

E-MAIL FROM SOMALIA



I got an e-mail from a good friend and a former prison mate at Addis Ababa's Kality federal prison, Abdub. He is certainly one most vibrant character that I have ever met. It was his personal courage, piety, compassion, and willpower that made him a rare breed amongst the prison population. Though he was confined within fortified walls, he was free like a wind. He has sent this e-mail from Somalia.

Here is the e-mail:

I have never though my life adventure would interest other than myself nor have I ever entertained the idea that it possesses inspirational attributes and yet, I was asked to write about it. As a teenager, I did not much know about Islam but during my confinement, I have gratefully acquired Islam's rich expressions, the magnanimity of its impressions, the spiritual cohesion, the organic wholeness of Islam, and I embraced it with a smile that mutely said, "Allahu Akbar". At the prison library, I read about Islam

thoroughly and it has discharged a train of thoughts and it was that train got me in motion. In order words, Islam has illuminated my life objectives and it has dispelled the distorted conceptions that are inaccurately stamped with Sharia Law. I have realized that, at least in my mind, the secret of understanding Islam lies in Qur'an innermost meanings, merely focusing on its rituals aspects like prayers generates a false sense of virtuousness.

My journey was about seeking sanctuary in a place where preaching the word of Allah is not an offence. The temptation and the lure for discovering a such place has overrode the hazards posed by the danger imbued journey, and I knew my stormy longing will only subside in Sharia administered land. I was unduly nervous because the Ethiopian intelligence agency is unpredictable even though you think that you have discovered all the red-buttons that trigger its wrath. It has the tendency to get you off-guard with falsely formulated offences that are non-existence in the legal books because we are the 'usual suspects'. I am in Somalia where Sharia law is supreme, not that I am a roadrunner, not at all, I am on a mission.

Somalia is a nation held hostage by tribal fanaticism, intense personal interests, and foreign influences but some people would like to portray Somalia' problems in an economic sense, and poverty as the reason that the youth are excessively joining Alshabab. In contrast, Somalia is a prosperous land and the financial hardship is something that is directly related to its people's incompetence, but the root cause is that Somalis have put Islam under the carpet. As a result, this spiritual amnesia has violently brought down the whole nation not only the perpetrators who devised it but also those who heedlessly watched it decay, leaving behind cautionary marks for the future generations. This predicament is complex because it conceals far more than it reveals particularly for those who view it with alien spectacles. Based on an erroneous reading, the West has uninformedly prescribed a defective medication for an illness that is only curable with Qur'anic verses, consequently, the disease has grown far beyond control. This is the very reason that Somalia is bedridden for a long time.

If the civil wars have taught us anything is that when bell of tribalism rings, Somalis have nothing in common except Athan (call for prayer), a matter that had never received its merited attention amongst the population. The turmoil that ensued had catastrophic outcomes on many but the experience had awakened the hidden abilities, refined the senses, and the most importantly, it had invoked the need for an impartial unifying bond. It was Islam that came to the rescue and normalcy has swept across the land, a land that was notorious for lawlessness. But the Westerners and allies were quick to undermine

the religious venture by questioning its legitimacy and smearing it with fabricated allegations but the project has blossomed despite the continued negative media campaign. Equally, numerous military attempts were ineffective in subduing the endeavor, in contrast, Sharia law has spread like a wild fire across Somalia. This victory was unique and distinct in many ways because it had boosted the morale and it has brought forth a fresh conviction that the Sharia law is achievable despite the West's disapproval.

The Western form of governance is to guide the masses with laws derived from their own intellectual thoughts which intrinsically conflicts life's natural habits and its dynamic movements, in other words, all laws must be within the frames of 'common sense'. Immersed in egoistical mentality, it flatly invalidates any life standards outside of the Western cultural orbit. No Muslim nation will ever survive if Sharia Law is subordinated to man-made laws, and it will eventually collapse like a house of cards without needing help from foreign actors even if wealth is abundantly at hand. Islam is like a sea where its beauty simply lies in the ways in which the waves alter their appearances without assistance from external substances to enhance its natural movements, and it is that element of purity that makes it magnificence and powerful. All Muslims agree that the rotten present can only be rectified by emulating the utopian days of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) by means of Jihad to achieve that spiritual purity.

One day, in Somalia, I had an idea of visiting the town's Sharia court, a town that was emerging from a devastating past, and the newly thriving housing estates indicate its evolving economic progress. The cupola of the newly built mosque rose above all and the sun's reflected rays on it makes it visible from a distance. At the court entrance, the black Tawhid banner was up with its beauty of timelessness, it is the very testimony that lifted mankind from the utter darkness to the pinnacle by means of higher social forms. I walked past the reception area where few individuals were unconcernedly waiting. We have exchanged Islamic greeting, ' peace and pleasing of Allah be upon you' I wondered the source of their calmness despite living under difficult situations. How could it be otherwise? Perhaps they had acquired the divine tranquility that is innately embedded in Islamic faith, and the extreme circumstances had simply made them intellectually mature.

The court was in session and the proceeding case was a lawsuit about a dead camel. One could hear "in the name of Allah" an emotional oath that is intended to clarify a hidden truth. An elder's disagreement over the matter was not a secret as he walked out looking at me with glittering eyes; though he had an appearance of deep gravity, and yet his sense of humor was still present, and a tender smile that yielded oscillating thoughts was equally visible. The clerk had called out the next case eye-balling at the guard

who echoed the exact phrases at the waiting room. We were allowed to enter. My effort was to understand the overall picture of what practical Sharia is as a judiciary system, and to attain a certain level of detachment from the past alien associations.

