PEACE, LOVE, TOLERANCE

KEY MESSAGES FROM ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY ON PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

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بطريركية الأقباط الأرثوذكس

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Contents

Preface

People of faith understand that children are a gift from God – the Highest, the Almighty. God entrusts parents, families and the wider society with the responsibility to care for and protect children and to raise them in a climate of respect for themselves and others. The Islamic and Christian faiths place particular importance on the role of the family in raising children, and each provides mothers and fathers the guidance and support they need to bring up their children within the tenets of these two great religions. In today's increasingly violent and dangerous world, one of the most important duties of parents is to protect their children from harm and all forms of violence.

In this context, our two religious institutions – Al-Azhar University and the Coptic Church of Egypt – have joined together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the international agency charged with protecting the rights of children in all countries, to develop this guide to protecting children from the different forms of violence that deny them their rights to live, grow and develop as crucial members of our society.

Children are both our present and our future. No society can develop in a sustainable way without solidarity and significant national efforts to protect children, which is both a current responsibility and an investment in the future. Protecting children from all forms of deprivation, discrimination, violence and danger is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by international conventions to which most countries are committed, such as the Convention on Rights of the Child, which has become the reference for all the fundamental rights of children that should be respected, protected and enforced.

It is an established fact that fulfilling children's rights is one of the foremost aims of Islamic law. These aims cover the safekeeping of the religion, soul, mind, offspring and wealth. All of the rights due to children fall under the aim of safekeeping of offspring. If we refer to the discourse of the Holy Quran and the pure prophetic Sunnah concerning children, we find verses in the Quran that illustrate how children are a blessing from God, The Highest, a blessing to give thanks for. This is demonstrated in the following verses: "To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He wills. He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills male children. Or he makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren. Indeed, He is Knowing and Competent".[1]

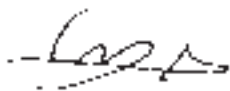1   Surat Al-Shura (Consultation), 42:49-50.

In Christianity, too, protecting children is a key principle and central to the role of the Church. In addition to representing the flowers, beauty, brightness and joy of life, children represent purity and the path to salvation: "... unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18: 3-4)

This book explores the approaches to preventing all forms of violence against children from the perspectives of Islam and Christianity. It is intended as a guide for all those who work in the wide field of caring for and protecting children including parents, servants, teachers, educators, imams, priests and others. It should be used in connection with protecting children from all forms of violence and harmful practices in the most important three circles that contribute to the development of the child's personality: the family environment; the school environment; and the social environment.

The Islamic and Christian scholars and child rights specialists involved in researching the contents of this book have made greatly commendable efforts. Such hard work will, God willing, undoubtedly lead towards the worthy goal of protecting children from all forms of violence and their harmful effects, allowing them to live their lives with the fullest level of physical, psychological and mental integrity.
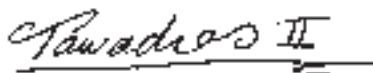
And God, The Highest, is the Aim of our intent and the Guide to the correct path.

May God compensate all!

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Al-Tayib

His Eminence, Grand Imam and Shaykh of Al-Azhar

His Holiness Pope Tawadros II

Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Holy See of Saint Mark

Introduction

The Islamic and Christian faiths place great value on children and the importance of raising them in a safe, protective and moral environment so that they may realize their rights to live, grow, develop and be active members of society.

Islam urges proper childrearing and care and keeping the child away from anything that could hurt his or her health or psychological or social condition. Children are a gift from God, The Highest, and a trust placed on the shoulders of the parents, society and the state. Allah says, "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded".[2] Also, the Prophet (peace be upon him [**pbuh**]) has said, "All of you are guardians and all of you are responsible for your subjects".[3]

The Christian Church likewise gives to children the necessary care, protection and development inspired by Jesus Christ. Saint Paul the Apostle emphasized parents' responsibility towards children when he addressed them by saying: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged". (Colossians 3: 21) In his letter to the Church of Ephesus, Saint Paul stated: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord". (Ephesians 6: 4) He also preaches to men to care for their families: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever". (1 Timothy 5: 8)

In today's world, families are confronted with different forms of violence that can harm children's physical, intellectual and moral development. Islam and Christianity both stress the importance of protecting children from all forms of violence.

Jesus Christ gave children a special status when He invited them in particular to come to him, "Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God". (Mark 10: 14) Christ also gave us an example of parenting and defined the responsibility of parents when it came to bringing up their children when he said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep". (John 10: 11)

Islam, in its essence and in its texts and legislation, provides for a protective environment for children. The Prophet (**pbuh**) said, "Indeed Allah will question everyone who is responsible

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2   Surat Al-Tahreem (The Prohibition), 66:6.
3   Reported by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, Book of Day of Gathering (Friday), Chapter: Friday in villages and cities, part 2, page 380, h893.

about his charge, whether kept or lost".[4] The protection of children is only achieved through confronting abuse, violence and exploitation that deprives, or threatens to deprive, the child of her or his basic right of access to adequate parental care, which even includes the choice of a good name, as well as education, health services, the enjoyment of play and recreation and the free expression of her/his inner thoughts.

These teachings are in line with international conventions, particularly the Convention on Rights of the Child, which guarantees children's rights to protection from all forms of deprivation, discrimination, violence and danger.

To stress to people of both faiths the importance of protecting children from violence, religious scholars and experts from Al-Azhar University, the Coptic Church of Egypt and UNICEF have collaborated closely to develop two publications – *The Islamic Perspective on Protecting Children from Violence and Harmful Practices* and *The Christian Perspective on Protecting Children from Violence and Harmful Practices*, both available in English and Arabic versions – that reflect the positions of these religions on multiple aspects of violence against children. The publications cover various forms of violence against children such as child labour, sexual abuse, children without parental care or who live on the street, domestic and school violence, armed conflicts and child trafficking, as well as violence through the media and the Internet. They also discuss harmful customs and traditions such as gender discrimination, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child and forced marriages. The publications, which draw respectively on the Holy Quran, Holy Bible and other sacred texts, were designed for use by religious scholars, imams or priests and others responsible for the protection and care of children within the two faiths, especially parents.

This joint document aims to share the main messages of the two publications with a wider audience of people and groups concerned with children's rights. The authors aim to deepen the concepts of peace, love and forgiveness encouraged by all divine religions, which are needed around the world for the protection, development and welfare of humanity's most precious wealth, our children.

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4   Reported by Al-Tirmidhi in his Sunan, Book of Jihad, Chapter: Regarding the imam, 4/208, on the authority of Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him.

I. The Islamic and Christian perspectives on violence against children

Introduction

Violence is a social phenomenon, and violence against children in some form or another may be found and practiced anywhere and in any society. The many forms of violence against children have disparate impacts, but the repercussions on children and the society as a whole are usually serious and damaging. Whether within or outside the family environment, violence against children has many social and economic causes. Economic reasons include poverty, financial pressures, inability to find gainful employment and poor living conditions. Cultural traditions are another cause of violence against children, on the pretext of preserving cultural patterns and prevalent traditions and customs, even if they are against human rights. Violence can occur within the family because parents lack the ability to exercise positive parenting and childrearing, including positive discipline. There is no place for physical or verbal punishment and discipline, but there is a place for sound guidance, advice and a good example.

In view of the various forms of violence to which children are exposed throughout the world and which violate their rights, the Convention of the Rights of the Child was drawn up as an international legal charter which guarantees universal recognition and protection of the rights of children, as they need special care and protection. The Convention delineates the actions that are considered to be violence against children, including all manifestations of violence or harm, physical or mental violence, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse.

Islamic viewpoint on violence against children

Islam's view of children flows from its perception of humans as the creatures burdened with the task of sovereignty on earth, as a central and meaningful element in the regulation of the universe.[5] Considering the lofty position of mankind, Islam gives attention to all phases of human development, and such attention to mankind in all its life phases is one of the salient characteristics of the rulings, legislation and systems under Islam.

Islam takes special care of humans from the early stage of childhood, which is the foundation of all ensuing stages and conditions. The Islamic code has encompassed all aspects of the child's life with the best manner of care and maintenance. One of the first guarantees in Islamic legislation is regarding the child's physical rights, with breastfeeding a right of the child over her/his mother. The noble code has ordered the mother to breastfeed her child as follows: "Mothers shall suckle

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5   Islamic Viewpoints of the Problem of Racial Discrimination, Omar Odeh El-Khatib, p. 123, Message Corporation, Beirut, second printing, 1398A.H.

their children for two whole years; (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling";[6] and obligated the father of the newborn to provide for the breastfeeding mother, "The duty of feeding and clothing nursing mothers in a seemly manner is upon the father of the child".[7] There are many forms of legislation and rulings in the divine code that aim to protect the child's physical rights.

The divine code also provides for the emotional needs of the child by laying down a comprehensive model of child care. One example is in the hadiths that refer to kissing one's children. Scholars of the Sunnah and hadith have even categorized this in chapters such as the 'Chapter on mercy, kindness to, and embracing children' in Sahih-Al-Bukhari in his Book of Manners. One such hadith speaks of the Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) kissing Al-Hasan ibn Ali [his grandson] in the presence of Al-Aqra' bin Habis Al-Tamimi. Al-Aqra' said, "I have ten sons and have not kissed one of them." The Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) turned to him and said, "He who does not show mercy to others will not be shown mercy".[8] It is well known that kissing children leaves a great impact on their psyche, which is why the Prophet (**pbuh**) did it and advised others to do so for their own children.

