



مجمع علماء كئلاله

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**POSITION PAPER # 24**

**Muslims & Non-Muslim Events**

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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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*Allahumma salli alaa sayyidinaa Muhammadin wa baarik wa sallim*

## **MUSLIM INVOLVEMENT IN NON-MUSLIM FESTIVALS, SEASONS AND EVENTS**

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## 1. Introduction

MajlisTT notes the recurring instances of very diverse vocal and public positions regarding the involvement, participation and commemoration of Muslims in non-Muslim events – in particular those events of a religious nature – within Trinidad and Tobago society.

The term ‘events’ include, but are not limited to, recurring official and unofficial calendar events and festivals such as Divali, Christmas, Carnival, Easter and Phagwa. The term also includes non-calendar or non-national events that apply at the community or family levels, including church-services, pujas, weddings, baptisms, funerals, thanksgivings, birthday parties, celebrations and other such events held by persons of other denominations, or of no particular religious denomination.

There are numerous concerns that emerge and which are acknowledged in relation to these various events identified, which span acknowledgement, endorsement, commemoration and participation by Muslims, and which include:

- Endorsements and extending greetings (e.g. wishing people Happy Divali, Shubh Divali, or Merry Christmas, etc.)
- Participation (in such activities as exchanging gifts / secret santa, lighting deyas, easter egg hunts, spraying abeer, etc.)
- Consuming foods and treats shared at events (including and especially eating food from other persons / households in attendance at events, or preparing a meal in alignment with festival norms and customs such as a Christmas Lunch or Thanksgiving Dinner, etc.)
- Décor (including such activities as decorating a Christmas tree, putting up blinking lights, pennants with Happy Divali or Happy Easter, painting the house, etc.)
- Promotions and trade practices (offering trade discounts, sales promotions, etc.)

The diverse positions relative to these practices across events range from very accommodating and inclusive to avoidance and exclusionary positions held by different segments of the Muslim community.

- On one part, some Muslims are of the belief that nothing is wrong with acknowledgement and participation as a citizen and associate – doing so does not compromise belief in Almighty Allah. Another popular assertion in national culture is that ‘Trinis celebrate everything’, and it is customary for persons to participate in Eid, Divali and Christmas, and so on, especially when it comes to eating foods associated with the various festivals and events.

It is not uncommon for such persons to label other viewpoints as ‘hardline’, ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘extremist’, or other names associated with these firm stances.

- On the other part, some Muslims espouse that involvement in such events is imitating the non-believers, or encouraging disbelief, and therefore haram or can lead to shirk. They hold the belief that any acknowledgement of or participation in other events – especially those of other religious denominations – is promoting shirk, or haram, or otherwise following the non-believers, and is therefore wrong or should be discouraged.
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This dichotomy of extremes is amplified in the context where a lot of Muslims are living in or are part of families which include non-Muslims.

Embedded in this reality are key issues:

- The Islamic basis for relations of Muslims to non-Muslims
- The acceptability of Muslim participation in non-Muslim events

What does Islam say?

## 2. The Islamic Basis for Relations of Muslims to Non-Muslims

### 2.1 Peaceful Coexistence

First, MajlisTT acknowledges that Islam allows for the peaceful co-existence of multiple religions in society – even in Muslim-dominated or Muslim-majority societies. All persons of other religions are free to practice their religions, without condemnation or provocation by Muslims. Islam recognizes the rights of persons to choose or reject religion and religious beliefs, be it of a specific religion or religion overall.

“There is no compulsion in religion” (Quran 2:256)

“If your Lord had so willed (and, denying them free will, compelled humankind to believe), all who are on the earth would surely have believed, all of them. Would you, then, force people until they become believers?” (Quran 10:99)

“Have not then those who believe yet known that had Allah willed, He could have guided all mankind?” Quran 13:31)

“And upon Allah is the direction of the [right] way, and among the various paths are those deviating. And if He willed, He could have guided you all.” (Quran 16:9)

### 2.2 Recognition & Respect

In Islam, revealed religions are sacred and should not be disrespected by Muslims. Muslims are encouraged to be righteous with those of other beliefs, and treat everyone with respect.

