

## Artikli fuq Suġġetti Differenti:

### **May peace prevail on this earth**

A few weeks ago I visited the Argotti Gardens in Floriana, where I saw written on a pole “May peace prevail on earth”. These few words drew my attention to write something about this important topic.

The single most important malady of the world today is the absence of peace. In the contemporary world, man, as a whole, has reached a high standard of achievement in material progress, made possible by the advancement of science and technology in every sphere of human requirement at a mind-boggling pace.

Nevertheless, man is not happy and content. There is growing restlessness, fear, premonition, lack of trust in the future and dissatisfaction with one’s heritage. Man is in search of peace.

To establish true peace, we must understand the spirit of true justice and equality. Every religion has the same teachings of peace; every religion guides to establish peace. God Almighty says that peace will only come about with justice and benevolence.

So, this is the way to establish peace. Do justice! Every problem cannot be solved with force, but good and just treatment fosters a feeling of bonding and trust. The urge for real peace comes from the heart and the voice that comes from the heart is the only one that establishes real peace because it is based on love and warmth. The Allah Almighty addresses all nations of the world on the basis of humanity and says all human beings are created from male and female and they are all equal.

This teaching of brotherhood, alone can foster love, affection and equality. Peace and security cannot be established until people of each race and nation are able to recognize that they are indeed the children of Adam and created by a male and female and are therefore equal.

Islam says that all mankind is like a family and it can only look after the peace and security of each member, only if it lives like a close-knit family. The apparent differences in mankind are only for identification. As humans we are all the same, and have the same sentiments and feelings. Peace and security will prevail when each other's sentiments are cared for.

In the end I would like to write one thing. We can have peace in this world if the majority of the believers in this world, of whatever religion, develop in themselves the love and fear of their Lord.

Man cannot live at peace with himself nor can peace be vouchsafed for society without this formula; no other formula can work. It is only the love of God which can bring about true respect for His creation.

This is the ultimate philosophy. Without returning to God one cannot attain peace and without that peace, peace in society cannot be built.

All human efforts to create peace from selfish ulterior motives are bound to fail. If there is no God, there is no peace. That is the ultimate wisdom.

To establish real peace we must remember our Lord and love His creation, and try to live by "Love for All, Hatred for None".

It is my fervent prayer that Allah the Almighty makes the world understand the reality of peace, and may peace prevail on earth.

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<http://stocks.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20081209/letters/may-peace-prevail-on-this-earth>

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## **Muslim fasting during Ramadan**

I saw a photo of a child wearing a cap before Friday prayers, on The Times of September 20, page 24, which drew my attention to the need to write something about Ramadan and Muslim fasting. It is obligatory for Muslims to fast one month every year in the month of Ramadan. The Holy Quran states: "O ye who believe, fasting is prescribed for you during a fixed number of days as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may safeguard yourselves against every kind of ill and become righteous."

The true purpose of Ramadan, as of all forms of Islamic worship, is to draw people closer to Allah and closer to mankind. Though normal pursuits and occupations are carried on as usual, the emphasis on moral and spiritual values and concentration on them are intensified, and everything is subordinated to the main purpose. The hearing, the sight, the tongue, the mind are all under stricter control. For instance,

not only vain talk, but much talk is also eschewed, so that there should be greater concentration on remembrance of Allah and reflection upon His attributes. Fasting in Islam begins everywhere at the first appearance of dawn, and ends with sunset. During this period one is expected to abstain from all food and drink completely.

It is not just physical hunger and thirst that constitute the Muslim fast, but the nights prior to the beginning of the fast acquire a far more important character and play a central role in the institution of fasting. The Muslims wake up many hours before dawn for individual prayer and the remembrance of God.

Also the Holy Quran is recited in every Muslim house much more than in ordinary days. A greater part of the night is thus spent in spiritual exercises which make up the very essence of fasting. During the day, apart from restraining oneself from food and water, all Muslims are particularly exhorted to avoid vain talk, quarrels and fights, or any such occupation as is below the dignity of a true believer.