Mercy, compassion and affection are among the noble sentiments that Allah has placed in the hearts of mothers and fathers. These are benevolent emotions that have a great impact on the children's upbringing and emotional formation. For this reason, we find that the Sharia entrenches these sentiments of mercy and compassion in all of its rulings and encourages mothers and fathers to commit to them.

Islam has determined certain matters that must be abided in disciplining children, particularly avoiding treating them with any form of violence. The Sharia gives due attention to the protection of children from abuse and neglect and designates measures to prevent slipping into the practice of any violence or injury, whether physical or psychological. The family is the starting point for addressing violence by limiting its causes and treating its impacts.

Christian viewpoint on violence against children

The position of Jesus is clear regarding violence against children: He rejects any ill treatment of children. He does not even want them to be rebuked. The Gospel of Saint Matthew says, "Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 19: 13-14) He set up children as an example of humility and innocence when he called a boy and placed him in their midst

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6   From Surat Al-Baqara (The Cow), 2:233.
7   From Surat Al-Baqara (The Cow), 2:233.
8   Sahih Al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, Chapter 27: Mercy on people and animals. Part 10, page 428.

and announced, "Whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven". (Matthew 18: 4). Saint Mark's Gospel conveys the scene in more detail: "Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them and [took] him in His arms...". (Mark 9: 36)

Jesus was expressing the protectiveness, tenderness and affection with which children should be treated. He was aware that there were those who would cause children to sin through their abuse of them, so He warned, "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea". (Matthew 18: 6)

From the time it was first established and up to the present day, the Church has followed in the footsteps of Christ. The Church calls for great care and attention to be paid to children, both before and after their birth; it absolutely forbids all forms of violence against children. The Church takes great care of the child's family from the time it is formed and follows it up spiritually to ensure that the family provides a sound environment in which to bring up children. The Church makes sure that the parents are fit to care for and raise their children in a Christian family environment, filled with faith and mutual love, which rejects any violence, whether physical or psychological, and which feeds and nurtures personal relationships between the members of the family. The Church also teaches families to bring up their children through dialogue and by example, avoiding any kind of violent punishment. Children are then able to grow in an atmosphere of tenderness, forgiveness, respect, generosity and safety.

The Church charges children's parents or guardians with keeping them safe, caring for them, imbuing them with true faith and bringing them up in the fear and love of God. The Church also helps the child to establish sound concepts regarding the self (acceptance, nurturing); the family (love, respect, service); the homeland (pride in belonging to it, positive participation in its service); others who are different (true Christian love, open and positive cooperation); sex (awareness that sex is not evil or unclean, but is sacred, that promiscuity does not provide true satisfaction and real satisfaction resides in life with God, according to His Commandments); and marriage (awareness that it is a Sacrament, being loving and giving to one's partner, so as to live a life full of happiness and joy).

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity condemn any kind of violence against children. The two faiths stress the importance of treating children with love, tenderness, affection and compassion. Both Islam and Christianity charge parents with the responsibility to care for their children physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually, and stress the importance of the family as a protective and nurturing environment in which children can grow and thrive.

II. Child marriage and forced marriage

Introduction

Child marriage and forced marriage are serious violations of the rights of children, particularly girls. Child marriage, also referred to as early marriage, means marriage of children under the age of 18 years, which is the international consensus for childhood as agreed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The justifications for this kind of marriage can be cultural, moral (to preserve chastity and honour) or economic. Forced marriage is a marriage that is forced upon a girl or young woman against her will by her parents or guardian, sometimes in exchange for money. Child and forced marriages deprive girls of their basic rights of choice, to express their opinions and to enjoy their childhoods and of the care that is their due as children. Such marriages expose girls to violence due to their lack of physical and emotional maturity and their inability to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and raising children.

Islamic viewpoint on child marriage and forced marriage

Child marriage has no legitimate basis in the Sharia and forced marriage is clearly invalid and prohibited.

Childhood, the period up to the age of 18 years, is when boys and girls learn to bear their responsibilities and become able to make decisions that affect their present and future such as marriage.

Islam is innocent of the custom of child marriage; the practice of marrying at an early age was not mentioned at all in the Quran. Furthermore, we did not find any mention of a specific age for marriage; however, we do find an unchangeable criterion which is the reaching of maturity. The fact of the matter is that early marriage is no more than a custom; it is not part of Sharia or worship. Moreover, the phenomenon is not exclusive to Muslim society but reaches deep into many other cultures.

In some regions, mothers and fathers encourage their sons to practice it and may even force their girls into it in order to protect their honour or to reduce the burden of sustaining them. This orientation towards early marriage has been shown to lead to complications and adverse effects, both immediate and cumulative. Repeated and overlapping pregnancies and nursing periods before the girl's body is fully developed, and without sufficient periods of rest so that she may recover the nutritional state needed for growth, pregnancy, and breastfeeding, lead to a condition called nutritional depletion. The risk of infection with HIV during sexual intercourse is higher in females than in males, especially among young girls whose growth is not fully complete but are subjected to sexual relations with husbands who are older than they are and have had previous

sexual experiences. This is compounded by the emotional, familial and social problems related to this phenomenon caused by incomplete physical maturity and the emotional immaturity of husband and wife. Sharia has given parents the right and also the duty to care for their children's physical health and upbringing so that they may emerge from childhood happy with their lives and their afterlives.

Child marriage is no more than a custom; it is not part of Sharia or worship and it leads without doubt to significant adverse effects. Therefore, the preferred age of marriage is after the age of 18 years. Marriage is a religious and social responsibility that demands the ability and willingness of both husband and wife to bear its responsibilities, so it is not right to apply this burden to children. Allah has said, "O you who believe, fulfil [all] contracts…".[9] And the Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) said, "O young, whoever among you can afford it, let him get married".[10] Young girls may not be entrusted with marriage because they should not be entrusted with more than they can bear. Evidence shows that those who enter early marriage are covered by this general principle of Sharia. God Almighty has said: "On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear".[11] The Prophet (**pbuh**) said: "There should be neither injury nor return of injury".[12]

Forced marriage usually occurs with young girls. The severe social repercussions and harm to a girl's health caused by child marriage mean the parents bear a great responsibility to avoid such consequences. Allah says, "And spend in the way of Allah and do not throw [yourselves] with your own hands into destruction. And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good".[13]

Conclusion of a marriage contract by force (coercion) without the agreement of the wife is a matter that no rulings of the Sharia approve; therefore, this act is to be ruled invalid. The Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) has said, "A previously married woman should not be married until her consent has been sought, and a virgin should not be married until her permission has been sought".[14]

Christian viewpoint on child marriage and forced marriage

Christianity does not accept child marriage, forced marriage or the marriage deal (transactional marriage) such as 'summer' marriage, because of the nature and sanctity of Christian marriage and the significantly adverse effects such practices have. Therefore the age of marriage should be after the age of 18 years.

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9   From Surat Al-Ma'ida, 5:1.
10 Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, Chapter: On those who can afford should marry, Fath-al-Bari, 9/106, No. 5065.
11   Surah Al-Baqarah 286.
12 Compiled by ibn Majah in his Sunan, Book of Judgments, 2/784 H 2341 through ibn Abbas.
13 Surat Al-Baqarah (The Cow), 2:195.
14 Reported by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, Book of Marriage, Chapter: The father or any other shall not arrange the marriage of the virgin or previously married woman without her consent. 3/358, h5136, on the authority of Abu Huraira.

In Christianity, marriage is a holy sacrament which has a spiritual dimension. The Apostle Paul describes the sanctity of marriage using two important expressions, "This is a great mystery" (Ephesians 5: 32) and "Marriage is honourable among all". (Hebrews 13: 4) In this way, Christian marriage transcends the flesh to be a coupling of souls, through prayer. Christianity confirms that each party in this sacred relationship should view the other with love and honour. Each should honour the other, in a relationship in which each of them knows their duties and their limits well. The first of these duties and limits is to be giving and to put the other party before oneself. There is no doubt that such a relationship requires a mature person – physically, psychologically, mentally and spiritually – who is capable of realizing the nature of the relationship and its essence. "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." (Genesis 2: 18) "Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." (1 Corinthians 7: 2-3)

The Church does not agree to child marriage because at that stage, young men and women have not matured enough physically, psychologically, mentally and spiritually to choose a suitable partner for life. Therefore it is wrong for marriage to occur between two people who are not capable of shouldering the responsibility of bringing up a new generation. The married couple must be resourceful and aware. This needs maturity and the ability to shoulder life's burdens and to face every event, surprise, change and development that it brings. This means that underage marriage harms not only the husband and the wife, but also their offspring.

These types of marriages cannot produce a successful union. A successful marriage is built on compatibility, acceptance and love. Parents should remember that they must not choose what suits them, but instead what suits their son or daughter, since it is their life, not the life of the parents doing the choosing, that is involved. Marriage needs to be built on a basis of compatibility and consent.

The Church pays a great deal of attention to this matter, even in the pre-marriage stages, through programmes to prepare engaged couples psychologically, morally, culturally and spiritually. At the same time, these programmes explain the importance of choosing a partner for life in terms of compatibility and age, as well as socially, intellectually, culturally, etc. There is a need for more such programmes, especially in the rural areas and the slums, where the phenomenon of child marriage is common. Therefore, it is vital to pay attention to the family counselling programmes, especially those related to the choice of husband or wife, as a way of protecting the family unit and guaranteeing that none of its members is exposed to violence.

