

# **Editorial, Volume 2, Number 3 Winter 2008**

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Editorial about the efforts to be done towards the Islamic Unity, in order to find a common ground for all the islamic mahdahib to be united against all the enemies manifested and hidden of Islam.

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## Editorial

The coming together of the different *madhahib* (schools of jurisprudence, theology, or thought) within Islam and the unification of the ranks of Muslims against the enemies of Islam, has been the aspiration of many visionaries and concerned individuals within the Islamic world, and has been one of the most important goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran since its inception.

Undoubtedly, there are those who hold that the attempt to bring together the different *madhahib* within Islam is tantamount to the spread of an intellectual and ideological form of liberal pluralism and something which leads to the censoring and revision of various historical and recorded realities; however, this is far from the case. The principle objective in pursuing this endeavour is to unite the various Islamic groups and communities [and has no ulterior agenda apart from this].

This noble aspiration is dependent on a number of different factors which include: 1) ensuring the well-being of the individual and society, by being firmly rooted in the Qur'an and the traditions, 2) avoiding division within the ranks of Muslims, 3) preventing the loss of Divine favour and the weakening of faith, and 4) putting a stop to the subjugation of Muslims and the dominance of foreign powers in Muslim countries.

Today, in the wake of the Islamic resurgence movement, Muslim nations have become aware of the existence of a common enemy and its malevolent intentions; it has become imperative, therefore, for the concerned Muslim to struggle and devote himself in order to defuse the divisive plots of the enemies and to return to Islam its former glory and grandeur. With a single and united voice (*tawhid-e-kalemeh*), Muslims should take steps towards the dissemination of *tawhid* or monotheism (*kalemeh-e-tawhid*), which is the greatest and most apposite of man's divinely mandated destinies.

It is only with the growth of intellectuality, under the guidance of religion, that one may remove any inhibitions and be able to lay the theoretical framework for the proper conduct of the individual and society. This effort—as well as the acquisition of a common language of discourse—can then act as the basis through which internal relations may be furthered between Muslim nations. This will foster

interaction and replace the current state of miscommunication and its unfortunate consequences.

The Iranian year 1386 was declared as “the Year of National Unity and Islamic Cooperation” by the supreme leader of the Islamic Revolution; it is in this light that the 21st conference of the World Assembly of the Proximity of the Islamic *madhahib* presents the following charter:

## The Charter of Islamic Unity

***In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.***

All Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Peace and salutations be upon the holy Prophet Muhammad (s), his pure progeny, his companions and those who follow him in virtue till the Day of Judgment.

**Whereas** Islam is a trust placed on the shoulders of Muslims and defending its sanctity and honour is obligatory for all; and

**Whereas** Islam has emphasized all issues which lead to Islamic unity; which lay the foundations for brotherly relations between the nations; which spread reason, good sense and a language of communication; and which enable cooperation, interdependency, consensus, and the maintenance of the sublime interests of Islam; and

**Whereas** the enemies of Islam—including arrogant global powers and Zionism—have waged a cowardly and extensive onslaught on the culture, values, interests and independence of the Islamic *ummah*, therefore, calling for efforts to marshal all material and spiritual forces to confront this enmity and antagonism:

We, the Muslim scholars, intellectuals and signatories of the following charter—in accordance with the valuable steps taken by previous *‘ulama* in the blessed city of Mecca, Tehran, Amman, Cairo and elsewhere—unequivocally endorse the roots, principles and methods enumerated below and call upon others to become duty-bound by them:

## General Principles

### Principle 1

Islam is the seal of religions, the only path which elevates mankind, and is a trust placed on the shoulders of Muslims. Therefore, it is incumbent on Muslims to employ it in all spheres of life, to defend its sanctity and honour, and to place its sublime interests above all other interests.

## Principle 2

The holy Qur'an and the noble Prophetic *sunnah* are the principle sources of legislation in Islam, as well as in all its teachings. The truthfulness and authenticity of these sources, as well as the dependency of all other secondary sources of legislation upon these ones, are agreed upon by all the Islamic *madhahib*.