In Islam, alms-giving and care for the destitute is so highly emphasised that it becomes part of a Muslim's daily life. However when it comes to Ramadan, the month of fasting, Muslims are required to redouble their efforts in this field. It is reported of the Holy Prophet that spending in the cause of the poor was a routine daily practice with him which has been likened unto a breeze, never ceasing to bring comfort and solace to the needy. However during Ramadan, the reporters of the Ahadith - the sayings of the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him) - remind us that the breeze seemed to pick up speed and began to blow like strong winds. Alms-giving and care for the destitute are so highly emphasised, that in no period during the year do Muslims engage in such philanthropic purposes as they do during the month of Ramadan.

The institution of fasting is extremely important because it cultivates the believer in almost every area of his spiritual life. Among other things, he learns through personal experience about what hunger, poverty, loneliness and discomfort mean to the less fortunate sections of society. Abstention from even such practices during the month of Ramadan as are permissible in everyday life plays a constructive role in refining the human character.

**Laiq Ahmed Atif**  
**Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Malta, Ta'Xbiex**

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# Ahmadiyya Muslim Association

In this day and age when violence, crime, drugs and alcoholism seem to be gaining the upper hand, it is very encouraging to hear about various religious representatives who are ready to meet, discuss and find out on what they can agree more than on what they disagree. One organisation which encourages interfaith dialogue is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association.

Laiq Ahmed Atif is the official representative in Malta of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, which this year is celebrating 100 years of its Caliphate.

This religious organisation, which advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths, is non-political, non-sectarian and also an international relief organisation.

It has branches in over 190 countries in all the continents. It does not discriminate on basis of faith, colour, religion or language. Recently, Mr Atif presented the President of Malta with a donation of €2,000 in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund. He also donated €1,000 to the National Foster Care Association of Malta to provide continued support for foster carers.

Between August 22-25, Lawrence Grech, my wife and myself were the honoured guests of this organisation's annual convention in Manheim, Germany. Our four-day stay will always remain a very memorable experience. We were warmly greeted by all-as were the many other guests-and the welcome given could not have been better. The great enthusiasm and participation of the thousands of members present was indescribable.

The climax of our visit was our meeting with the Caliph, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the supreme head of the organisation. We were greatly honoured by being given a private audience of about 20 minutes.

The Caliph is a very knowledgeable and wise person. His humility and saintliness are much admired and respected by all. He is a man of peace and love towards God and humanity. His organisation has and is suffering persecution by militant extremists in certain countries. For the Ahmadiyya Caliphate the "Jihad" is an expression of love towards God and struggle towards Him - and is different from militants "Jihad", as white is different from black.

The organisation's motto is 'Love for All Hatred for None' and their aim is to improve the quality of life of those less fortunate - not by words but by deeds.

**Godfrey Magri, Attard**

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20080923/letters/ahmadiyya-muslim-association>

## **Small Island, great generosity**

All human beings are the people of God and progeny of Adam. Allah Almighty says: He loves those who love His people and take care of them and feels mercy for them who feel mercy for His people.

Service to humanity has always been a central point of all the religions, and alms giving is addressed by all of them. Every religion teaches its believers to be of service through practical assistance, raising of funds and devotion of time and energy for those who are in need.

The generosity I saw on December 27 in L-Istrina made me appreciate this with the depth of my heart. The fact that more than €1.2 million were donated to the needy in just one day is really a thing to be widely appreciated. It shows the generosity of the Maltese people and their love for helping the poor and most vulnerable.

I would also like to express appreciation for the hosts of the programme, Peppi Azzopardi and Valerie Vella, who did a great job. They kept busy throughout the programme urging the audience to donate to charity and they did not rest. It showed their deep love and devotion towards this important charity programme.

I pray, may Allah Almighty bless us all and accept our donations and help us to perform a great service to humanity and may He enable us to provide assistance to our needy brothers.

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<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20090101/letters/malta-small-island-great-generosity>

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## **The Concept of Fasting in Religions**

Fasting is the practice of abstaining from food, either completely or partially, for a specified period. Fasting is another form of worship found universally in the world religions. Although there are vast differences regarding the mode of fasting and the conditions applied to it, the central idea of fasting is present everywhere. Where it is not mentioned clearly, it is likely that it may gradually have either been discontinued or have petered out through gradual decay in practice.