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity agree that child marriage and forced marriage are cultural practices that have no basis in religion and should be forbidden. Such marriages, which often involve girls, deprive them of their rights to childhood and to consent to the marriage. Children under the age of 18 years do not have the emotional, psychological or spiritual maturity to accept and understand the responsibilities of marriage, including raising a family. Young girls are not ready for the physical and emotional aspects of childbearing and can face lifelong physical complications from early pregnancy.

Therefore, parents and guardians are obliged to respect the rights of their children to grow to adulthood before embarking on marriages which might put them at risk or expose them to harm.

III. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

Introduction

The records and documents that recount the history of peoples and their cultural practices are full of the various forms and methods they use to mutilate their bodies for tribal, religious, cultural, aesthetic, sexual or therapeutic reasons, through cutting, splitting, scarification or modification of parts of the body. One such practice is the mutilation that is performed on the genitals of females, known as female circumcision or female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

FGM/C is a traditional practice that is erroneously thought to prepare the girl for womanhood. The age at which the procedure is conducted varies from one culture to another. In some cultures, girls are circumcised while still infants while for others it is performed at a much later age. For the most part, FGM/C is done between the ages of 4 and 13 years.

Although many studies indicate a wide variety of types of FGM/C, these could be categorized under four main types:

Type 1	Involves removal of the clitoral head, meaning cutting of the highest tip of the skin of the clitoris. It sometimes entails cutting part or all of the clitoris.
Type 2 (Clitoridectomy)	Refers to the removal of the clitoral head and clitoris and partial or complete removal (excision) of labia minora (inner vaginal lips).
Type 3 (Infibulation)	Refers to the partial or complete removal of all parts of the female's external genital organs. It also entails stitching or narrowing the vaginal opening.
Type 4 (Uncategorized)	Includes such procedures as pricking, piercing or incising of the clitoris and/or labia; stretching of the clitoris and/or labia; cauterization by burning the clitoris and surrounding tissues; scraping the tissue surrounding the vaginal orifice or cutting of the vagina; introducing corrosive substances or herbs into the vagina for the purpose of tightening or narrowing it.

In countries where FGM/C is practiced, erroneous concepts and misbeliefs are widespread. One idea is that this operation is for beautification or removal of extra protrusions. Medical facts, however, show that the organs that are removed are not superfluous; rather, they have specific

functions in the human body. Another mistaken belief is that the parts that are removed, if left as is, will enlarge to the point of being like male reproductive organs. One common misbelief says that the uncircumcised female is unable to control her sexual desire, but this is not true because it is the brain that controls sexual desire.

Islamic viewpoint on FGM/C

The practice of female genital mutilation is among the most prominent forms of violence against women and girls. It causes numerous complications which impair women's rights to enjoy their marital lives and as there is no benefit, it must be rejected as a violation of girls' and women's privacy and the integrity of their bodies which God has forbidden.

From an Islamic viewpoint, the Quran is empty of any text that mentions FGM/C, even remotely. Calling it 'Sunnah circumcision' is merely a deception to give it a degree of holiness and deceive people that the practice comes from Islam. The truth is clear that none of the hadiths attributed to the Noble Prophet (**pbuh**) in this matter are based on genuine sources from the Sunnah. Ibn Al-Mundhir said, "Female Circumcision (FGM/C) has no report to refer to or *Sunna* to follow".[15] Also, there is not one authentic proof in a hadith from which could be derived a Sharia ruling in a matter as dangerous to human life as this one. Allah creates humans in the best form, so if an important part of the body is cut or severed this would be changing Allah's creation, which is not a moral or virtuous action. The Messenger (**pbuh**) spoke the truth when he said, "Allah curses those who change the creation of Allah".[16]

There is no medical justification for FGM/C; rather, it could lead to many health problems that impact the child in the short and long term. Allah says in the Quran: "O you who believe, take your precautions…".[17] And the Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) said, "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm".[18] Allah, The Highest, also says: "… and do not throw [yourselves] with your own hands into destruction…".[19]

Abandonment of FGM/C is not sinful according to the Sharia and it is not right to say that it is from the Sunnah or from human nature (*fitra*). The Quran contains no verses that mention female circumcision (FGM/C). Any hadiths that are cited to indicate its legitimacy are all weak and flawed.

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15 Nail AlAwtar by Al Shokani, 1/112,113
16 Agreed upon on the authority of Ibn Mas'oud.
17 Surat Al-Nisaa (The Women), 4:71.
18 Reported by Ibn Majah in his Sunan, Book of Rulings, Chapter: Whoso builds on his rightful property shall not harm his neighbour.
19 Surat Al-Baqara (The Cow), 2:195.

Christian viewpoint on FGM/C

FGM/C is one of the forms of physical mutilation which is in keeping with some of the cultural beliefs and concepts that are prevalent in some societies and especially with traditions that contribute to the social values and controls that apply to the conduct of individuals. This harmful practice has absolutely no basis in Christianity and there is not a single verse in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible that refers to FGM/C.

Christianity rejects FGM/C because it is a source of discrimination and violence against women and girls, and is connected to a system of traditions and customs that demeans the dignity and humanity of women while recreating the stereotypical model of the relationship between men and women, which enshrines the superiority of men. When God made man, He said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness ... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female He created them". (Genesis 1: 26, 27) The story of Creation in the Book of Genesis demonstrate that woman has the same status and dignity as man since God made her in His image, just like man. The Holy Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her". (Ephesians 5: 25)

The Church does not restrict itself to condemning FGM/C and saying it is wrong and a sin, but is also working hard to spread knowledge of how dangerous the custom is.

Conclusion

Both Christianity and Islam honour women and girls. Both religions agree that God has created humans in the best form and the sanctity of the human body must always be protected from harm.

On these grounds, there is religious consensus that FGM/C is a detrimental social and cultural practice, which has no relation or justification in religion, either Christianity or Islam. Hence, abandoning this harmful practice is a religious and moral duty.

IV. Discrimination among children

Introduction

Human rights are universal. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." Discrimination against vulnerable groups, particularly children, based on race, gender, colour, religion, disability, wealth or any other reason is an especially dangerous phenomenon. Such discrimination hinders efforts to end the continued suffering, deprivation and violence facing many women and children.

Islamic viewpoint on discrimination among children

Islam enshrines the principles of justice and equality as part of the most important foundations of human life. The teachings of Islam make all people equal in duties and rights. There is no room for discrimination among them on the basis of race, gender, colour or disability. Discrimination contradicts Islamic teachings that guarantee equality among all people, considering them as equal as the teeth of a comb. They vary only in their pious behaviour and in what each person offers in assistance for her/himself, society and the nation as expressed in her/his awareness of Allah. In this regard, Allah says in the Quran: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you…".[20] And the Prophet (**pbuh**) has said, "O mankind, your Lord is one, and your father is one; all of you are Adam and Adam comes from dust. The most honourable of you in the sight of Allah is most righteous of you. No Arab is better than a non-Arab and no non-Arab is better than an Arab except in piety".[21]

Islam forbids gender-based discrimination between children. The Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) has said, "Fear Allah and observe equity among your children".[22] An image far removed from the spirit of Islam but deeply steeped in weak souls is the hatred of girls and harsh treatment of the wife if she gives birth to a girl. This is in spite of the fact that Allah – all praises be to Him – is the one who shapes His creation in the womb, whether female or male, white or black, and so on. Allah says: "It is He who forms you in the wombs however He wills. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise".[23] Allah rewards every male or female for their actions

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20 Surat Al-Hujarat (The Dwellings), 49:13.
21 Reported by Ahmad in his Musnad, part 5, page 411 – printed by Dar-al-Fikr.
22 Reported by Muslim, Kitab Al Hebat (Book of Gifts), Hatred and preferring some children over others in the Gifts, 1242/3-3421, by Nuoman Bin Bashir.
23 Surat Aal 'Imran (The Family of Imran), 3:6.

as follows: "And their Lord responded to them, 'Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female, you are of one another...".[24]

Islam calls to giving due attention to the care of girls, guaranteeing their rights to familial, health and economic care, so whoever cheats them of their rights is a sinner. It has decreed just rights and full equity for them as shown in this hadith: Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) said, "He who brought up two girls [25] properly until they grew up, he and I will come together on the Day of Resurrection like this", and he interlaced his fingers. Another narration says, "I will enter the Garden with someone who brings up two daughters until they come of age, and we will be like these two", and held his index finger and middle finger together.[26] Righteous providers for girls will be safe from Allah's punishment if they stand for the truth and fulfil their duties towards their daughters in terms of upbringing, attention and care.

Christian viewpoint on discrimination among children

Christianity rejects all forms of discrimination since God made human beings equal and He did not want to discriminate between one human and another because of colour, race or sex. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". (Galatians 3: 26-28)

Christianity believes that God is the Creator of man. Even when He made a difference between male and female, both of them were made in the image of God and He made them equal and gave them both all the gifts and powers. "... Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air and over the cattle, over all the earth and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1: 26) Both sexes, male and female, bore the responsibility of the work that God ordered them to do: "Be fruitful, and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...". (Genesis 1: 28)

An important issue related to the mistreatment of children concerns discrimination based on sex. This is established through social upbringing, especially in societies which prefer to have sons, for social and cultural reasons, which leads to the continuous neglect of girls, whether hidden or obvious. This has an effect on the girls' awareness of their human rights, since they are often treated as inferior and their social upbringing places them at a lower level. Discrimination and neglect in childhood lead to growing deprivation and distance them from social life in the future.

