

The Statement of the Muslim Brothers on Democracy

This statement was issued by the Muslim Brothers after a number of their members and leaders were arrested early last year, and after they were accused of cooperating with extremist Islamist groups.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Thanks to God in Whose grace good deeds are attained, and blessings on prophet Muhammad and the messenger of well-guidance and well-being ... During the last months, the Muslim Brothers were subjected to a severe security campaign, accompanied by media campaigns spreading a great deal of misinformation. Thus we issue this statement as a reminder of our true thought and methods that are corroborated by the facts that are known to all.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

And Blessings on His Trustworthy Messenger

This world is at present passing through an unprecedented epoch that is characterized by swift, major transformations in thought, political systems, and values, and in the balance of political, economic and military forces. As part of this world, Muslims are not removed from these processes, and cannot run their affairs as if they were inhabitants of a distant island who could absolve themselves of the consequences, dangers and challenges of this historical epoch.

One of the most serious phenomena that accompanied, and still accompanies, this historical epoch at the intersection of the different paths of humanity is the jumbling of concepts and the prevalence of misconceptions about "others." The international media have played a damaging role in creating and enforcing this phenomenon. Muslims were depicted as if they were savage, primitive peoples who lack humaneness, sound reasoning, progress and development. They were also depicted as if they were peoples who deny the rights of others to life, to freedom and to differences in opinion and judgment, to the extent that the whole world tends to suspect any-

thing Islamic and anyone Muslim.

We should honestly admit that part of the responsibility for this unjust confusion rests on the shoulders of Muslims, because of the ideas and visions which some of us propound, and the practical positions we adopt that corroborate this suspicion and open the doors to both legitimate and unfounded distrust. In addition, some matters that are not related to Islam nor approved by its principles, rules or texts, let alone by its prime values and intentions, are ascribed to Islam.

The Muslim Brothers consider that it is their right and a right of the people to declare unequivocally their positions on some of the leading issues in the debates between different civilizations. Hence, last year we issued some statements denoting our positions on the issues of shura, political pluralism, and women's rights. Despite the fact that, according to our knowledge, these statements were welcomed by impartial people and truth-seekers, the efforts to harm the Islamic civilizational trend in general persisted in the form of rumors, slander, and deliberate misunderstandings. Because of these efforts, and in answer to those who fight the Islamic trend and try to reverse it, we find ourselves obliged to reiterate our positions on the major issues that concern our nation and the people around us.

First, the general position as regards the people – Muslims and non-Muslims:

Initially we have to note that our positions on these and other issues are not provisional or optional positions that are based merely on discretion. Our positions are based on Islam, committed to its principles, and derived from its sources (foremost of which are the Qur'an and the established traditions of the Prophet). The Muslim Brothers believe that all people are inherently good, and are capable of proceeding on the right path. The Muslim Brothers do not occupy themselves with judging anyone to be an apostate. They accept what is outward and professed. They do not hold any Muslim to be an apostate however much he sinned, for souls are a matter for God, and it is He who rewards all endeavors.

We, the Muslim Brothers, always say that we are advocates and not judges, and thus we do not ever consider compelling anybody to change his belief, in accordance with God's words: "No compulsion in religion." Our position regarding our Christian brothers in Egypt and the Arab world is explicit (they don't say "Muslim world" or Christians brothers everywhere), established and known: they have the same rights and duties as we do. They are partners in the homeland, and brothers in the national struggle. They have all the rights of

citizenship – material and moral, civil and political. To do good to them and to cooperate with them in attaining good deeds are Islamic provisions which no Muslim can disregard or trivialize. Whoever believes or acts otherwise is forsaken by us.

Politicos and intellectuals raise the slogan of “pluralism” and the necessity of recognizing differences in opinions and creeds. Islam, since its very beginning, considers the diversity of people a human and universal fact, and establishes its political, social and cultural system on the basis of this diversity. (“We have created you as peoples and tribes to

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know each other.” Qur’an). Pluralism, according to Islam, requires recognizing the other, as well as the psychological and mental readiness to adopt from that other whatever is right, good and beneficial, for “wisdom is the long-sought aim of the man of faith: he should be the first pursue it” (Prophetic saying). Thus, it is so unfair to describe Muslims as an introverted, narrow-minded group, and as keeping behind a curtain that isolates them from the rest of the world and prevents them from interacting with other peoples. The Muslim Brothers re-emphasize their commitment to this wise Islamic vision, and remind their followers that each of them should epitomize this vision in all that he does and thinks: he should be close and amicable with peoples; he should open his mind and heart to all people; he should not treat anybody haughtily or insolently; his hand should be extended to all in good faith, love and good will; he should greet the whole world in peace. Thus was Prophet Muhammad a mercy sent to the world, and only thus could one be related to the Prophet and to his message (“And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you,” “It [the Qur’an] is a reminder for you and your people, and you will be called to account.” Qur’an).

Second: the issue of religion and politics:

The Muslim Brothers believe that ruling with justice, fairness and mercy is a part of the message of Islam, and that applying the laws of Islam is an ordinance of this. In the eyes of Islam, however, rulers are only human, and they have religious authority by virtue of any divine right. The legitimacy of government in a Muslim society should be derived from the consent and choice of the people, and from enabling the people to participate in public discussions and decisions. Applying this principle, people have the right to invent different systems, formulas and techniques that suit their conditions, which definitely would vary according to time, place and living conditions.