According to eleventh edition of Encyclopedia Britannica (1911) under the heading of 'fasting', "Fasting is of special interest when considered as a discipline voluntarily submitted to for moral and religious ends. As such it is very widely diffused. Its modes and motives vary considerably according to climate, race, civilization and other circumstances; but it would be difficult to name any religious system of any description in which it is wholly unrecognized."

According to Wikipedia, "Fasting for religious and spiritual reasons has been a part of human custom since pre-history. It is mentioned in the Bible, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Qur'an, the Mahabharata, and the Upanishads. Fasting is also practiced in many other religious traditions and spiritual practices."

According to present day Encyclopedia Britannica online, "Fasting has been practiced from antiquity worldwide by the founders and followers of many religions."

The Holy Quran states: "O ye who believe, fasting is prescribed for you during a fixed number of days as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may safeguard yourselves against every kind of ill and become righteous." (2:184)

Traditionally, fasting has been a widely used practice observed for the purpose of purifying the person or of atoning for sins and wrongdoing. Most religions designate certain days or seasons as times of fasting for their adherents. Prayer is supposed to accompany fasting in most religions. Fasting is also an excellent form of training for the physical, moral and spiritual development of man.

Fasting in Islam begins everywhere at the first appearance of dawn, and ends with sunset. During this period one is expected to abstain from all food and drink completely. It is not just physical hunger and thirst that constitute the Muslim fast, but a greater part of the night is thus spent in spiritual exercises which make up the very essence of fasting.

During the day, apart from restraining from food and water, all Muslims are particularly exhorted from vain talk, quarrels and fights, or from any such occupation as is below the dignity of a true believer. All Muslims are expected to spend in the cause of the poor, vulnerable and needy people.

The true purpose of Ramadan, as of all forms of Islamic worship is to draw people closer to Allah and closer to the mankind. It encourages prayers, almsgiving, the doing of other good deeds and refraining from evil giving one power to overcome all evil.

It is also an excellent religious discipline which trains the mind and body to cope with crisis, anger, hunger, thirst, etc. According to one mystic, the secret of life is to speak little, eat little and sleep little. All these disciplines are exercised during the month of fasting.

Throughout history, in almost all religions of the world, fasting has long been promoted as a spiritual means for intensifying prayers and faith. People have fasted as it is an obligation to God, leading to good health and spirituality. Fasting brings great spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health.

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<http://f1plus.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20090905/letters/the-concept-of-fasting-in-religions>

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## **Promotion of Tolerance**

In this age, when certain powers are engaged in destroying peace, when ill-feelings against each other are being sparked unnecessarily and walls of hatred and intolerance are being erected, the objective of establishing (creating) peace, love, affection, harmony and tolerance is all the more important.

On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1995, UNESCO's Member States adopted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. It is clear, respectful and appreciative of the rich variety of cultures, traditions, forms of expression and ways of being human. It is a Declaration of promotion of tolerance, live and let others live, demolishing walls of hatred, and building bridges of peace and tolerance. The Declaration respects rights of human beings and their freedom. The world is full of diversity and now when the world has become the global village, it is only tolerance that can ensure the survival and acceptance of mixed communities in every region of the globe.

Accordingly to the Oxford Advanced Learner's and an online dictionary the word "tolerance" means; "(1).The willingness to accept or tolerate sb/sth, especially opinions or behaviour that you may not agree with, or people who are not like you. (2) A fair, objective and permissive attitude towards those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc. differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry."

According to online Wikipedia, "Toleration and tolerance are terms used in social, cultural and religious contexts to describe attitudes which are "tolerant" (or moderately respectful) of practices or group memberships that may be disapproved of by those in the majority. In practice, "tolerance" indicates support for

practices that prohibit ethnic and religious discrimination. Conversely, 'intolerance' may be used to refer to the discriminatory practices sought to be prohibited."

