

A kind request to all Imams:

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,

The UK government has tabled a Bill to stop public bodies like councils and universities boycotting Israel.

This Bill explicitly aims to restrict public bodies from making ethical decisions concerning Israel.

Boycotting is a peaceful and democratic way to make a moral decision about who to deal with. Boycotting was very successful in ending apartheid in South Africa.

If this Bill becomes law, it will stop public bodies from championing justice. Importantly, this Bill could be the first step in banning individuals from boycotting Israel or any other country the government wants.

This is an urgent issue of justice and democratic rights, and we kindly request you consider the following text for your Jummah Khutba on **Friday 13th October**:

.....

Among the qualities of a believer is that he stands for justice. This means championing the end of oppression. Every Jumuah, many Imams recite the verse: (16:90)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَايَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

“Allah commands justice, doing good and generosity towards relatives and He forbids what is shameful, blameworthy and oppressive, he teaches you so that you may take heed.”

In many verses of the Quran, Allah implores us to stand up for justice and calls upon us to make an effort to stop evils in society.

“O you who believe, be upright for Allah, and be bearers of witness with justice!” [Quran, 5:8]

Being a believing Muslim is not a passive act – it means actively upholding and protecting the values of justice and fairness.

“God commands justice and fair dealing...” [Quran, 16:90]

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both.” [Quran, 4:135]

Allah reminds us that even if it be against our parents, we must stand firm in establishing and believing in justice – it might be incredibly difficult, but it remains a duty upon us all.

When the messenger of Allah ﷺ was a young man, before prophethood, an interesting and relevant incident took place in Makkah. An individual from outside of Makkah came to Makkah to engage in trade. Al-As ibn wael bought some stock from him and promised to pay the money later. When the time comes for Al-As to pay, he refuses to honour his dues.

This leads to the individual complaining to the leaders of Makkah, who initially ignore him. A long story cut short, after a while, the people of Quraysh agree that this man has been oppressed and so they make a pact between themselves that no one shall be oppressed in Makkah in this way. If someone outside of Makkah comes for trade, they shall receive the money owed. As a young man, the Prophet ﷺ was also part of the pact.

However, what is even more interesting is that the messenger of Allah ﷺ remarked regarding this incident many many years later, perhaps approximately 40 years later, *“I witnessed a pact in the house of Abdullah Ibn Judan, if I were invited to take part in it after Islam I would have accepted”*. Meaning even though the pact took place way before he became a Prophet, if the same thing had happened while he was a Prophet, he would have been part of it.

Dear respected brothers and sisters; this teaches us a vital lesson. It teaches us that the Muslim and justice should be tied together. A Muslim – an individual with natural fitra does not remain silent when oppression is taking place. The Muslim is the one who stands for justice.

The messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *“whoever from amongst you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand, if he is unable to then with his tongue and if he is unable to then let him at least feel uneasy in his heart – and this (last option) is the weakest form of Iman”*. (Muslim)

“In another narration, the messenger ﷺ said: “Help your brother, be he the oppressor or the one oppressed. Someone asked him, O messenger of Allah! I can help him if he is oppressed, but when he is the oppressor, how can I help him? The messenger [saas] replied, stop him from committing oppression, this is how you help him”. (Bukhari)

We are discussing this today because there is a bill going through Parliament at present. This Bill, if it becomes law, will make it illegal for public bodies like, councils and universities to boycott Israel.

Remember, Boycotting is inspired by the movement that helped end apartheid in South Africa.

Boycott allows individuals, businesses and governments worldwide to take peaceful, democratic measures against Israel for its ongoing violations of international law. It is a legitimate, peaceful way to stand up against injustice.

The government is trying to remove this tool with the ‘Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill’ or ‘anti-BDS Bill’.

The Bill will allow ministers to exempt certain territories from the provisions of the Bill, but explicitly precludes ministers from making any exemptions regarding Israel. In other words, the Bill will grant Israel a favourable exemption, offering Israel a protective shield for its ongoing violations of international law.

This is a serious attack on the democratic right of public bodies to make ethical decisions. Public bodies must have the right not to financially engage with companies and countries that violate international law. The Bill has already passed the first and second stage and a third reading of the Bill is expected to take place in the next Parliamentary session.

The Bill restricting boycotts is unjust – and to uphold justice, we need to campaign against the Bill becoming law.

Remember, Boycotting is part of our history.

Thumaamah bin Uthar, the chief of Banu-Hanifa and leader of Yamamah, had killed several companions and was later apprehended. He was to spend three days in Medina as a prisoner, when the Prophet ﷺ asked him to accept Islam. Thumaamah declined and despite his refusal and the crime he had committed, the Prophet ﷺ released him and gave him his freedom.

Thumaamah bin Uthaar left Medina but returned back and accepted Islam at his own free will. Thereafter, he headed to Makkah (which was still under the control of Quraysh) to perform Umrah. On witnessing the hatred and malicious plans of the Quraysh, Thumaamah pledged to boycott the Makkans and withhold the sale of food/Grain coming from Yamamah.

The ahadith in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim state:

“.....By Allah, you will not get a single grain of wheat from Yamamah until it is permitted by the Messenger of Allah peace be upon him”.

The boycott took place and we can conclude that the Prophet ﷺ permitted him to use this strategy. The boycott was only lifted when the people of Quraysh sent a letter to the Prophet ﷺ begging him for it to be lifted.

When it comes to calling for justice for Palestinians, one of the most peaceful strategies we can use is that of boycott.

To uphold justice, we must take practical steps. Otherwise, this Bill may lead to individuals being restricted from boycotting Israel.

What can we do?

[1] Rely on Allah to help us as is mentioned in the Qur’ān. *“and put your trust in Allah if you are believers indeed.” (5:23) “And there is no victory except from Allah. Verily, Allah is AlMighty, All-Wise.” (8:10)* Indeed, trust in Allah (tawakkul) is an integral aspect of our faith as Muslims. It is the firm belief and reliance on Allah's wisdom, power, and guidance in all aspects of our lives.

So the first step for Muslims is to put our trust and reliance in Allah, the Most Powerful, the Most Magnificent, the Most Majestic.

[2] Each one of us must understand the Bill and its long term implications. Educate family members and colleagues.

[3] Send letters and emails to your local MP. It is MPs that will be voting on the Bill. Therefore, we must lobby our MPs to ensure they vote against the Bill. Write to your local MP explaining why the ‘Anti-BDS’ Bill is harmful to freedom of speech in Britain.

[4] And we must make du‘ā’ and pray that Allah helps us to overcome this Bill, and allows us to continue to practise our religion peacefully. As Allah mentions: “*..and your Lord has said: “Call upon Me; I will respond to you. Indeed! Those who disdain My worship will surely enter Hell in humiliation.” (40:60)*

For more information about the anti-BDS Bill, sample letters to send to your MPs and other details, visit the Friends of Al-Aqsa website:
foa.org.uk/righttoboycott

Jazak Allahu Khayran