## Principle 3

Accepting the following pillars and beliefs forms the criterion through which one may recognize a Muslim:

1. Belief in the oneness of Allah, the Most High (*Tawhid*)
2. Belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (s) and in his being the seal of the prophets, and acknowledging that his *sunnah* forms one of the two principle sources of religion. (*Nub'wwah*)
3. Belief in the noble Qur'an, and acknowledging that its concepts and decrees form the principle source of religion.
4. Belief in Resurrection. (*Ma'ad*)
5. Acceptance of the indisputable and agreed-upon tenets of the faith while not denying any of its foundational supports such as the canonical prayers, charity, fasting, pilgrimage and *jihad*.

## Principle 4

True Islam—while officially recognizing the principle of *ijtihad* within the framework of Islamic sources—acknowledges differences of opinion; for this reason, it behooves Muslims to consider the diversity in *ijtihad* as a natural element of Islam and to, therefore, respect the opinions of others.

## Principle 5

The unity of the Islamic *ummah* and safeguarding the interests and well-being of all Muslims is an important principle; moreover, Islamic brotherhood must be counted as the basis of any sort of collaboration, interaction and solidarity among Muslims.

## Future Outlook

### Principle 6

It is necessary that the *'ulama* and Islamic thinkers aspire towards the following:

To engage in efforts uniting modern-day Islamic communities, with the hope of returning them to a condition similar to the early period of Islam in terms of: spreading collaboration, cooperation and a

sense of spiritual brotherhood; calling for God-consciousness (*taqwa*); persevering against arrogance; encouraging truth and patience; and avoiding division, schisms and all things that lead to the weakening of Muslims.

To emulate the interactions that the leaders (*a'imma*) of the Islamic *madhahib* had with each other, and to convey the nature of this interaction to their followers today.

To spread the culture of solidarity among Muslims to the point where they accept differences of opinions and realize that they are a natural result of the legality of *ijtihad*.

## **Principle 7**

It is upon the *'ulama* and Islamic thinkers to guide, deepen and strengthen the Islamic revival movement; to insist on Muslims becoming acquainted with each other in order to bring together the followers of the different *madhahib*; and to encourage religious familiarity and Islamic brotherhood based on firm principles and a common understanding of Islam.

## **Scope of the Proximity**

### **Principle 8**

The effort to bring together the different Islamic *madhahib* embraces all aspects of life of its followers, including beliefs, jurisprudence, morality, culture and history.

### **Principle 9**

In addition to what was mentioned earlier, the following plans and programs are necessary for ensuring the proximity of the Islamic *madhahib*.

1. Absolute cooperation on issues about which Muslims are unanimous is a necessity.
2. All material and spiritual energies aimed at elevating the Word of Allah and employing Islam as the most stable path to felicity must be mobilized.
3. A united approach in confronting the enemies of Islam, particularly on issues common to the whole Islamic *umma* such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, etc. must be coordinated
4. Name-calling (*tafsiq*) and declaring each other as unbelievers (*takfir*) or of ascribing innovation (*bid'ah*) to other Muslims must be avoided. As Muslims who believe in the legality of *ijtihad* within the framework of Islamic sources, we must accept the necessity and end-result of this principle; such is the case even when the opinion of others appears erroneous in our view. Moreover, in our judgments regarding various differences of opinions, instead of issuing verdicts of 'belief' and 'disbelief', terms such as 'correct' and 'incorrect' may be more appropriate. Furthermore, declaring others as unbelievers on

account of their opinions—which, according to us are against the tenets of the faith, yet which according to them are not—is unacceptable.

5. Respectful interaction when encountering differences of opinion must be maintained; again, this is due to the acceptance of the diversity of *ijtihad* in Islam.