“Indeed, those who have believed [in Prophet Muhammad] and those [before Him] who were Jews or Sabeans or Christians - those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve. (Quran 5:69)

“They are not [all] the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer]. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds. And those are among the righteous. And whatever good they do - never will it be removed from them. And Allah is Knowing of the righteous.” (Quran 3:113-115)

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“O you who believe! Let not some people among you deride another people; it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let some women deride other women; it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor defame one another (and provoke the same for yourselves in retaliation); nor insult one another with nicknames (that your brothers and sisters dislike). Evil is using names with vile meaning after (those so addressed have accepted) the faith (doing so is like replacing a mark of faith with a mark of transgression). Whoever (does that and then) does not turn to God in repentance (giving up doing so), those are indeed wrongdoers. (Quran 49:11)

### 2.3 Following Disbelievers

That being said, Islam warns Muslims against following disbelievers. We are told in Islam,

“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allāh guides not the wrongdoing people.” (Quran 5:51)

“Let not believers take disbelievers as allies [i.e., supporters or protectors] rather than believers. And whoever [of you] does that has nothing [i.e., no association] with Allāh, except when taking precaution against them in prudence.<sup>1</sup> And Allāh warns you of Himself, and to Allāh is the [final] destination.” (Quran 3:28)

“You will not find a people who believe in Allāh and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allāh and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred...” (Quran 58:22)

“O ye who believe! **take not others than your own people as intimate friends**; they will not fail to corrupt you. They love to see you in trouble. Hatred has already shown itself through the utterances of their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater still.” (Quran 3:119)

“**Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. And those who are with him are hard against the disbelievers**, tender among themselves...” (Quran 48:30)

“O ye who believe! whoso among you turns back from his religion, then let it be known that in his stead Allah will soon bring a people whom He will love and who will love Him, and who will be kind and humble towards believers, **hard and firm against disbelievers**. They will strive in the cause of Allah and will not fear the reproach of a faultfinder.” (Quran 5:55)

“O Prophet! **strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites; and be strict against them**. Their home is Hell, and an evil destination it is!” (Quran 66:10)

“O ye who believe! fight such of the disbelievers as are near to **you and let them find hardness in you**; and know that Allah is with the righteous.” (Quran 9:123)

“O ye who believe! **take not those for friends who make a jest and sport of your religion from among those who were given the Book before you, and the disbelievers.** And fear Allah if you are believers” (Quran 5:58)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.” Narrated by Abu Dawood (4031)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, “You would tread the same path as was trodden by those before you [i.e. Jews and Christians] inch by inch and step by step so much so that if they had entered into the hole of the lizard, you would follow them in this also.” (Sahih Muslim Book 47, Hadith 7)

## 2.4 Care to not Stereotype

Muslims are reminded to not succumb to stereotypes in ascertaining disbelief.

“If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient. (Quran 3:110)

“Say, [O believers], "We have believed in Allāh and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants [al-Asbāt]<sup>1</sup> and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him." (Quran 2:135)

“And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him." (Quran 29:46)

Some Muslims segments interpret these verses to adjudicate that imitating others and being like them in outward appearance and behaviour leads to imitating them and being like them in one’s heart and mind, by way of gradual, hidden influence – a slippery slope that can ultimately lead to loss of faith in the Oneness of Almighty Allah. (Ibn Taymiyah, Iqtida’ as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem 1/548). Others see these verses as contextual, and acknowledge other references that also serve to guide conduct. Almighty Allah guides Muslims to act justly and righteously towards disbelievers.

“Perhaps Allah will put, between you and those to whom you have been enemies among them, affection. And Allah is competent, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. 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.” (Quran 60:7-8)

“Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you, because of religion... of being righteous to them. Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion...” (Quran 60:8-9)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, "Hate your enemy mildly; he may become your friend one day" (Al-Tirmidhi)

## 2.5 Interaction

Disbelievers should not be wronged, or persecuted by Muslims without just cause.

A number of companions (may Allah be pleased with them) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said, **'Beware, if anyone wrongs a mu`ahid [i.e. a non-Muslim enjoying the protection of Muslims], or diminishes his right, or forces him to work beyond his capacity, or takes from him anything without his consent, I shall be his adversary on the Day of Judgment'** (Abu Dawud).

In another hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said, **"Whoever killed a mu`ahid shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years (of traveling)."** (Al-Bukhari).

"Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, curtails their rights, burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment." (Abu Dawud)

Muslims are ordained to honor agreements with persons of other religious denominations, and maintain peaceful relations.