Although al-shura has its distinct meaning in Islam, it essentially accords with the democratic system which allows the will of the majority to prevail without infringing on the right of the different minorities to adopt different positions and opinions, and their legitimate right to advocate and defend these positions. Accordingly, the Muslim Brothers perceive organized political opposition as a check on the despotism of the majority, for “Indeed Man does transgress when he thinks himself self-sufficient” (Qur’an). In this way, organized political opposition is a part of the political system, not external to it or a threat to its unity and stability. Also, in this way, carrying out sound and fair elections, in an atmosphere of freedom and impartiality that is enjoyed by all political forces, is a real guarantee of the security and stability of society, and a warrant that no section of the nation would rebel against its political system, or use politics to subvert the security and stability of society. These are indispensable conditions for directing the capacities of the nation towards construction, production and development.

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Third: the issue of peaceful political practice and denouncing violence and terrorism:

The Muslim Brothers have announced dozens of times during recent years that they engage in political life with a commitment to legitimate means and peaceful tactics only, armed with sincere words and extensive efforts in the realm of social work, believing that the conscience of the nation and the consciousness of its sons are, in the end, just arbiters of the different intellectual and political trends that complete fairly under the constitution and the law. Therefore the Muslim Brothers reiterate their denunciation of the methods of violence and coercion and all forms of putschist action which divide the unity of the nation, and which – even if they enable those who perpetuate such acts to disregard the political and societal facts – are inconsistent with the free will of the masses of the nation. Furthermore, these methods constitute a great rupture in the wall of political stability, and undermine the real legitimacy in society.

At a time when the atmosphere of repression, anxiety, and turmoil which envelops the nation has embroiled some of its sons in terroristic acts that claimed innocent people, shook the security of the country, and threatened its economic and political progress, the Muslim Brothers declare – without hesitation or cajolery – that they are guiltless of any form or source of violence, and that they condemn all forms and sources of terrorism, and that those who shed inviolable blood and who assist in its shedding are partners in guilt. They are called upon – in all resoluteness and promptness – to return to the right path, for “the Muslim is he whose people are safe from his

tongue and hand” [Prophetic saying], and they should remember – in the midst of what they are doing – the testament of the Prophet in his last pilgrimage: “O, people! Your blood, money, and honor are to be inviolable by you till the Day of Judgment as the sacredness of this day of this year in this land [pilgrimage in Mecca].”

Some people deliberately confuse matters and unjustly accuse the Muslim Brothers of participation in violence and involvement in terrorism. They justify such accusations on the grounds of the Brothers’ persistent demand that the government should not meet violence with violence, that it should abide by the law and court ruling, and that in its treatment of the phenomenon of violence it should assimilate all the causes and circumstances and not be content with armed confrontation.

Such accusations are refuted by the unblemished record of the Muslim Brothers over many years, during both those years in which they participated in Parliament and parliamentary elections and those in which they were prevented from participating. Throughout, they remained committed to the stipulations of the constitution and the law and to holding to sincere words as their only weapon in the struggle for the cause of God.

This is not a matter of politicking or maneuvering, it is a matter of faith and doctrine with which the Muslim Brothers are prepared to stand before God on “a day when neither money

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nor children will benefit but those who come to God with a guiltless heart.” [Qur’an]

Fourth: the issue of human rights:

It is a pitiful irony that Muslims are accused of disregarding and violating human rights at a time when Muslims (peoples, governments, groups and individuals) are being subjected to unprecedented kinds of assaults on their basic rights and freedoms. Rulers and politicians of the superpowers employ two standards in evaluation: a standard of justice, equity and commitment to the human rights instruments for non-Muslims, and a standard of injustice and of justifying aggression when the issue is related to a Muslim people or government – the tragedies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Chechnya are still recent in memory.

Perhaps it is superfluous to remind ourselves and the world that Islam – as is known – has been and still is the only intellectual and political model that honors man and humanity, disregarding

differences in language, color, and race. Also, since its very inception it safeguarded lives, money and honor, and established that their inviolability is an Islamic rule that should be upheld by Muslims even if others violate it (“The animosity of some people [towards you] should not entice you to do injustice; it is more pious to do justice.” Qur’an). Although it is true that some Muslims at present or in the past have not rightly upheld this Islamic rule, their practices should not be imputed or attributed to Islam.

It remains to say to ourselves, to all our followers, and to the world that we are in the forefront of those who demand respect for human rights, safeguarding these rights for all people, and enabling the enjoyment of freedom within the framework of moral and legal systems. It is our belief that Man’s freedom is the way to any good, progress, and creativity, and that violating rights and freedoms under any banner, even the banner of Islam, degrades humanity, relegates it to a status inferior to that given it by God, and prevents it from blossoming. While saying this, however, we also put forth to international public opinion that the major injustices taking place in this age are done to Muslims and not by them. People of wisdom and of faith everywhere should call for equality in the enjoyment of freedom and human rights, for this equality is the true path towards international and social peace and towards a new world order that would rectify injustice and aggression.

This is our witness, and this is our call in reason and good advice for a new chapter in the relations between individuals and between peoples, where evil would be uprooted and everyone would live under justice, freedom and peace.

“Lord decide between us and our people in truth, for You are the best to decide.” [Qur’an]

The Muslim Brothers
Cairo, April 30, 1995

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