with a common sense of humanity cannot but side with the oppressed. Edward Granville Browne, the English orientalist, said "is there any heart not to bleed and grieve when told about Karbala? Even non-Muslims cannot deny the chastity of the soul manifested in this war under the banner of Islam. On his part, the India's political and spiritual leader, Mahatma Gandhi said "I have carefully read the biography of Imam Husain and have contemplated the events of Karbala. I am sure Indians must follow his ideas on the path to victory!

Then, with whom is your sympathy? There is no cause to be confused on the unambiguous position of the two parties. Right from the occurrence of the incidence, some supported the oppressors and others were misled to equate them with the oppressed, which is an obvious form of oppression. Punishing the criminals and rewarding the good doers is the tradition of Allah. This is what all verses of the noble Qur'an and sayings of the noble messenger attest. Therefore, one must clearly analyze the two parties and take a right stand so that he or she may not be raised with oppressors and enemies of the blessed prophetic family on the Last day. Al-Tabarani related from Ibn Abbas that "no one shall be able to move from his place of reckoning on the day of Judgment until he has stated four things: how he spent his life and wealth, where he got his wealth from? And shall also be asked about the love of the Ahlul-bait.

IN RESPONSE TO CALL OF THE IMAM

The popular wording of the Imam was “Indeed I went out claiming reform for the Ummah (nation of my grandfather - Allah’s prophet), I want order all that Islam has ordained and prohibit atrocious behaviors”. But for the great sacrifice, Islam would have been long forgotten! Generally speaking, the commemoration reminds the faithful on the need for an unflinching stand in the fight against oppression for the establishment of justice on earth. Obviously, this can bring about change in the society as Ashura was the catalyst for the success of Islamic revolution in Iran. Allah states “... verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves with their own souls ...” Q13:11

As the world commemorates the 40th day mourning of the oppressed Imam, it must embrace the path of justice and righteousness and reject oppression and exploitation of the weak as did the courageous Imam. May the peace of Allah be upon Husain, Aliyu son of Husain, children of Husain, companions of Husain, and His endless curse on their murderers to the Day of reckoning.

Using the august medium, I reiterate the need for international community to join hands in support of justice and unconditional of release of Sheikh Ibraheem el-Zakzaky (H) and his disciples.

Wassalamu alaikum.