"Excepted are those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists and then they have not been deficient toward you in anything or supported anyone against you; so complete for them their treaty until their term [has ended]. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous [who fear Him]." (Quran 9:4)

The Quran and the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) allows for / demonstrated friendly relations, interactions and transactions with non-Muslims. At the very least, Muslims are warned to maintain justice and avoid transgressing limits, despite personal prejudices and hatred.

**"O mankind! We created you from a single soul, male and female, and We made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the greatest of you in piety. Allah is All-knowing, All-aware."** (Quran 49:13)

"And by the Mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you;" (Quran 3:159)

**"and let not the hatred of some people in (once) stopping you from Al-Masjid al-Haram (at Makkah) lead you to transgression (and hostility on your part)."** (Quran 5:2)

**"and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety."** (Quran 5:8)

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“Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the neighbor who is near of kin, the neighbor who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful.” (Quran 4:36)

“Because of that We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind. And indeed, there came to them Our Messengers with clear proofs, evidences, and signs, even then after that many of them continued to exceed the limits (e.g. by doing oppression unjustly and exceeding beyond the limits set by Allah by committing the major sins) in the land” (Quran 5:32)

**“Let there be a group among you who call ‘others’ to goodness, encourage what is good, and forbid what is evil—it is they who will be successful.”** (Quran 3:104)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) used to do business and enter into dealings with non-Muslims. It was narrated that `A`ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said, “The Messenger of Allah bought some food on credit from a Jew, and he gave him a shield of his as collateral (*rahn*)” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Jabir ibn Hayyan said: “The Prophet and his Companions stood up for the funeral of a Jew until it disappeared” (Sunan An-Nasa’i).

In Islam, Muslims are mandated to maintain ties, good relations with, and give due respect to, their family, kin, relatives, neighbors and those with whom they interact or transact in society – Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This includes being kind and gentle with them, showing care, visiting the sick, being good to neighbors, **even when treated badly**. As we are told in ahadith, failure to do so in some instances can condemn a person to the hellfire, even if they uphold regular prayer, fasting and charity.

**“And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years; give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination. But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly, and follow the path of him who turns to Me in repentance and in obedience. Then to Me will be your return, and I shall tell you what you used to do.”** Quran 31:14-15)

“... and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship)...” (Quran 4:1)

“And give to the kindred his due and to the miskeen (poor)...” (Quran 17:26)

Asma’ bint Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with her) said, “My mother came to me while she was still a polytheist, so I asked the Messenger of Allah, ‘My mother, has

come to visit me and she is hoping for (my favor). Shall I maintain good relations with her?’ He (peace be on him) replied, ‘**Yes, maintain good relations with your mother**’” (Al- Bukhari and Muslim)

“The one who maintains a relationship with his relatives only because they maintain a relationship with him is not truly upholding the ties of kinship. The one who truly upholds those ties is the one who does so even if they break off the relationship.” (Sahih Bukhari)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, “A Muslim walking to visit a sick person will be wading in the mercy of Allah. When the visitor sits with the sick one, they will be immersed in mercy until his return.” (Ahmed)

Prophet Muhammed (peace be on him) reportedly said, “On the Day of Resurrection, Almighty Allah will say, ‘O son of Adam! I became sick and you did not visit me!’ The person will say, ‘O Lord, how can I visit you and you are the Lord of all that exists!’ Allah will say, ‘Did you not know that my slave ‘so and so’ was sick, and you did not visit him? Did you not know that if you visited him, you would have found me with him?’” (Muslim)

Hazrat Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) asked the Prophet (peace be on him) about which neighbors she could send gifts to. He replied, “To the one whose door is closest to yours.” (Sahih Muslim)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said, “For whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement it is essential that he does not harm his neighbors...” (Bukhari and Muslim)

### 3. The Acceptability of Muslim Participation in Non-Muslim Events

For Muslims, there are some practices that are obligatory, others that are encouraged, others which are allowed, permitted, tolerable or not prohibited, others that are discouraged, and yet others which are prohibited, be they borderline, or explicit.

#### 3.1 Extending Greetings:

There are some greetings that are proffered on non-religious events or seasons, such as birthdays or at the start of the New Year (by various calendars). **There is nothing wrong from an Islamic perspective in extending these greetings to others at these times.**

Some hold the view that saying Merry Christmas is endorsing belief in Jesus as the son of God. Others reject the linkage and say wishing one Merry Christmas or Shubh Divali (meaning auspicious or prosperous Divali) is extending a greeting of the season, and does not affirm religious belief. Instances like these are difficult to ascertain unless the intent behind the greeting is known – a matter largely left for Almighty Allah to judge, on a fixed day of Judgement.