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24 From Surat Aal 'Imran (The Family of Imran), 3:195.

25 Translator's note: The meaning of 'jariya' here is 'young girl' [not the more common contemporary meaning of 'female slave'].

26 Narrated by Muslim in his Sahih, Book of Righteousness, Chapter: Virtue of doing good to daughters, 4/2027-2028, h4631.

God made human beings equal. He did not want to discriminate between one human and another because of colour, race or sex. Nevertheless, humans, throughout their history, have tried to discriminate between themselves for social and cultural reasons. In order to wipe out these forms of discrimination, the whole of humanity in every part of the world must believe that the reason for variety is for us to be able to complement each other, cooperate, support each other and even to unite. This will happen only if we respect the teachings of the religions and the international charters on human rights in general and those of vulnerable groups in particular, against whom some form of discrimination is practiced on the basis of sex, class, colour or religion.

The role of the Church is to combat discrimination of all kinds against children. The Church is careful to encourage the parents to pay attention to the way they bring up their male and female children, without any discrimination. The Church provides various activities to educate women, newly married couples, parents and families to increase their awareness of parental responsibility and of the need not to discriminate between children, so that the next generation grows up respecting diversity and respecting others.

Conclusion

Christianity and Islam both believe that God created all men and women equally. Both religions condemn any form of discrimination based on race, gender, colour, religion, disability, wealth or any other reason.

Practices that discriminate against women and girls are based on custom rather than religion and it is important to educate people about the harm caused by such discrimination.

V. Child labour

Introduction

Child labour may be defined as any work that deprives children of their fundamental rights or childhood, hurts their dignity or harms them physically or psychologically. Examples include work that causes physical, psychological or social harm or deprives children of the right to play and enjoy their time and childhood; work that hinders their education; work that deprives them of the opportunity to enrol in school; work that forces them to leave school early; and work that forces them into hard labour for long hours, most notably child labour in homes, using them to beg and ask for donations and exploiting them in armed conflicts.

Islamic viewpoint on child labour

It is acceptable in Islam for children to voluntarily occupy themselves with work that suits their age and personal abilities as long as this does not conflict with their rights to an education, play or enjoy their childhood. It could actually be necessary to develop their skills, expand their knowledge and contribute to their physical, cognitive and emotional formation.

Assigning children simple jobs that enable them to acquire life skills is beneficial as long as it does not harm them or deprive them of their rights. The third caliph Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Do not charge the young with earning [a living], for if he does not find [a way to earn], he will steal. Be upright as Allah made you upright. And eat that which is good and right for you".[27] Participating in work activities will increase children's abilities, hone their skills, give them experience and contribute to their mental, psychological, physical and social growth. It ingrains in them constructive values such as self-confidence and pride, respect for others, social responsibility, cooperation, solidarity and tolerance.

Islam has forbidden the exploitation of children in hard and dangerous labour or that which violates their legitimate rights. Allah says: "On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear..."[28] and "...Wrong not and you shall not be wronged".[29] The Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) has said, "He is not one of us who does not have mercy upon our young".[30]

Child labour conflicts with the fundamental obligations to protect children and prepare them for the future. It is inconsistent with their rights which guarantee a proper upbringing to become sound members of a cohesive, successful community where everyone enjoys safety, security,

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27 Reported by Malik in Al-Mawta', Book of Asking Permission, Chapter: On ordering to be kind to servants, 2/981, h42, printedbyIssaAl-Halabi.

28 Surat Al-Baqara (The Cow), 2:286.

29 Surat Al-Baqara (The Cow), 2:279.

30 Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi, Book of Righteousness, Chapter: On having mercy on the young. 4/322-1920.

happiness and stability. It is also at variance with their right to be provided for by their parents until they are able to depend on themselves. Child labour contradicts their right to live in dignity in decent conditions that are appropriate to their needs to grow and develop their minds, conditions that give them sufficient opportunities to learn and mature. Furthermore, being required to work causes them harm and harm is forbidden as stated in the hadith of the Messenger (**pbuh**), "There shall be no harming and no reciprocation of harming".[31] Child labour is a type of social injustice forbidden by Islam on account of it being the worst of actions. Allah, Most High, has said: "Wrong not and you shall not be wronged".[32]

The grave outcomes of child labour incite us to confront the state and society and advocate for its abolition. It is the state's duty to assist the most poverty-stricken families to protect their children from being pushed into working and deprived of an education. "Every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges. A man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them."[33]

Christian viewpoint on child labour

The practice of putting children to work, with or without pay, is a social phenomenon connected to the economic activities of numerous communities, especially agricultural ones, in which farm work is shared between parents and children. Throughout history, these communities have striven to involve children in work that is suited to their age, without force or pressure and without affecting their mental, physical or psychological development, to allow them to learn the principles of cooperation, shouldering responsibility, sharing of work and other positive values. The Holy Bible has given us examples of children who have performed these roles as part of the life they led in their communities. Samuel the Prophet served in the Temple when he was a small child: "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod." (1 Samuel 2: 18) Despite that, "the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favour both with the Lord and men." (1 Samuel 2: 26) David the prophet was also a shepherd when he was a boy, then he became a king and a commander of the army and God said of him, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." (Acts 13: 22) The child Jesus used to help his father at work, but not at the expense of his physical, psychological and mental development. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men". (Luke 2: 52)

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31 Narrated by Ahmad 1/313, no. 2867, and Ibn Majih in his Sunan, 2/784 h 2340. Al-Bousiri said of it: "The men in the chain of relaters are worthy of confidence but the chain is interrupted."

32 From Surat Al-Baqara (The Cow), 2:279.

33 Compiled by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, Book on Friday, Chapter: Friday in Villages and Cities 1/248, 249 H 893.

While Christianity confirms the importance of work, it rejects the exposure of children to any form of deprivation, violence or exploitation and any type of work that affects their spiritual, psychological and physical development, and so the Church does have a role to play. As a child, Jesus Christ worked with Joseph the carpenter and David was a shepherd when he was little. Paul the Apostle worked as a tent maker and Peter, Andrew, Jacob and John worked as fishermen. They all did work that did not interfere with their spiritual, psychological or physical growth. Their work was a natural part of the economic and social life of their communities.

The Church has an important role to play regarding the groups that are deemed to need more care or that are more deserving of attention, in keeping with Christ's words, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick". (Matthew 9: 12) Since working children face a great deal of suffering and hardship because they bear a burden that is beyond their capacities and because they are poor, the Church gives them special care. The Church also provides material support for the parents through financial assistance to help care for the children and to prevent them from being forced into work, and it provides moral support by increasing parental awareness of the importance of educating children, promoting their survival and not forcing them into work that exposes them to danger.

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity both condemn any child labour that exploits children physically and morally and deprives them of their basic rights, particularly to childhood and to education. Both faiths recognize the value of children sharing in simple jobs that help their families and communities and allow them to develop positive life skills. At the same time, Islam and Christianity understand the economic reasons that push families into putting their children to work, and urge support for these families and advocacy for the abolition of child labour.

VI. Sexual abuse of children

Introduction

Sexual abuse is any inappropriate sexual behaviour with a child of the opposite or same sex, such as touching the child's sexual organs or forcing her/him to touch the sexual organs of an adult. The inappropriate behaviour includes sexual intercourse, incest, rape or sexual exploitation. Sexual abuse also includes the use of force or bribery, threats, pressure or deception to force the child to participate in sexual activity. It occurs when an adult or a child uses another child to achieve sexual gratification. This crime has grave repercussions for children and society, beginning with severe psychological damage to child victims that could trouble them throughout their entire lives.

Islamic viewpoint on sexual abuse of children

Islam has warned mothers and fathers not to neglect their children, which could leave them exposed to sexual abuse. Allah has said: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones...".[34] The Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) said, "It is sufficient for a man to be [considered] sinful if he neglects whom he sustains".[35] He also said, "Be kind to your children and perfect their manners".[36] Attention should be given to sexual awareness-raising for children that is suitable to their age and in line with Islamic teachings and principles. Families, teachers, preachers and counsellors must all disseminate this culture and information including respect for others. They must educate youth and adolescents to protect them from learning this information from others and being misguided. The vocabulary used should be non-provocative and non-stimulating, and take into consideration the age of the recipient. What should be said to the child differs from what should be said to the adolescent or young person.

In the absence of familial care, youth and adolescents, whether on purpose or not, could slide into the wasteland of sexual images and films, magazines and websites that circulate shameful pictures. This could lead to the sexual abuse of children. Islam encourages youth and adolescents to fill their free time with beneficial activities that protect them from deviant behaviour. The Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) said, "There are two blessings which many people squander: good health and free time".[37] He also said, "The feet of a slave of Allah will not move in the Day of Judgment until he is asked about four things: about his life and how he spent it, about his

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34 From Surat Al-Tahrim (The Prohibition), 66:6.