The structural design of the court and its fittings were very primitive; wooden table, benches along the wall, a small bookshelf, a thin layered carpet that covered the floor and a window that is a gateway to the waiting area. The room was noticeably saturated with the past memories; stacked files that perhaps contain search for justice when human reasoning had reached a dead-end, boundless emotions due to the unexpected, and perception of justice in human outlook – only if the walls could talk.

The defendant, who was accused of possessing a memory card that contained inappropriate materials, was dressed in Qamis, a simple Islamic garment that inspired no alien culture. He was visibly agitated, lost in deep reflection perhaps he was polishing his thoughts. The Judge was quick to state his name and the allegation staring at him questioningly. With his head bent, he simply mumbled, " The memory card is mine " before retreating into silence and a gesture that wished a miracle intervention. The judge, bearded stocky middle-aged man with wrinkled penetrating eyes that painted unforgettable serious look was intense in his condemnation by employing Qur'anic verses as well as humor to have an unrestricted appeal. The spontaneity and fluency of his knowledge suggested that he was aware of the complicated task that had been entrusted in him.

The defendant's concern was genuine. The prospect of public lashing was a probable, tension had thickened the air, and in sympathy, I prayed for a happy ending. The judge had curiously inquired his marital status "Are you married?" as he caressed his long henna-dyed beard in anticipation for an answer. Avoiding eye-contact, the defendant simply shook his head for a reply nervously cracking his fingers. After more like a sermon that covered every angle of individual morality, the judge had cautioned him before ordering his release. He stood up with overwhelming relieve that was not distinguishable from a lassitude, stretching his long hand towards the judge in gratitude that acknowledged both the favorable decision and his offence in a good grace. In a way, we both implicitly shared a sense of admiration for the simplicity of the process, and its sovereign clarity. The concept and mechanism of Islamic judiciary is the practical implementation of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) but not knowing the true spirit of Islam, one cannot appreciate or use its power appropriately.

Islam safeguards human decency by providing set of divine ethical values and nothing is unimportant or negligible in Qur'an and the tradition of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). These inappropriate contents would certainly invoke pursuit of illegal physical pleasures beyond Islamic perimeter not to mention the moral decay. Allah (SWT) said "...and seek not to spread corruption on earth: for, verily, Allah does not love the spreaders of corruption." Muslims are commanded to behave within the radius of Islam by emulating the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in all aspects.

In contrast, Western societies, the terms 'good' and 'bad' is entirely left to an individual's sense of imagination and there is no room for religious interference for matters that defy human reasoning or cannot be proven in science. For example, what is considered 'good' in one country is despised in another due to lack of concrete moral values, and the element of 'Christianity' is no more than a unifying bond, a familiarity, and a comfort-zone. To degrade the Islamic moral standards, they use humanitarian aid, progress, education, etc. as a bait to disintegrate Islamic morals. This encroachment has enabled them to gradually corrupt not only the intellectual forms but also the religious roots.

The next case was about a breach of contract between partners; a total loss of capital. The defendant had acknowledged the plaintiff as a shareholder and a large amount of money was electronically transferred to an account to transport sugar sacks from overseas. The defendant claimed that the vessel had capsized in the middle of the Indian Ocean ruining all on board (source: the shipping company (non-believers)). The plaintiff had submitted a legal document from the Port Authority (non-believers) affirming that the boat in question is at large invalidating the implication that it had perished. It was up to the plaintiff and defendant to convince the judges whether it was a deception by design or merely an unforeseen tragedy.

There were key factors in deciding this case. First, the location of the boat is beyond the judges' jurisdiction to determine its status. Second, in Islam, none-believers' testimony is not permissible in Sharia court (in person or in paper). Allah (SWT) said, "...And bring to witness two witnesses from among your men. And if there are not two men [available], then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses – so that if one of the women errs, then the other can remind her.", and the term, "... your men.", means these men must be Muslims to testify. In worst case scenario, a deceitful Muslim's testimony is more acceptable than a truthful non-believer because according to C. E. Bosworth's book, 'The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam' "...the obstinate failure to recognize the

true light of Islam, was proof of defective morality and a consequent incapability of bearing legal witness."

To be at Sharia court is praiseworthy deed, and as they (the defendant and the plaintiff) told me, they have never imagined that their search for justice would disembark as far as this township, perhaps the court case was just a reason and the journey may have had other purpose which they did not realize it. Now that I look back, a wisdom beyond human knowledge had guided us to this court.

The case had occupied my thoughts and an irresistible curiosity had pressed me to acquire the verdict. I had unexpectedly met the plaintiff at a local coffee shop though we were strangers at sight; a friendly man in his mid-fifties who possessed the wisdom to accept what he perceived as an unfavorable decision and maintain his composure at the same time. Sipping tea and a smile that exposed no trace of bitterness, he had told me that it was settled in oath in favor of the defendant. We had a conversation on different subjects, and finally, he waved at me and left not knowing that he is at the nucleus of a religious quake whose waves will eventually irradiate the entire world.

As for me, I certainly knew I was pursuing an expedition of no new discoveries but it had only revitalized what I had already knew: Sharia law harmonizes the social and intellectual aspect of human life from personal development to communal interests, guiding not only the practical life but also the struggle for the good at Hereafter. My conviction had been intensified, my spiritual view had been expanded, I have acquired new impressions from ideas that had been familiar to me, and a known truth that was partially dormant had been awakened, confirmed in a Sharia court.

Join the caravan!

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