There are some greetings that are go beyond seasonal salutations and actually endorse association of partners with Allah. Sentiments bearing, for example, remarks such as “May the

light of Mother Lakshmi guide you” or “on the (birth or resurrection) of the Savior”, “He is Risen”, or “birth of the Son” are direct associations to beliefs held by other religions.

Where Muslims have the opportunity to extend a generic reply to greetings related to such events, Muslims are encouraged to extend generic greetings to not be rude, to maintain cordial relations and be courteous, while not risking engaging in questionable practices.

MajlisTT is of the position that some greetings are coined as generic greetings related to an event, and are acceptable to extend to others; whereas other greetings are endorsements of religious beliefs that associate partners with Allah, and must be avoided. MajlisTT holds the position that by extending greetings commensurate with the season, we are not endorsing other theological beliefs, but rather simply extending greetings to segments of the community. We urge Muslims to be mindful of what exactly we are saying, and ensure that sentiments do not state or imply association of a partner or partners with Almighty Allah, or goes against any of the fundamental tenets of Islam.

### 3.2 Eating Food:

It is common for food to be shared to all in attendance at many events. In such instances, eating food is permissible to Muslims as long as the food is not dedicated to a god or deity other than Allah. Muslims need to bear in mind that food that is halaal cannot be made ‘unhalaal’. Islam has defined what is permissible and what is not. In addition to the aforementioned verse, we also note the following:

“Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah; that which hath been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form); that which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety....” (Quran 5:3)

“The food of those who were given the Scripture (before you) is permitted to you and your food is permitted to them. And (lawful to you in marriage are) chaste women from among the Believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you” (Quran 5:5)

Verily, the lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know. Thus, he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honor, and he who falls into doubtful matters will fall into the unlawful as the shepherd who pastures near a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Verily, every king has a sanctum and the sanctum of Allah is his prohibitions. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 52, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1599)

According to the laws of Hanafi fiqh, When halal and haram mixes, the haraam overpowers the halaal. From this law it is determined that to mix food that has been dedicated to other than Allah in a pot of regular food makes that entire food unlawful for us to consume. Al Ashbah wa Nazair Law #2

In light of the aforementioned, MajlisTT notes the following:

- It is understood that some religious practices and events entail food in general or a small amount of food being *dedicated* to other god(s), and then (in some instances) mixed with the remaining food to be served. Where this mixing occurs, these foods should be avoided.
- If food that is permissible for Muslims to consume is prayed over by persons of a different religion or religions, but is not dedicated to another god, then it is acceptable for Muslim consumption.
- Muslims are urged that whenever they are going to eat lawful meat, if they are not sure whether it is acceptable for Muslims (i.e. halaal or slaughtered by people of the book), it would be safe to say 'Bismillah' before they start to eat.
- There are some Muslims that assert avoidance of any practices that even appear to be imitation, so that if turkey is commonly prepared on Thanksgiving, they should avoid preparing turkey at that time, to not risk imitation. Muslims are reminded to be mindful that we do not follow the disbelievers, nor encourage the perpetuation of such festivities. But we also cannot be intolerant and inflexible, or extreme in our interpretations and practices. This is an extreme position to take and we remind Muslims of the hadith:

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, "Facilitate things to people (concerning religious matters), and do not make it hard for them and give them good tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam)." (Sahih Bukhari and Muslim)

### 3.3 Decorations, Restorations and Renovations:

Decorations and enhancements to properties and facilities are also a common practice and prevalent at different seasons associated with events and festivals. Decorations can include ornaments and objects such as symbols, colors and shapes, which are either symbolic of the season, or have direct associations with religions and religious belief. MajlisTT notes that the authentic histories of some of these ornaments and objects are difficult to ascertain, and it may be there is a direct religious linkage, or it may be that religious association is retrofitted to previously upheld traditions.

In this regard, Muslims are cautioned to ascertain the religious significance of the decorations. If yes, then they should not do it. (e.g. deya, crucifix, etc.). If there are no religious connotations, then while its preferable to *not* associate with such, there is no restriction on doing so.

In many cases, the acts themselves are not wrong or disliked in Islam, and may even be allowed or encouraged. In many instances as well, it may make economic sense to engage in some activities (such as renovating or enhancing properties) in times that coincide with festivals, without any intent to endorse or commemorate said events.