35 Abu Dawud in his Sunan, Book of Zakat, Chapter: Attending to kin. Part 2, page 132, no. 1692.

36 Reported by Ibn Majih in his Sunan, Book of Manners, Chapter: Righteous treatment of the father and kindness to daughters. 2/2211h, 3671, on the authority of Anas, may Allah be pleased with him.

37 Reported by Al Bukhari, 177/4 Hadith 6412 Book 81 To make the Heart Tender (Ar-Riqaq).

youth and how he used it up, about his wealth and how he earned it and spent it, and about his knowledge and what he did with it".[38]

A key element in the incidence of sexual abuse of children is the lack of activities to fill their time usefully, leaving them prey to bad influences of predators or sometimes their peers who try to make sexual abuse look attractive. Islam addresses the problem of free time by advising parents to play with their children and fill their time with useful activities.

Islam has prohibited and criminalized the sexual abuse of children due to the grave risks it entails and laid down severe penalties as in the Quranic verse: "And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and an evil way".[39] And in describing the righteous believers, Allah says, "And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein humiliated".[40] Islam has placed harsh penalties on this serious crime that leaves destructive impacts on the victim, which is tantamount to murder.

Christian viewpoint on sexual abuse of children

Christianity rejects and strongly condemns sexual abuse of children as a violation of the sanctity of the human body and family life, and as an act that has serious detrimental physical and psychological effects on children. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites ... will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6: 9-10)

God gave sexual energy to humans to enrich their lives. He created sex in humans to allow love to enter their lives and to end their internal isolation, opening them up to others and freeing them from self-absorption. Setting up a family is a demonstration of love, unity, partnership, generosity and tenderness. That is why the Church has sanctified sex and has codified its practice through the mystery of marriage, which is blessed by the Church. "This is a great mystery". (Ephesians 5: 32) "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." (Hebrews 13: 4)

Because Holy Matrimony promotes a pure life, any violation of this sacred framework for sex is rejected by the Church and comes under adultery, which God forbade in the Old Testament, in the commandment, "You shall not commit adultery". (Exodus 20: 14 and Deuteronomy 5: 18).

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38 Reported by Abu Yaali in his Musnad, 13/351, h7434, on the authority of Abi Barardha. It examiner labelled it good (*hasan*).
39 Surat Al-Israa (The Night Journey), 17:32.
40 Surat Al-Furqan (The Criterion), 25:68-69.

In the New Testament, the concept of adultery is expanded to encompass lust, or mere thinking about adultery. Christ says in the Sermon on the Mount, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart". (Matthew 5: 27-28) The sin of adultery becomes even uglier when it is incestuous or against nature, as explained by Paul the Apostle in his epistle to the Romans.

Sexual abuse goes beyond breaking the commandment and committing the sin that has been forbidden by both the Old and the New Testaments. Such acts destroy the self, the soul and the body in various ways and that is why the role of the Church is not limited to rejecting these practices or reporting cases to concerned authorities. The Church is constantly working to increase people's awareness through various methods which help to limit the spread of such actions and protect children.

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity consider the sexual abuse of children to be one of the most serious violations of children's rights because of the immediate and lifelong physical and psychological scars it inflicts on innocent children. Parents and families must provide a protective environment for their children and increase awareness of these abuses.

VII. Absence of family care and children living on the street

Introduction

'Street children' are children who live on the street all or most of the time due to a family connection which is irregular, broken or non-existent; they are also defined as children who work on the street all day and go back to their families to sleep.

The phenomenon of 'street children' is one of the major social problems to emerge in developing societies in general, because of the deteriorating conditions and impoverishment of some social groups and sectors which have resulted from structural changes and economic, political and social crises.

Studies confirm that children living on the street are exposed to problems and dangers such as sexual assault and harassment, continuous insults, daily fights, theft, confrontations with the police, including the possibility of being arrested for vagrancy and of being mistreated at police stations, the danger of becoming addicted to drugs, malnutrition and illiteracy.

Islamic viewpoint on absence of family care and children living on the street

The right of the child to parental care – whether by a blood relation or alternative caretaker – is one of a set of rights bearing special significance in Islamic Sharia because it ensures a safe life, both physically and psychologically. Without doubt, the presence of both parents in the child's life is very important to ensure proper development, particularly if the parents have some degree of awareness and responsibility that enables them to fulfil their role in rearing and educating the child in a sound and healthy manner.

The causes of the absence of family care for children are many and often lead to their resorting to the streets. Among these causes are marital and familial disputes, breakdown of the family unit and rising rates of divorce. Another cause of the absence of family care is not knowing who the child's family is, and the deserted or abandoned child is called a 'foundling'. If one or both of the child's parents is lost [deceased], she/he is called an orphan. Islam has accorded these two types of children the right to alternative parental care.

The approach of Islamic Sharia to protecting children without parental care involves family settings and social care institutions. In family settings, Sharia has legislated a set of means to achieve this care, including declaring kinship for children whose lineage is unknown, nursing infants and fostering orphans *(kafala)*. Where alternative care for children without parental care is to be established in social care institutions, it is the state that will undertake the funding, implementation, monitoring and accountability. This care is implemented through public institutions able to accommodate children who lack parental care by building units similar to those that a typical family would live in.

Children living on the street and those lacking parental care have a right over the community and state to be offered projects and services that ensure a safe and decent life for them. Allah has said: "...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression...".[41] And: "...And they ask you about the orphans. Say, Improvement for them is best. And if you mix your affairs with theirs - they are your brothers. And Allah knows the corrupter from the amender. And if Allah had willed, He could have put you in difficulty. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise".[42]

The grave consequences of the phenomenon of children without parental care push us to exert all possible efforts to confront and root it out. This may be achieved through abiding by Islamic legislation that regulates familial relationships, attention to children's upbringing and protection of their rights and welfare. Also needed is a deep faith in the importance of this issue, sincere efforts to abolish it and awareness-raising on the gravity of the possible repercussions. This is the task of the society as a whole – leaders, legislative and executive authorities, civil society organizations, charitable associations, callers to Islam, thinkers, educators and the media.

Christian viewpoint on absence of family care and children living on the street

The Church calls for love and mercy to be shown to vulnerable and impoverished groups, especially the poorest, such as the orphans, the needy, strangers and those who have gone astray. God tells His people after their exodus from Egypt, "If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you". (Leviticus 25: 35) Isaiah the Prophet says, "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out? When you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide not yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58: 7) The Holy Bible is full of verses, teachings and parables which call for mercy and compassion. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5: 7) "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6: 36)

The Church has an important role to play regarding children living on the street who have no shelter. It is working hard to rehabilitate these children and to integrate them in the Church and in the community. It also tries to reunite them with their families, if possible, and to create job and educational opportunities for them and their families, so the children can be cared for and obtain their natural rights, grow up in a healthy environment and be brought up in a balanced way in terms of material needs, education and entertainment. Ministering to these children begins in Sunday School, which strives to integrate all the children, especially the most needy, in keeping with Christ's words, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick". (Matthew 9: 12)

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41 Surat Al-Ma'ida (The Table Spread), 5:2.
42 Surat Al-Baqara (The Cow), 2:220.

The Christian view does not stop at charity and compassion, but extends to action. As our teacher John the Beloved says, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3: 18) There is a dire need for more programmes and assistance for these children and their families, focusing on urban areas where the phenomenon is concentrated. The programmes should cover rehabilitation, training and education, so as to reintegrate the children into society and to help them obtain their social entitlements.

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity are in full agreement on the importance of showing mercy and compassion for children living without parental care, including those living on the street. Both faiths agree that such children have a right to alternative care. They also believe that the state must play an important role in preventing and responding to the phenomenon of children living on the street by that ensuring their needs and rights are met in conformity with the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

VIII. Domestic violence against children

Introduction

Domestic violence against children refers to violence taking place within the family or extended family. It may take the form of emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse or sexual abuse. Any violence exercised by someone with authority or uncontested power against a minor in the family is considered familial violence. This type of violence is a form of aggression which the victim has no means to repel or resist, and it has a direct impact on the child's life and behaviour in general.

The report of the United Nations Secretary-General on violence against children shows that most victims of domestic violence are children, whether due to direct aggression or to neglect. Millions of children are victims of violence of all kinds and thousands of children die at the hands of their parents as a result of violence.

Islamic viewpoint on domestic violence against children

The effective prevention of domestic violence against children lies in skilled childrearing based in an Islamic approach. Islam has laid down the fundamentals, principles and texts that forbid domestic violence in any form. It further provides guidance to any individuals who wish to fulfil their responsibility towards children and their welfare and not neglect them. Islam urges mothers and fathers to care for and attend to children and to be good examples to them. The Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) said, "It is sufficient for a person to be [considered] sinful if he neglects whom he sustains".[43]

A general rule contained in Islamic Sharia is that no harm may be inflicted on oneself or on another. It follows that no parent may beat her/his child. Psychological injury is the same as physical injury; both are forbidden. Islam enjoins kindness, mercy and affection in the treatment of children and in tending to their normal life development and various needs. Wisdom and foresight are needed to foster self-confidence and the ability to face life. The Messenger of Allah (**pbuh**) said, "He is not one of us who does not have mercy on our young".[44] A traditional adage on the optimal upbringing of children stated the following: "Play with him for seven years, discipline him for seven years, befriend him for seven years, then cut the rope and set him free".[45]

The parents must avoid any kind of corporal and psychological punishment of their children, especially when there are other methods of childrearing available such as withholding rewards,

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43 Abu Dawud in his Sunan, Book of Zakat, Chapter: On doing kindness to close relatives, part 2, page 132, no. 1692.