6. Insulting that which is sacred to others must be avoided. Considering that Islam allows a type of religious tolerance with regards to other faiths, and calls on Muslims not to disrespect the sacred beliefs of others (though they be erroneous), tolerance among Muslims, therefore, becomes a priority. For this reason, one must steer clear of disrespecting the sanctities of the followers of the Islamic *madhahib*; respect for the pure progeny (*ahl al-bayt*) of the Prophet (*s*) and his righteous companions must be insisted on.

7. Government organizations must avoid imposing a particular *madhhab* on their populace, thereby taking advantage of their needs and weaknesses. Through the official recognition of the certified Islamic *madhahib* and the acceptance of the principles mentioned previously, governments should accord followers of these *madhahib* all rights of citizenship.

8. There must be freedom of enacting personal religious laws. In matters related to individual affairs, the followers of the Islamic *madhahib* should be permitted to follow their respective *madhhab*; however, in matters related to public affairs, they should follow the current laws governing their country.

9. In light of the fact that the Holy Qur'an calls upon Muslims to converse with others with reason and wisdom, while shunning fiery and intimidating speech, and with the sole aim of understanding truth, it behooves Muslims, as a matter of priority, to solve their differences peacefully through dialogue and within the confines of logic and morality. In this way, they will have taken a practical step towards proximity and the materialization of its values in their life.

10. The doors of conversation and dialogue regarding the disputed areas of history, theology and jurisprudence should remain open. This dialogue should be carried out in an impartial manner and in the spirit of brotherhood by experts and specialists in the field—with the sole aim of attaining the truth. The establishment of distinct seminaries to foster such dialogue in the fields of theology, jurisprudence and history would be a worthy undertaking towards this end.

11. The jurisprudence of Islamic unity and the etiquettes of dealing with differences should be taught. Such teachings, as well as constructive debates in jurisprudence, theology, and Qur'anic exegesis (both topical and comparative) may be conducted in the sanctuary of Islamic seminaries and educational establishments where there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and where criticism of each other's opinions is avoided.

12. Developmental (*tarbiyati*) centres committed to the Qur'an and *sunnah* must be revived in order to reduce the tendencies towards extreme materialism, to prevent the deceptions of new-age or pseudo-

religious movements, and to correct the ignorance regarding the true principles of Islam.

13. The certified *‘ulama* of the Islamic *madhahib* must strive to foster moderation and tolerance through the implementation of any and all educational methods available. This includes assemblies, scholarly seminars and public conferences. Moreover, by taking advantage of institutions devoted to ensuring proximity, and with the aim of correcting the attitudes of the educational institutes of theology and jurisprudence, they may be able to implement Islam through a variety of ways. The *‘ulama* should convey the idea that the differences among the *madhahib* are differences of diversity (*tanawwu’*) and gradation (*takamul*), and are not oppositional differences (*tadhad*). On this note, the unique qualities and distinguishing features of each one of the different *madhahib* should be brought to light and familiarity with their respective anthologies of literature should be encouraged.

14. Extremist and radical ideologies and tendencies which are contrary to the Qur’an and the *sunnah* must be confronted. The conditions mentioned earlier to determine which tendencies or groups meet the criteria of being in the fold of Islam should be considered in this process.

15. The *madhahib* should not be blamed for the mistakes and actions of Muslims who claim to follow them whether in issues of belief, jurisprudence and erudition, or in actions such as killing innocent people, defiling the honour and reputation of individuals and destroying property. Moreover, it is necessary to resolve on preventing acts which further lead to discord among Muslims and their becoming deviated. Efforts should be made to eradicate provocative and seditious issues which act as a catalyst for angering Muslims and which cause schisms within the communities.

16. The issuance of *fatwas* should be limited to persons who are experts and have profound knowledge of the Qur’an and the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (s) or are learned in related sciences such as jurisprudence and its principles, and therefore have the ability to deduce religious rulings from the mentioned sources. They should also have a general awareness of the state and affairs of Muslims and the contemporary circumstances under which they live.

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