- For businesses, there is no objection to business decorating at the time of national events. This is especially for businesses that tend to have customers from all walks of life and diverse denominations and backgrounds.
- For households, MajlisTT reiterates that if there are no religious connotations, then while it is preferable to not associate with such practices, there is no restriction on doing so. MajlisTT further notes and acknowledges that we may not want to be ourselves, or have our children be feeling left out of events or activities that occur at some events, where such events or activities are in themselves allowed or not disliked in Islam. Families have to be cautious in this matter, and educate their members, learn about the practices that are upheld, in making the decision on how to act.

MajlisTT further notes that if one decorates for an event, one can be accused of following the ways of the disbelievers, etc. Some assert that the mere fact of putting up decorations is participation in an event. While MajlisTT does not condemn the practice, we urge Muslims to try to demonstrate that Islam does not uphold those things. Persons participating in events in this manner would have to use discretion; it is not something one can just condemn, since it can be used as a basis to establish a good relationship with others, and bring them closer to Islam.

### 3.4 Participation

Participation in non-Muslim events is a sensitive issue, since the variance in the public would span persons who are in all-Muslim families, or mixed families (Muslim and non-Muslim families), and all of this operates within the context of a Muslim-minority community and a national culture that displays elements of multiculturalism.

In the context of Muslims in society today, there is need to uphold the values and beliefs of Islam on one part, represent Islam in our relations, representations and interactions with others on another, and be active members of the community and promote inclusion, tolerance and mutual respect, on a third.

In this regard, some events are outright un-Islamic and there is no room for compromise in Muslim non-involvement, others are questionable and subject to discretion – underpinned by the intention behind involvement, while others are consistent with Islamic values and there should be no concerns with a Muslim’s participation.

MajlisTT also notes that on one extreme, Muslims should be careful not to take too rigid a stance that repels others from Islam or Muslims, nor portray an image of Muslims that are elitist or insular. At the other extreme, Muslims also need to be careful of being too lenient – if something is wrong or discouraged in Islam, then we must comply, understand and communicate the wisdom of why it is so. In the same vein, we should be diplomatic in what we are saying, and be careful to not create a barrier with others.

We are told in the Quran,

“O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you ...” (Quran 7:26).

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“O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters” (Quran 7:31)

“The life of this world is alluring to those who reject faith, and they scoff at those who believe. But the righteous will be above them on the Day of Resurrection...” (Quran 2:212)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said that no sooner does the performance (*‘amal*) of a people deteriorate than they embark on decorating their mosques. (Ibn Majah)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said that he feared for his followers the peril of the splendor of the life of this world and its (false) adornments which they will soon possess and with which they will be tested. (Sahih Muslim)

All celebrations should be tempered with the principles of Islam, and in that regard, we observe the following:

- There are some specific things that are explicitly disallowed for Muslims, including wearing revealing or vulgar costumes, dancing in festivals, singing or reciting works that endorse belief in other god(s).
- Some activities are subject to the discretion (of the parents or decision-makers), and include such aspects as the creative activities (such as craft, compositions and so on are ok, once the activities and the artefacts do not contradict Islamic beliefs). In the same way, singing of songs can be acceptable, depending on the lyrics of the songs and the conduct and manner in which it is practiced.
- Nothing is wrong with students attending school-events and listening to or observing proceedings, nor is anything wrong for students to engage in learning the theory of the festival, or studying the event in a classroom condition. These activities should not include or require participation in haram or other activities which Muslims should avoid.

There are some days and events for which there are no issues or concerns. Events and celebrations (such as Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Children’s Day) are consistent with Islamic teachings and, while not mandatory, are acceptable. Some persons have reservations that these events should not be relegated to single days, but whether it is done on a specific day or not, its principles are based on Shariah.

Some events bear elements of worship to other than Allah (such as the singing or playing of religious songs during events) and should be avoided. Other situations promote debauchery or encourage persons away from the remembrance of Almighty Allah (such as participation in carnival celebrations held in primary and secondary schools, that entail ‘jump up’, costume wearing, dancing, singing songs of the season – such as calypso, soca, chutney) and should be avoided. Relatedly, there are some celebrations such as school graduation balls, parties replete with dancing and revelry, gatherings which promote consumption of alcohol, narcotics or other haram substances, or events that promote promiscuity and public or private sexual interaction

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which are unlawful according to Islam. These are not of Islam; they contravene Islamic obligations, and should be avoided outright.