44 Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi, Book of Righteousness, Chapter: On having mercy on children. 4/322- 1920.

45 Reported as a saying of Umar or Ali. Also said to be the words of Abdul Malik bin Marwan (Best of Brilliant Traits), Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Kutubi, page 718.

advising, temporary banishment, conditional deprivation of play or recreation or other measures that the child would feel to be punishment. These options could be more effective than corporal punishment in achieving the aim of childrearing.

Along with forbidding psychological violence came the injunction of living in kindness in order to create an atmosphere of tranquillity for the child. Allah says: "And live with them in kindness...".[46] It is also known that violence directed against children is also directed against the mother whose heart is torn apart at the sight of any injury to her child. Likewise, violence against the mother in front of the child is psychological violence against the child. All forms of such violence are prohibited.

Among the most important means of prevention is the undertaking of the state to protect children from the occurrence of violence. This springs from the general responsibility exemplified by the hadith of the Prophet (**pbuh**), "All of you are guardians and are responsible for your subjects".[47] He also said, "Indeed Allah will question everyone who is responsible about his charge, whether he preserved or lost, until He questions the man about the inhabitants of his home".[48]

Christian viewpoint on domestic violence against children

Christianity calls for a sound relationship between parents and children which takes into account the rights and duties they owe each other. The Church rejects all forms of violence against children within the family as it negatively affects their emotional, physical and psychological development.

The Holy Bible is full of teachings on this issue and calls for all the rights stated in international conventions. In the Book of Psalms, we read, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it." (Psalm 127: 1) "They labour" refers to the parents who shoulder the responsibility of bringing up their children and providing for their material and moral needs with forbearance and patience, praying for God's help. When the Holy Bible calls on parents to raise their children, it says, "Bring them up in the training and the admonition of the Lord". (Ephesians 6: 4) This means in keeping with the Lord's way and in order to implement His commandments, to correct her/his behaviour in the Lord's way, so that punishment is not given without a prior warning. The issue must be defined and explained convincingly. That is God's way of discipline and warning. The Holy Bible also says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it". (Proverbs 22: 6) The Bible did not say bring up the child in 'your way', as do all parents, so that the child may follow their path and fit into the mould they think is most suitable for her/him; it said, bring up the child in 'his way', the way

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46   From Surat Al-Nisaa (The Women), 4:19.
47   Reported by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, Book of Friday Prayer, Chapter: Friday prayer in villages and cities. 1/248-249, h893.
48   Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi, 4/208, no. 1705.

he/she chooses freely. These are the same principles stipulated in the treaties and laws concerned with children's rights.

The Bible confirms the need for a sound relationship between parents and children which takes into account the rights and duties they owe each other. Paul the Apostle says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise. That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth". (Ephesians 6: 1-3) Saint Paul confirms this in his epistle to his disciple, Timothy, when he says, "But if any widow have children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God". (1 Timothy 5: 4) In return for the obedience of their children, parents should provide love and kindness with discipline and guidance, not with violence and cruelty. Therefore Saint Paul addresses parents as follows, "And you, fathers, do not provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in training and admonition of the Lord". (Ephesians 6: 4) He also says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged". (Colossians 3: 21)

Conclusion

In Islam and in Christianity, parents are responsible for protecting their children and raising them in an atmosphere of love and kindness, without resorting to corporal, psychological or other forms of violence. Both faiths condemn such practices wholeheartedly and reject all forms of violence against children within the family and extended family as it is a violation of their rights that negatively affects the children's emotional, physical and psychological development.

IX. Violence in schools and educational institutions

Introduction

After the family, school is the second most important institution for socializing children. It is a place where they grow physically, mentally and psychologically and learn new social norms and roles. They also learn to control their emotions and how to cooperate and behave. To do so, children must learn in a framework of positive values based on forgiveness, peace, dialogue, acceptance, sharing and other values that make up a good citizen and a balanced character. Unfortunately, violence has come to be a widespread behavioural phenomenon in many schools and educational institutions which use methods based on violence, beating and intimidation. Such methods have a negative effect on the children who are victims of this violence and on others.

Both physical and psychological violence are found in schools and the two usually occur together. They are committed by teachers and other school employees and children themselves. These forms of violence include corporal punishment and cruel and humiliating treatment, sexual violence and gender-based violence, intimidation and bullying. Violence within schools is practiced not only by teachers towards students, but also by students towards teachers, or between students. School violence is a behaviour that leads to harm for students, teachers and school property. It represents one of the most dangerous forms of violence because it impedes learning at school and prevents the institution from performing its role.

Islamic viewpoint on violence in schools

Teachers are the cornerstone of the educational process in combating violent behaviour by fulfilling their function of being role models for students. They represent the highest role model, in whom mercy, compassion, gentleness, kindness and sympathy prevail. This is a general trend found in the instruction of the Prophet (**pbuh**), who said: "Whoever was given his share of gentleness, then he has been given a share of good. And whoever has been prevented from his share of gentleness, then he has been prevented from his share of good".[49] The biography of the Prophet (**pbuh**) includes many models featuring leniency that are useful for addressing violence. If teachers imitate these models, they and the educational system will succeed in their vision and mission.

Given the importance of peer groups for children's development, the family must encourage children to belong to such groups, but should also always take note of children's behaviour and how their world view develops in order to intervene when necessary. This will ensure that the

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49 Compiled by Al-Tirmidhi in his Sunan – Book of Righteousness, Chapter: On Compassion 4/367 H 2013, declared good by Al-Tirmidhi.

family is not tempted by unacceptable customs, traditions and values, and that what children learn from peer groups is positive, because what appears to one group as deviance on the part of the child could be utterly normal for his/her companions. God said: "… And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression…".[50] And God's messenger (**pbuh**) said: "A man follows the religion of his friend; so each one should consider whom he makes his friend".[51]

In the school, educational methods for combating school violence include early detection and treatment of aggression. God said: "O you who have believed, take your precaution…".[52] And: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones…".[53] These methods can include adopting a plan to protect children from violence, spreading a culture of tolerance, establishing good relationships between family members and the school community, providing psychological support to victims of violence, using the curriculum and teaching methods to address violence, improving the use of social workers and psychologists in the schools, emphasizing the equality of all in terms of rights and duties, and developing the knowledge, skills and abilities of all personnel who deal with children.

The phenomenon of violence in schools has manifold forms and numerous cultural and social causes, and stems from negative educational trends. Combating or reducing violent behaviour against children requires the adoption of various methods and strategies that do not focus solely on combating or reducing violent behaviours (treatment), but also through researching and eliminating the factors and causes behind violence (prevention). This will help to avoid the psychological, social and physical violence that results from children's exposure to violence, as well as to ensure the basic rights set forth in Sharia, the Law, and international conventions in order to enable various educational institutions, like schools, that are entrusted with the process of socialization to perform their roles well.

Christian viewpoint on violence in schools

The Church believes that schools should be places of safety where children can learn or develop to their full potential. "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward." (Psalm 127: 3)

This can only be done in an environment free from violence. The Church firmly condemns all forms of violence and abuse in schools. "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones,

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50 Surah Al-Ma'idah Verse 2.
51 Compiled by Al-Tirmidhi in his Sunan, Kitab ul-Zahd, Chapter: no. 45 v. 4 p. 589 H 2378, classified by Al-Tirmidhi to be good and authentic.
52 Surah Al-Nisaa' Verse 71.
53 Surah Al-Tahrim Verse 6.

for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 18: 10) It confirms the importance of dialogue and persuasion in the educational process, and shares with the school the task of preparing each generation to face the future. It does so through its role in providing educational, cultural, recreational and health services, in developing skills and capacities and in correcting the inappropriate behaviour that could have been engendered by the methods of upbringing used within the family or at school. The Church provides an atmosphere of love, openness, freedom and forgiveness. It is an environment where there is no place for corporal punishment or verbal abuse. There is only guidance, advice and a good role model. "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6: 36)

No matter what types of violence are to be found in schools and the reasons for them, they must be resisted by all means. This could be done through preventive measures such as awareness-raising, spreading the culture of forgiveness, rejection of violence and respect for human rights, all of which help develop the values and morals of the students. The school administration must provide training for the teachers in dealing with the various age groups in effective communication skills and non-violent disciplinary methods. Some churches are active in partnering with schools through developing teachers' skills and briefing parents on their educational role and how to deal with students, through seminars and workshops.

In addition to preventive measures, support should be provided to address violent behaviour. This can be done through counselling and referral as well as enforcement of relevant legislation and regulations protecting students and school staff.

Conclusion

All forms of violence in schools, whether committed by teachers against students, students against teachers or students against each other, are to be condemned. Islam and Christianity both promote a culture of non-violence, respect and tolerance in schools through efforts to prevent and address all types of school violence. These efforts must include all concerned parties, including teachers, parents and psychologists and social workers, so that children and teachers see their schools as havens of learning.

