

Muslims never caused any security problem; no security problem at all while they were weak, persecuted and tortured; while they were ruled; while they were part of the administration as minority and while they were in power as a ruling party.

Rutherford Civil Rights Commission organized "A Night of Diversity and Unity" program on Feb 15 2012. PII's director Dr. Levent Koc was one of the speakers invited. Dr. Koc started off his speech by mentioning recent attacks on synagogues in Bergen County. He said, "Attacks on any faith is an attack on all faiths. We have to stand together during such adverse incidents and get our message out all together." We condemn any kinds of attacks on any temple.

Levent then continued his speech on the theme of the night, "Diversity and Unity" Below is a summary of his speech.

Living together with others: examples from Prophet Muhammad's Life (pbuh)

We have two main sources of Islamic sciences, Qur'an and our Prophet (pbuh). There are several verses regarding living together with 'others' in the Qur'an. For example, "O Mankind: We created you from a male and a female; and made you into tribes and nations that you may get to know each other. And verily, most honored before God is the most virtuous/ righteous of you." (Qur'an, 49:13).

Say: (It is) the truth from the Lord of you (all). Then whosoever will, let him disbelieve (Qur'an 18:29)

Had Allah willed, He could have made them one community (Qur'an 42:8)

Had Allah willed He could have made you (all) one nation (Qur'an 16:93)

Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) clearly said: "Arab is not more privileged than non-Arab, nor white than black. Spiritual excellence and true piety is the only distinction amongst humans recognized by Allah."

If we focus on differences, we make people 'other'. If we make people 'other', we make them our 'enemies'. If we make them our enemies, we make them 'evil' in our eyes. As human beings our aim must be to find similarities, and find ways of living together while forbearing differences if not celebrating.

After these principles, I want to present you a short analysis of our Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) life from a different perspective, regarding living together. We can divide his life into four periods in this sense: Makka period, Abyssinia period, first Madina period and second Madina period.

Makka Period: what we observe in Makka period is patience and examples of living together despite all kinds of suffering, including torture. Muslims in this period had to live together with their enemies, with those who tortured them, with those who made honorable living impossible for Muslims. One day our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was praying in Ka'ba and Abu Jahl put a camel's stomach on his back, which dirtied his all body terribly. His youngest daughter Fatimah came, she cried and tried to clean him. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) asked her to be patient.

Idol worshippers tortured Ammar bin Yasir and his family. They killed his mother and his father in front of his eyes. They forced him to deny Oneness of God. He did what he was asked to do but kept his faith in his heart. He was released but he was not happy because of what he uttered with his tongue. He told the story to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and explained he was faithful when he denied God. Our prophet calmed him down and said, "Say it again if you are forced to say it" and advised him to be patient.

Abyssinia period: Because life was unbearable in Makka, the Prophet asked some of the Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia, telling them that there was a just Christian king there. It was a Christian land where Muslims were minority. What was fascinating to Muslims in this Christian land was loyalty, participation and cooperation with the local people and authorities. It was even reported that Muslims joined Christians in a war to defend Abyssinia.

Muslims migrated to Abyssinia twice.

First Madina period: Common characteristics of this period are outreach of Muslims to Jews and non-believers. As soon as Muslims migrated to this city, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) became the leader of the city although Muslims were about 15% of the population. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) prepared a governance document that was accepted by all. This document is considered to be the first written constitution in the history. It is called Madina document or Constitution of Madina. This constitution's major articles were on security for all, freedom of religion, social-military-political participation and cooperation, individuality of crime (the entire tribe was held responsible for one's crime in the past, which resulted in wars between tribes).

Demographic characteristic of the city was important in terms of living together. Majority, almost 45% was non-believer, 40% was Jewish and only 15% was Muslim out of 10,000 people in Madina. There was cooperation between these communities in trade, agriculture and daily life.

Second Madina period: Muslims were majority in this period. They were the ruler of the state. Others were minority. Main characteristic of this period is justice. No Muslim was favored over non-Muslims. All were treated equally by the state.

Common character of all periods is that Muslims never caused any security problem; no security problem at all while they were weak, persecuted and tortured; while they were ruled; while they were part of the administration as minority and while they were in power as a ruling party.

Below are some pictures of the night



