



Shia Muslim Council of Southern California

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Muharram Message – Answering the call of '*hal minnasireen yansuroona*' (who is there who would help us?)

Once again, as we all prepare ourselves for Aza (lamentation) of Imam Hussain (AS) during Muharram and Safar 1436, let us remind ourselves that when leaving Madinah, Imam Hussain declared, "*Wa innama kharajtu li talabi-l islahi fi ummaati jaddi*" (Indeed, I am leaving Madinah to reform the *umma* of my grandfather). There can be no better guidance for us all than our responsibility to answer the call of '*hal minnasireen yansuroona*' (who is there who would help us), which Imam Hussain made on the day of Ashura.

Aza is our way of responding to his call and we must not fail in our response by allowing this important tradition to be perceived as mere ritual. Unquestionably, the mourning ceremonies have been the most potent force in organizing and rejuvenating the Shia communities the world over. Today, centuries later, the remembrance of the tragedy of Karbala continues to draw ever-increasing crowds to the many Islamic centers round the world as soon as the Muharram crescent is sighted. The undertaking of Imam Hussein (as) is a movement of reform based on the Islamic principles. The moral principles that were set up by the holy Prophet of Islam were on the verge of destruction, and human values forgotten, and treachery and injustice became common. Imam Hussein's uprising was aimed at the corruption of the Umayyad government and the social disorders of the day. Today there are many parallels, and as we commemorate yet another Muharram, we must not lose sight of that. We must not evade our responsibilities to campaign against injustice, oppression, poverty, corruption and social disorders.

According to the Holy Quran, when the moral fabric of a society is being torn then such a community traverses the path of corruption and needs to be reformed. Prophet Shuaib has been quoted as saying, "I desire nothing but reform so far as I am able, and with none but Allah is the direction of my affair to a right issue; on Him do I rely and to Him do I turn." (Quran 11:88) The basis to seek reform in Islam is "*amr bil maaruf and nahi anil munkar*" (enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong). Human beings should not remain indifferent towards personal and social disorders, but they should invite people to prosperity, purity, and justice.

Reform in Islam has been regarded as a social responsibility, which includes all affairs. In other words, reform in Islam is an effort to remove deficiencies, weaknesses, and corruption from within individuals and hence from society. The modern world primarily regards reform in economical, cultural, social and political spheres. Reform in the Islamic context means attention to religion and promotion of religious values to be considered the primary factors. The domain of reform in Islam begins from an individual and ends in society.

This is why today, as it has been for centuries, our Aza is a message to the world at large, that in the name of Imam Hussain (as) and seventy-two of his dear followers, who sacrificed their lives under the scorching sun of that parched land of Karbala—we stand for the truth, human values and social justice; we unequivocally reject the barbaric atrocities being perpetrated by the likes of ISIS and their sponsors in the name of Islam; and we stand with the likes of Sheikh Nimr and many others who are being silenced for speaking out against their despotic rulers.

Let us ensure we send a loud and a clear message this Muharram that when we see any group of people being humiliated, downtrodden, oppressed, suffering from a despotic regime, we will support them to stand for their rights because that is the constant lesson we draw from the events of Karbala—***refuse to tolerate the despots of today and never reconcile with an unjust authority, whether a Muslim or a non-Muslim.***

May Allah accept our efforts in answering the call of "*hal minnasireen yansuroona*"!

Imam Sayed Moustafa al-Qazwini
President – Shia Muslim Council of Southern California