X. Children in armed and other conflicts

Introduction

Children in more than 50 countries around the world suffer from armed conflicts or their effects. According to UNICEF estimates,[54] the civilian casualty rate in armed conflicts has greatly increased in recent decades and is now estimated to be greater than 90 per cent. Children represent nearly half of these casualties, and approximately 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes because of conflicts and human rights violations. Some live as refugees in neighbouring countries and others have been internally displaced inside their countries' borders. According to the 2010 annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, an estimated 27.1 million people have been forced to flee their homes because of armed conflicts and are now internally displaced within their home countries, and no less than half of these people are children.

More than 2 million children have died[55] as a direct result of armed conflicts during the last decade, and more than three times that many, i.e., upwards of 6 million children, have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Additionally, more than 1 million children have been orphaned or separated from their relatives, and between 8,000 and 10,000 children are either killed or receive amputations due to landmines every year.

According to estimates, approximately 300,000 child soldiers[56] under the age of 18 years (including both boys and girls) are involved in more than 30 conflicts around the world. Children are used as fighters, porters and cooks or are sexually exploited. Some children are forcibly conscripted or kidnapped while poverty, abuse and discrimination push others to join fighters or seek revenge because of violence committed against them and their families.

This occurs despite the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which entered into force in 2002. The protocol prohibits involving children younger than 18 years of age in hostilities and requires that nations raise the minimum age for mandatory conscription and direct participation in conflicts to 18 years. The protocol likewise requires that States Parties to the protocol raise the minimum age for voluntary enlistment from the current minimum age, which is 15 years.

During armed conflicts, girls and women are subject to dangers such as rape and sexual exploitation, trafficking, humiliation and mutilation. The use of rape and other forms of violence against women has become a strategy used by all sides in wars.

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54 UNICEF, Children in Armed Conflicts and Emergency Situations. See also United Nations document centre A/HRC/15/58, www.unicef.org/Arabic/protection/24267-25751.html.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

Islamic viewpoint on children in armed conflict

Islam forbids endangering children, women or the elderly during wars, all types of armed conflict and other situations. The principles of Islamic Sharia secure the prohibition of violence against children during armed conflicts, political struggles and domestic unrest to an extent that exceeds existing legal systems.

It is well known that refraining from conscripting children is among the most important obligations of belligerents (state and non-state) towards children. It also represents the most important right of children in relation to the countries in which they reside. In an authentic hadith by Ibn Umar, he said, "On the day of the Battle of Uhud, I offered to [fight for] the Messenger (pbuh). I was a fourteen year-old boy, and he did not permit me"[57] That is to say, he offered to fight in the Battle of Uhud. This hadith shows it is impermissible to involve children in hostilities.

Islamic jurists agree that children are exempted from jihad and that it is impermissible to involve them in wars or conscript them, whether or not a child agrees to participate. This consensus has been narrated by Ibn Rushd and others,[58] and it is consistent with the Quranic verse, "There is no blame on those who are infirm, or ill, or who find no resources to spend (on the cause), if they are sincere (in duty) to Allah and His Messenger: no ground (of complaint) can there be against such as do right: and Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful".[59] Children therefore have the right to be protected from armed conflicts, and this right is based on the Holy Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) and the consensus of the Ummah's religious scholars.

Children's rights are not limited to the right to avoid conscription into hostilities. Society must also secure the means to allay their fears of warfare and provide them familial warmth. A child should not be separated from his/her mother, as it is said that the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whosoever separates a mother from her child shall be separated from his loved ones in Paradise".[60] In all cases, the food, water, clothing, shelter, medical treatment and educational services which children need must be secured, in addition to psychological rehabilitation to treat the effects of war trauma. In situations in which children lose their parents due to fighting, the state must provide them with safe shelter and arrange for people to treat them like family and with compassion in order to replace the mothers and fathers they lost.

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57 Narrated by Sunan An-Nasa'i – Vol. 1 – Page 155 – Book of Divorce – Chapter: When Does the Divorce of a Boy Count? – Printed by Dar Al-Kutub Al-Musawarra.

58 The Distinguished Jurist's Primer – Vol. 1 – Page 381 – Printed by Dar Al-Maarifa, Beirut.

59 Surat At-Tawbah, Verse 91. Trans. by Yusuf Ali.

60 An authentic hadith compiled by At-Tirmidhi in his Sunan – Vol. 4 Page 134 Book of Military Expeditions – Chapter: On Dislike of Demonstrating the Bad and its Good At-Tirmidhi – Number 1566.

In Islam, war is not an end in itself, but rather a means for defence, preventing injustice, repelling invasion and defending oneself from unjust aggressors who attack others, conquer them and impose their will upon them. In this case, resistance is legitimate according to the Quranic verse, "If then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, Transgress ye likewise against him…",[61] as well as the verse, "The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree)…".[62] These two holy verses, along with other verses and examples from the Sunnah of the Prophet (**pbuh**), show it is acceptable to respond to offenses in kind so long as justice is maintained and acceptable limits are observed. However, this permission does not allow for attacks against non-combatants, elderly people, monks, ascetics and other similar non-combatants, including women and children. The Quran says, "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors".[63]

For the same ends of protecting children's rights and shielding them from the horrors of war, Islam also forbids killing women in wars, as they are usually responsible for and attached to children, and their lives are intertwined with the lives of their children.

Christian viewpoint on children in armed conflict

Christianity rejects armed conflicts and strongly condemns any form of victimization, use, abuse and exploitation of children by parties involved in such conflicts.

As Christianity is a message of peace, it renounces wars and conflicts. Christ promised to leave us peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid". (John 14: 27) Our teacher Paul the Apostle says, "and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus". (Philippians 4: 7)

The Holy Bible confirms the renunciation of violence and cruelty since the beginning of creation. When Cain slew his brother Abel, God said to Cain: "'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?' And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth'". (Genesis 4: 9-12)

The Bible shows us that God defends the victims of the injustice of humans. The Book of Psalms says, "Let not a slanderer be established in the earth; let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow

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61 Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 194. Trans. by Yusuf Ali.
62 Surat Ash-Shuraa, Verse 40. Trans. by Yusuf Ali.
63 Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 190. Trans. by Yusuf Ali.

him. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor". (Psalm 140: 11-12)

Christianity rejects wars and conflicts and condemns involving vulnerable people, especially children, in wars. When the people of Israel fought the Philistines, at the time of King Saul, Jesse the Bethlehemite sent his older sons to war and not his little son David, the Prophet, at that time because he was too young. "Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul. The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone to follow Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab, the firstborn, next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest. And the three eldest followed Saul. But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." (1 Samuel 17: 12-15)

The Coptic Church supports families and children who lose their homes through the services it provides to the homeless and refugees via its various institutions and other non-governmental organizations affiliated to the various churches. These organizations run programmes that care for the victims of armed conflicts, especially children and women, since they are the most vulnerable groups and so are most in need of assistance.

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity agree that it is impermissible to involve children in war or conflict, and children, women and other vulnerable groups who are affected by conflict are deserving of special protection including shelter and other forms of care and assistance. They particularly condemn the use of rape and other forms of violence against women and girls by soldiers and other combatants. Both faiths are in agreement on the importance of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which prohibits involving children younger than 18 years of age in hostilities and requires that nations raise the minimum age for mandatory conscription and direct participation in conflicts to 18 years. The protocol likewise requires that States Parties raise the minimum age for voluntary enlistment from the current minimum age, which is 15 years.

XI. Child trafficking

Introduction

Trafficking in children refers to any action or interaction in which a child is transported from one person or group of people to another person in exchange for payment or any form of compensation. It can also be the act of selling, purchasing or offering to sell a child; delivering, receiving or transporting a child; or exploiting him or her sexually, commercially, economically, in scientific research and experiments or for any other illegitimate purposes, regardless of whether the crime occurred abroad.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, defines trafficking in children as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation". Exploitation includes "sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs," human tissue, or parts thereof, as well as begging.

The act of child trafficking involves the use of force, persuasion or deception, or the receipt of benefits and gifts. Families and others sometimes participate in this crime, and it may even result from the child's own initiative. When an individual undertakes the task of transporting a child, various people may take turns transporting, trading or supporting the transport and trade of the child during different points along the course of transport and delivery. There may be an agent to receive children and convey them to the end of their journey, which is often a permanent group in charge of reception. Others may also aid the trafficking process by forging documents and travel papers. The International Labour Organization therefore considers a child a victim of trafficking if he/she is transported from his place of residence for the purpose of exploitation. Anyone who contributes to or benefits from this practice is considered a party to the crime. These parties may include parents, guardians, traffickers, intermediaries who provide travel documents and transport the children, corrupt government officials, businessmen and document forgers.

Islamic viewpoint on child trafficking

Child trafficking has a number of objectives which concern all organizations promoting the rights of children and civil society organizations generally. These objectives are symptomatic of dangerous afflictions which have spread throughout all countries, both developing and developed. Some of these objectives include: sexual exploitation, including seasonal marriage and child

brides; begging; cheap labour; adoption; using children as a source for organ transplants; and exploiting children in armed conflicts, political struggles and internal unrest.

Trafficking in children is a type of corruption on Earth because it turns human beings, who have been honoured by God, into things that can be bought and sold. God Almighty said, "We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our Creation".[64] He also said, "… and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief".[65] God's Messenger (**pbuh**) said, "There are three whom I will oppose on the Day of Resurrection: a man who gave his word and then betrayed it; a man who sold a free man into slavery and kept the money; and a man who hired someone, benefited from his labour, then did not pay his wages".[66]

The punishments prescribed by secular law – namely imprisonment and fines – cannot be considered sufficient for deterring people from committing these grave crimes against humanity. Rather, interpretations of Islamic texts should be used to determine suitable punishments for these heinous crimes. This is the appropriate legislative approach to criminalizing and punishing these grave acts.