Tolerance is a great moral value which encourages accepting diversity in life. Also religions take note of diversity in the universe and stress the useful purpose of diversity in races, colours, languages, cultures and wealth in human social order and describes these diversities as signs of God for those who reflect and possess knowledge.

Actually if we reflect we will find that human progress in life is closely linked with the diversity in attributes in various civilizations and cultures. Sameness would not have propelled us into action of greater achievements and challenges. Moreover, it is not impossible to conceive that if each one of us would have been alike in culture, language, colour etc., this world would have been very boring, monotonous and unspectacular. There would have been no particular urge to learn from one another and develop in various facets of life. It is only the diversity in life which makes this world colourful, wonderful and propels people towards higher goals and objectives. These diversities can be beneficial with promotion of tolerance, respect and harmony. As it is said love creates love; the same way tolerance does create tolerance.

There is no religion in the world - be it Islam, or Christianity, or Hinduism or for that matter any other faith - that teaches intolerance or hatred. All the religions have set for society rules of love, mercy, forgiveness, justice, patience, endurance and tolerance. These are immutable laws framed by a Being, Who knows the hidden and the future and Who has based them on truth and wisdom. We believe that God sent His Messengers to their respective people with moral and spiritual guidance so as to teach man tolerance, respect, and appreciation of diversity and how to live at peace with other people.

Today, it is time to realize the need of tolerance and to express feeling of love and affection and to renew ties of brotherhood and kinship so that we can try to establish peace in our societies in the best possible manner.

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<http://f1plus.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20091110/letters/promotion-of-tolerance>



## **Respecting Religious Feelings and Freedom**

Freedom is a prerogative of all living things, man being no exception. Liberty is the most cherished fruit of life. Man is the epitome of liberty which is ingrained in him. His very texture is woven with the yarn of liberty.

And man enjoys at most, his freedom of faith, because every human being has this right to choose and practise a religion of his own choice. All the main religions of the world believe in freedom of faith. The Holy Quran makes it absolutely clear that 'there is no compulsion in religion' (2:257). As long as that principle is adhered to, harmony, love and peace will be maintained in the society.

Yet, amazingly, we find all man-made institutions shaped to work against the liberty of man in the final analysis. A careful study of the history of progressive growth of traditions, customs and legislation is sufficient to prove this assertion.

Over the last few years, we have seen a considerable amount of adverse reaction to the wearing or display of religious symbols. The recent days have witnessed two more of this series as banning Christian crucifixes and minarets of Muslim mosques. Traditionally the main purpose of a minaret has been to provide a vantage point for the Muslim call to prayer.

The call to prayer can be compared to the ringing of bells from a church tower because both signify the time for worship. However out of respect for the local indigenous population, in most Ahmadi mosques in the Western Countries this does not occur and the call to prayer is instead performed from inside the mosque to minimise disturbance to non-Muslims.

Nonetheless, the minaret continues to play a role as a key architectural feature of the Islamic faith. In all Ahmadi mosques the true Islamic principles of love, peace and tolerance are continually exhorted and practised.

How can the religious symbols be a mean of offence, as they are only the symbols of respect and love towards religion and God?

Practising the faith of one's own choice is a fundamental human right and we cannot exclude the wearing or display of religious symbols from this fundamental human right.

And just because a symbol is shown somewhere in the modern age does not mean that someone is compelled to adopt that religion, or to accept the views represented by that symbol.

Respecting religious symbols of all the faiths and respecting sentiments of the people of different religions will lead to the international peace. And according to the Islamic teachings Ahmadiyya Community is always committed to show a great respect to all the religions, their founders, symbols and holy places.

Therefore, if peace is to be established, we will have to respect the sentiments of each other and safeguard the rights of society. It is easy to spread hatred but very difficult to sow the seeds of love.

Modern man has come so close to other men that he can find the whole world before him on the touch of a button while seated on his sofa in his drawing room. Were all the efforts to achieve that nearness of a global village aimed at kindling the fire of hatred or were they to witness the evergreen fruit-bearing trees of love and sympathy for mankind? Everyone will certainly agree that our goal should be to acquire and promote love.

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<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20091218/letters/respecting-religious-feelings-and-freedom>

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