



مہینہ لک کونلہ میچ

POSITION PAPER #6

Islam, ISIS and the Paris Attacks

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ABOUT THE MAJLIS UL ULAMAA (MAJLISTT)

The Majlis ul Ulamaa is a forum to facilitate the collaboration of Islamic Scholars resident and active within Trinidad and Tobago. It seeks to define the authentic Islamic position as it relates to Islam and the Muslim community of the country, considering the various scholastic positions and schools of law. To this end, it deliberates on issues of importance, and defines the Islamic position. The due process is meticulous, spanning the issuing of a draft position paper, inviting stakeholders and public comment and consultations before a final position is issued.

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Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Raheem

Allahumma salli alaa sayyidinaa Muhammadin wa baarik wa sallim

Islam, ISIS and the Paris Attacks

The Majlis ul Ulamaa (Council of Scholars) of Trinidad and Tobago notes the attacks perpetrated on Friday November 13th, 2015, in Paris that have since dominated the headlines of major media reports, as well as social media discussions, internationally.

We recognise that these attacks were part of a wider series of (on-going) attacks that were conducted in Beirut, Tunisia, Kenya and Nigeria, and alongside volatile and mostly severe instability currently manifest in Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan.

We have seen unverified reports in which responsibility for these attacks were claimed by ISIS, according to international media.

As is the case in recent related events, the conversation and thrust that followed – by many persons in western societies such as ours – are done within the context of Islamic ideology and Muslims in general. Many equate Islam and Muslims with violence and warfare, whilst others defend Islam and relegate perpetrators of such actions to extremist groups.

This incident raises two critical issues:

- What is the Islamic position and justification relative to such actions?
- How do we deal with the backlash from a hostile society following such actions?

WHAT IS THE ISLAMIC POSITION AND JUSTIFICATION RELATIVE TO SUCH ACTIONS?

The taking of innocent lives is wrong according to Islam. In this regard the Majlis strongly condemns any actions which lead to the loss of innocent lives. It is prohibited in Islam in any context – including by people who use Islam and Islamic references as justification for such acts. Almighty Allah makes this clear in the Holy Qur'an in different facets:

1. Killing the innocent is wrong:

"On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that 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 of mankind: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole of mankind. Then although there came to them Our apostles with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land." (5:32)

And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein humiliated..." (25:68-69)

2. Muslims should avoid bloodshed:

“...if they remove themselves from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not made for you a cause [for fighting] against them.” (4:90)

“Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.” (60:8)

3. Muslims should restrain their anger:

“And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous. Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good;” (3:133-4)

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THE BACKLASH FROM A HOSTILE SOCIETY?

Majlistt recognises that, in consideration of behavioural phenomenon such as the empathy gap and statistical numbness, people would in some cases identify with, and react more to the incidents in Paris more than they would to similar incidents in other parts of the world. In this regard, we have noted reports in the international and social media of reprisal attacks being perpetrated against both individual Muslims and Muslim or Islamic properties (including mosques, organisations and homes), in various parts of the world.

Majlistt strongly condemns such attacks, and sees this as unjust backlash against a global community based on the actions of a few. The Qur’an reminds us:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.” (5:8)

For those who incite against Islam and Muslims, we can see different degrees of hostility which can be treated with in different ways. We recognise the different levels of incitement as:

- Those who may be misinformed about Islam and be influenced by propaganda; or relatedly those who speak harshly against Islam and Muslims
- Those who act aggressively towards Muslim individuals, Muslim and other Islamic properties.

1. Those who may be misinformed about Islam and be influenced by propaganda; or relatedly those who speak harshly against Islam and Muslims:

We are guided by the Qur’an regarding these persons, and have different responses available:

- **Educate them:**

“And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know.” (9:6)

- **Ignore them:**

“And when you see those who engage in [offensive] discourse concerning Our verses, then turn away from them until they enter into another conversation. And if Satan should cause you to forget, then do not remain after the reminder with the wrongdoing people.” (6:68)

- **Be patient:**

“And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good].” (41:34-35)

- **Lead by Example:**

“And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace” (25:63)

2. Those who act aggressively towards Muslim individuals, Muslim and other Islamic properties.

- **Do not turn to them for help**

“Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers.” (60:9)

- **Defend yourself within limits**

“Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.” (2:190)

“O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate; and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace "You are not a believer," aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions. You [yourselves] were like that before; then Allah conferred His favour upon you, so investigate. Indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted.” (4:94)

The Majlistt recognises that there is more work to be done on this issue, but we pray that human beings can co-exist in peace – without instances of oppression and terror – and with the understanding that we can all individually contribute to peace and mutual goodwill for each other.