In addition to punitive measures that deter child trafficking, cooperation between countries and societies is necessary in order to address and eradicate this phenomenon. God Almighty said, "…help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour…".[67] The Messenger (**pbuh**) said, "All of you are guardians and responsible for your wards and the things under your care".[68] He (**pbuh**) also said, "God shall ask every guardian whether he has kept or lost his charge. And He shall even ask man about the members of his household".[69]

Christian viewpoint on child trafficking

Christianity strongly rejects and condemns any form of child and human trafficking. This is based on the dignity accorded to the human body, for God made man in His own image and likeness. "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'... ." (Genesis 1: 26) He gave him freedom, immortality and a brain and combined in one being, the

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64 Surat Al-Isra, Verse 70. Trans. by Yusuf Ali.
65 Surat Al-Qasas, Verse 77. Trans. by Yusuf Ali.
66 Sahih Al-Bukhari – Book of Sales and Trade – Chapter: The Punishment for Selling a Free Man.
67 Surat Al-Ma'ida, Verse 2. Trans. by Yusuf Ali.
68 Compiled by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, Book of Friday Prayer, Chapter: Friday Prayer in Villages and Cities 248/1, 249 Hadith 893.
69 Compiled by Ibn Hibban in his Sahih, Chapter: On the Caliphate and the Emirate 344/10 Hadith 4492. Narrated by At-Tirmidhi 208/4 No. 1705.

material body and the soul that he received from God. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." (Genesis 2: 7) Thus, the body acquired a special dignity, which is why Christianity rejects the idea of tormenting and humiliating the body and also rejects trading in it. "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just even as the Lord does the church." (Ephesians 5: 29)

Christianity sanctifies the body since the Holy Spirit lives within it: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3: 16) and "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6: 19) Therefore, Christianity rejects the harming of the human body in any way, whether by abusing or exploiting it, or using it to commit sin: "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Corinthians 3: 17) and "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? Certainly not!" (1 Corinthians 6: 15)

The Church rejects trafficking in children or their body parts as a form of modern slavery, since the children are turned into goods that are bought and sold. The Church agrees to and blesses organ transplant operations, since they save human lives and do not conflict with religion in any way and using knowledge to serve human life absolutely does not go against religion. However, the Church does not condone trafficking in human organs.

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity are united in condemning all trafficking in human beings, who have been created by God and thus cannot be bought and sold. All forms of trafficking have devastating effects on children's physical and psychological well-being. They violate their fundamental rights to health care, education, job opportunities and other social and political rights. Both faiths also condemn using children as a source for illegal organ transplants. In addition to combatting the criminals who profit from trafficking in human beings, it is important to address the causes of child trafficking, which include poverty, lack of social awareness and low levels of education.

XII. Violence against children on television and the Internet

Introduction

Innovations in communication technology (satellite television, Internet, social media, cell phones, computer games, etc.) have had many beneficial effects on our society. People are able to communicate with each other in real time, across countries and across the globe, share information, maintain important human and familial connections, learn about other cultures and follow global and national events. In spite of these positive factors, these developments pose numerous challenges to societies, with children particularly vulnerable to the new technologies. Children are greatly influenced by communication technology, which can have a negative effect on their social and spiritual lives if the amount of time they spend online and the content they access are not supervised adequately by parents or caregivers. Overutilization of these means of communication can separate children from their families and friends, making them live in a state of isolation and loneliness instead of interacting directly with other human beings.

The threats facing children on the Internet and through the new communication technology include violent videos, games and material containing scenes of sexual violence, sexual abuse of children and pornography. Other emerging risks to children include cyberbullying, which is using social media to harass children by disclosing personal information, spreading rumors or distributing inappropriate photos or videos harmful to their image and reputation. Children can also be at risk of coming into contact with sexual predators and other dangerous people who are looking to lure children into dangerous situations such as sexual abuse, exploitation and extortion. There is also the risk of exposure to images of extreme violence which can be distressing and harmful to children and also contribute to the normalization of violence.

Islamic viewpoint on violence against children on television and the Internet

Parents can guard against a number of factors while monitoring their children's relationship with different forms of media, including television and the Internet, in the context of matters that should be avoided and others that should be used. This topic goes to the core of parents' responsibility, as the Quran says, "O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded".[70] And the Prophet (**pbuh**) said, "All of you are guardians and responsible for your wards and the things under your care".[71]

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70 Surat At-Tahrim, Verse 6. Trans. by Yusuf Ali.

71 Compiled by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, Book of Friday Prayer, Chapter: Friday Prayer in Villages and Cities 248/1, 249 Hadith 893.

Exposing children to a variety of material and discussing its contents with them is the best way to teach children that the world is neither ideal nor monstrous, but rather simply a place where both good and evil exist. Children's capabilities to distinguish between good and evil must be developed, and they must be taught how to act when viewing bad behaviour. Parents should avoid using television as a babysitter, which is a clear example of parents forsaking their responsibilities towards their children, and violates the sayings of the Messenger: "God shall ask every guardian whether he has kept or lost his charge. And He shall even ask man about the members of his household".[72] Parents should offer guidance and limit the number of hours of television and Internet use, avoid having the television on constantly and avoid giving children devices of their own.

To prevent dangers posed by media violence, parents should ask questions for discussion, offer a sound viewpoint and not remain silent. Parents and children should always watch television together, as the parents' presence allows them to counsel and guide the children and follows the example of the Messenger (pbuh), who said, "Religion is genuine advice".[73] Children should have other entertainment choices such as games, family visits to the park, reading books and stories and cultivating their hobbies. Parents should also give their children a chance to debate and discuss, thus strengthening their critical thinking skills and giving them the ability to rationally distinguish between right and wrong. Parents should participate in electronic activities with their children, play video games with them, add them as friends on social networks, send them emails, inquire about and monitor their electronic activity and keep an eye on their friend's pages. Parents should always be aware of the latest technological developments and should not refrain from providing religious and moral support.

Finally, parents should monitor their children's activities but not punish them. Excessive punishment leads children to adopt the punished behaviours and wait for an opportunity to engage in them when the parents are absent. Violence cannot be remedied with a violent response. The Messenger (pbuh) said, "Whenever there is compassion in something, it adorns it, and it is never removed from something without blemishing it".[74] He (pbuh) also said, "Surely, if God loves the people of a house, he bestows them with compassion".[75]

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72 Compiled by Ibn Hibban in his Sahih – Chapter on: The Caliphate and the Emirate 344/10 Hadith 4492, referring to Anas – and it is said this is a valid hadith.

73 Compiled by Muslim in his Sahih: The Book of Faith – Chapter: Showing that Religion is Genuine Advice 74/1 Hadith 55 referring to Tamim Al-Dari.

74 Compiled by Muslim in his Sahih – Book: *Al-Birr* – Chapter: The Virtue of Clemency 2004/4 Hadith 2594 referring to Aisha.

75 Compiled by Imam Ahmed in his Musnad 488/40 Hadith 24427 referring to Aisha. Printed by Ar-Risalah.

Christian viewpoint on violence against children on television and the Internet

Christianity rejects all forms of violence against children on television, and rejects the improper use of the Internet. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12: 2)

However, Christianity does not reject this new world in all its aspects. It does confirm that it presents challenges and calls on children and young people to strive to face them. As Bishop Moussa, the 'Youth Bishop', says, "Become salt that spreads and melts with love, a light that vanquishes the last vestiges of darkness, the yeast in which divine life is dormant, a sweet aroma, the aroma of Christ, the epistle which is known to all and read by all, become an ambassador representing God everywhere you go, clean, pure and holy". In his books for children, Bishop Moussa writes, "My dear ones, you are the munitions of the future, for the family, the Church and society… therefore you provide hope of a holy and happy life, because you possess energy and a dream. All that we ask of you is that each one of you should develop an integrated Christian personality. When your souls become saturated with Christ, when the Gospel enlightens your mind, when your souls are regulated by the Holy Spirit, when your bodies become fit with sport and with avoiding smoking, drinking alcohol and all that is profane; then will you be influential and successful members of the Church and of society. As the Holy Bible says, 'You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth.' If the salt is ruined, what can take its place?".

The Church believes in its role regarding children and youth, and knows how dangerous are the challenges imposed by the nature of modern life and the effects of the modern information media and communication technology. Through the child and youth festivals, the Church strives to bring up the new generations in the spirit of the age, while maintaining the authentic spiritual and social values. The Church does this through giving the young training in spiritual, artistic and sports exercises, to get rid of excess energy by way of being creative and being involved in positive and useful activities.

In every bishopric, there is a children's committee which is in charge of children's affairs and which organizes conferences and festivals for the children in general and for creative children in particular. These committees undertake to publish the outstanding results achieved in various fields by the children at these festivals and they display the creative works that they produce. The committees issue cultural magazines and produce various educational materials, which are aimed at bringing up generations of young people who have the spirit of the age while retaining the spiritual and social values of Christianity.

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity recognize the value of new forms of technology and communication, but caution against the dangers and challenges they also present. Families of both faiths are encouraged to remain involved in the children's lives – online and offline – and continue to instil in them positive spiritual and social values.