Some celebrations observed throughout society, such as Halloween, Valentine's Day, La Toussaint, etc. have no Islamic significance; instead, they have pagan underpinnings, and should be avoided.

Parents and decision-makers need to exercise discretion – it is not the intention to have children feel alienated from a class or school, but at the same time we need to be careful that we do not create the environment where these activities are seen as acceptable, now or in the future.

Some also assert that for seasons such as Christmas and Easter, even some sects of Christians do not celebrate the events, so why should Muslims. MajlisTT notes that while Muslim participation is not prohibited outright, they should try to not put emphasis on these celebrations. Rather, Muslims can emphasize events within the Islamic calendar, such as the Eids, and refocus the attention to, and create greater awareness for, these.

We acknowledge that there are some proceedings where parts of the programs may have questionable or haram proceedings. In such situations, nothing is wrong for Muslims to attend the parts of the program that are not in contravention of Islamic proceedings, but avoid being present for those parts that contradict Islam. In other situations that require our establishing a presence (such as funeral proceedings), nothing is wrong with a Muslim being present, but not participate in the religious proceedings where these contravene Islamic beliefs. Wisdom and tact should be used in making this decision.

### 3.5 Gift Giving, Charity and Trade Promotions:

Many seasons, both religious (e.g. Christmas) and non-religious (e.g. birthdays), are replete with gift giving and gift exchanges. Islam encourages giving of gifts, as we are told in numerous ahadith:

“Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment...” (Quran 7:32)

“Exchange gifts with one another, so you may love one another.” (Bukhari)

Aisha (ra) said: “The Messenger of Allah (saw) used to accept gifts and reward people for giving them.” (Al Mufrah)

“Whoever does you a favour, respond in kind, and if you cannot find the means of doing so, then keep praying for him until you think that you have responded in kind.” (Abu Dawud)

In light of this, nothing is wrong with the practice of gift giving and gift exchanges, once the gifts being given are permissible in accordance with Islam. MajlisTT wishes to remind Muslims

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to remember what it means to be a Muslim, and try not to put emphasis on the celebration itself – gift giving should not be limited or done to commemorate specific festivals or events only.

Muslims are also guided to not be extravagant, nor should we spend money unnecessarily:

“...and do not spend wastefully. Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful.” (Quran 17:26-27)

“O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.” (Quran 7:31)

Relatedly, at many occasions there are requests for charity, collections of money, food, clothing and other items to be given as charity. These acts are in some cases obligatory, and in others encouraged in Islam. MajlisTT notes that charity is not limited to giving physical objects or money, but extends to other acts and behaviors as well.

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, “The Prophet (peace be upon him) was the most generous of people, and he was most generous during Ramadan” (Sahih Bukhari)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said, “*Your smile for your brother is a charity. Your removal of stones, thorns or bones from the paths of people is a charity. Your guidance of a person who is lost is a charity.*” (Sahih Bukhari)

In another hadith, we are told, “*A charity is due for every joint in each person on every day the sun comes up: to act justly between two people is a charity; to help a man with his mount, lifting him onto it or hoisting up his belongings onto it, is a charity; a good word is a charity; and removing a harmful thing from the road is a charity.*” (Al-Bukhari, Muslim)

In addition, it is customary around seasons for business to offer promotions to their customers, in the form of discounts, special offers, gifts with purchases, etc. As long as the products are halaal, these practices have no religious significance, and Muslim-owned and managed businesses are free to engage in these offers.

#### 4. Conclusion:

Islam is very firm against those acts and practices that associate partners with Almighty Allah. It gives guidelines to Muslims to avoid those acts and practices, or avoid the risks of becoming influenced in same. In many circumstances considered above, there are many acts associated with other events that are not wrong in and of themselves – some in fact are consistent with Islamic beliefs and practices. However, participation may be construed as tacit endorsement of the event itself, at the least, or contain elements that are outright disliked, if not prohibited. As such, Muslims are reminded to be conscious of their intentions when engaging such events.

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MajlisTT recognizes that – despite how the act of participation appears to others – the intentions of a person may not be, and should not be, to celebrate the event, but rather to create love and harmony in society, and in so doing bring persons closer to Islam. This places the responsibility on the individual to know what they are participating in, find out more if they are unsure, and use discretion and wisdom in their decisions and actions. And for this we are reminded in the Quran,

“Your Lord is most knowing of what is within yourselves. If you should be righteous [in intention] - then indeed He is ever, to the often returning [to Him], Forgiving.” (Quran 17.25)