

Muslims have to take part

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It is the duty of Islamic people to breathe the same air as the masses, who work for a just state

MUSLIMS in South Africa can learn from the past that they cannot just criticise and make demands without being part of the solution and proactively get involved in the delivery. They cannot arrogate to themselves a privileged position, breathe the same air as the masses, eat from their hard toil and labour but exclude themselves from building this fragile democracy.

It is said that "God upholds the just state even if it is unbelieving (not Islamic) but does not uphold the unjust state even if it is Muslim". There is a group of "know it-all thinkers" among South African Muslims, which believes that it is morally just not to vote. They argue that by casting their votes, they would be partners to legalised abortion, prostitution and gay rights, among other things.

At a public meeting late last year, which was convened to discuss ways to deal with crime and which was attended by the metro, north/south central mayors and other stakeholders, one Muslim said that he was better off under the apartheid regime. He spoke disparagingly about President Mandela. Undoubtedly, those who were comfortable during the oppressive rule and did not suffer in spite of racist policies that denied health facilities, water and electricity, housing

and education to the masses must hate the man who languished for almost three decades in prison.

Today we breathe the air of freedom because of people like President Mandela, Billy Nair, Yusuf Daboo, Ahmed Kathrada, Monty Naicker, Walter Sisulu and people who were murdered in detention like Imam Abdullah Harun and Steve Biko. Justice and freedom also means not having the same amount of privileges some of us had during the pre-democratic phase while the masses suffered. It also means a concerted effort to break from the shackles of the past and become involved in nation-building. I am not suggesting that we stop making constructive criticisms but to desist from government-bashing and falling prey to those exploiting our fears and the serious challenges facing our fledging democracy.

Those who supposedly hold the moral high ground argue that the Shari'ah (Islamic law governing every aspect of life) is the solution to all the problems we face in South Africa. The Shari'ah is not implemented in any Muslim country today, which is one of the major reasons for the socio-economic turmoil and political oppression. The Shari'ah, however, cannot be imposed by a minority, and its greatest strength lies by exemplary behaviour. It is most dear to the Creator who desires the best for all Creation. Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessing be upon him) said that God is most patient and that he cares and provides sustenance for even those people who ascribe partners to him (which is the greatest sin in Islam). In the Qur'an, God

states that every human being is a dignified-sacred person. There are many verses of the Qur'an and numerous examples from the Prophet's life that show Islam is for humanity and not for a particular group which may consider itself an endangered species, requiring special treatment, cast in a privileged stone.

In any country where a democratic government is established, crime becomes a formidable destabilising force. Immediately after the introduction of an Islamic State in Madinah 1400 years ago, wars were waged and for 13 years criminals murdered Muslims to destabilise the first Islamic state. The charter of Madinah was an agreement of peace by Jews and Christians, with the first head of state, the Prophet, also allowing them to practise their religion and enjoy the protection of the state.

The pagan Arabs on the other hand massacred the Muslims because of their insistence that all men and women were equal before the law, resources had to be distributed, contracts had to be reduced to writing, education became a priority and poverty alleviated. All were the children of Prophet Adam (God's peace and blessings be upon him), created of dust so that no one could claim class or race distinction according to the Prophet's exemplary teachings. Servants and employees were treated with dignity- they ate with their employees and had to be provided with decent clothes and living wages. All were united with equal status, men and women, rich and poor, under one Creator.

The privileged class, the exploiters, those who suppressed and abused women, those

who buried their daughters alive, the various self-appointed leaders and the tribes which were involved in internecine wars had to either become part of nation-building or engage in acts of aggression and crime against the Islamic state and Muslims.

During Umar's rule, the second Khalif (successor to the Prophet as a political head of State) upheld the Shari'ah with utmost respect and passion, and people did not reject him when crime became rife. When the public treasuries ("banks") were robbed and policemen had to be introduced to guard the banks, they did not denounce him. They did not reject him when he suspended punishment when people stole because of the change in the economic condition. They supported him and turned the country into a prosperous state for all people.

Muslims in South Africa can learn from the past that they cannot just criticise and make demands without being part of the solution and pro-actively involved in delivery. They cannot arrogate to themselves a privileged position and exclude themselves from building this fragile democracy.

It is the collective responsibility of all South Africans to be part of nation building. Muslims must be involved in the affairs of all people selflessly at grassroots level. They do not have a mandate from God Almighty to behave in an isolationist manner or claim to be the chosen ones. On June 2, one can cast his or her vote and commit himself or herself to actively changing the conditions of this country for the better or sit back and become part of the problem.