THE INCLUSIVITY OF ISLAMICJERUSALEM AND ITS MODEL FOR MULTICULTURALISM

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ABSTRACT: *The three monotheistic religions have a very strong connection with the region of Islamicjerusalem. It is a place where these religions meet, sometimes peacefully and at other times not. Its bloody history took a major turn with the arrival of Islam and Muslims into this holy region. A new chapter of peaceful relations between religions and cultures was forged in the seventh century. This rapport has not always been maintained and at various points in history it has been violated and the region reverted to its old ways. This paper looks at the framework and source of this change in the seventh century. It will discuss various Qur'anic verses and the attitudes of the early Muslims who arrived into the region, and the model adopted for multiculturalism and cultural-engagement, drawing lessons for a time of great need.*

KEYWORDS: *Bayt al-Maqdis, Holy Land, Islam, Christian, Jewish, Byzantine, conquest, multiculturalism, Al-Aqsa Mosque.*

INTRODUCTION

Islamicjerusalem (one word) is a new terminology, which refers to the region of Bayt al-Maqdis. The Arabic form today refers narrowly to merely either the mosque or the city. However, historically this term had a further connotation, which referred to the large region that encompasses various towns and villages and cities besides the old city (El-Awaisi 2007: 273-275). The concept of Islamicjerusalem consists of three main factors: land, people and an inclusive vision. The first two are constants and the third with the right vision can lead to this holy region being a model for

diversity, multiculturalism and cultural engagement as is argued by Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi (2005). One may argue whether a region that is torn by wars and violent conflicts in both historical and contemporary times can be a model. Historically it has proven to be feasible with the right vision and this paper sets out to explore the framework for such vision and draw lessons for our times.

BACKGROUND

This area historically has been a hotbed for conflicts since its historical beginnings. This region has always been associated with conflict, which is expatiated when the victorious party makes the city or region exclusively theirs.   Excluding others from its space does not eradicate additional conflicts rather it only suppresses them, until the oppressed is able to take vengeance. This has been the sequence of conflicts between various parties until the beginning of the seventh century. As Islam was on the rise in Makkah a new conflict in the Holy Land was at its peak; this time between the Zoroastrian Persians and the Christian Byzantines (614-628CE). The Jews who were expelled in the second century by the Romans (later the Byzantines) were awaiting to avenge various centuries of exclusion and oppression. They thus joined forces with the enemies of their enemy, namely the Persians, slaughtering all together tens of thousands of Christians when entering the holy city. At the pinnacle of the victories on the Persian side and while Islam was still in its infancy, Qur'anic verses were revealed prophesising the victory of the Byzantines in a few years (Qur'an 30:1-4). This against all odds was fulfilled within the timeframe of the prophecy. This early prophecy seems to favour the Christian Byzantines -which the Qur'an refers to as al-Rum (Romans)- over the Persians as can be deduced from the verses in Surat al-Rum and some of the *Ahadith* that mention this explicitly. These verses conclude with a remark on the rejoicing of the Muslims on the Byzantine victory or the Muslim victory as some exegetes argue (El-Awaisi 2015).

This sympathy or support of the Christians did not appear of a vacuum rather it was how the Muslims aligned themselves with another monotheistic religion. This was clear especially as events started to unfold where the pagans of Makkah were rejoicing over

the Persian victories and said to the Muslims *"our brethren have defeated your brethren"* (Al-Tabari 1967: 184-185; Ibn Abi-Hatim 1997:3087; Al-Wahidi 1998: 288). Islam from this early stage considered itself a continuation of these religions. This is further reflected in the various verses revealed before and after this incident, emphasising the connection with this land and the prophets who dwelled on it. This can be seen clearly in one of the first chapters to be revealed, al-Muzzammil, which likens the sending of Muhammad to that of Moses to Pharaoh (Qur'an 73:15). This was constantly followed by further references not only to Moses but to another central figure in monotheistic religions, Abraham, as is recorded in chapters *Al-A'laa* and *al-Najim* (Qur'an 87:19; 53:36-37). This is again explicitly reflected in a latter Makkan verse that notes the connection with the main other four prophets, knowing as *Ulu al-Azm* (the Resolute Messengers):

> He [God] has ordained for you the same religion which he ordained for Noah and that which We revealed to you [Muhammad] and that which We ordained for Abraham. Moses and Jesus... (Qur'an 42:13)

This was reflected later in the special status that followers of these Prophets were appointed in Islam, as the People of the Book. Although the Qur'an clearly documents that these followers have strayed from the right path, yet it acknowledges truth in some of their teachings.

ISLAMICJERUSALEM IN ISLAM'S EARLY YEARS

One of the earliest revelations was that of *al-Muzzammil*, mentioned earlier and noted by al-Rabi from that early stage of Islam, prayer was directed by God to al-Aqsa Mosque (al-Rabi 2009). The Qur'an later in Madinah mentions clearly that the appointment of the first *Qiblah* was from God (Qur'an 2:143). The appointment of the Holy Land and Al-Aqsa Mosque, in particular, as the Qiblah, gives a sense of continuation of the legacy of preceding prophets. The argument that the Qiblah was changed from Makkah to Islamicjerusalem at the time of Moses or soon after his death has been acknowledged by later Prophets, such as Jesus, would also mean that Muhammad was acknowledging the established *Qiblah*. The issue of altering the *Qiblah* later, the

Qur'an states to have been known to the People of the Book (Qur'an 144-6).

One of the earliest revelation that speaks about this land, within the first few year of Muhammad's Prophethood, is the chapter of *al-Tin* (Qur'an 95), which again links the three monotheistic messages by reflecting on their geographical locations. It talks of the region of Islamicjerusalem and its vicinity metaphorically as the land of "*the Figs and Olives*", it then talks of Mount Sinai and the secure town (Makkah) (Ibn Kathir 2000: 1517-1518). Thus, referring to where the Qur'an was being revealed (i.e. Makkah), where the Torah was revealed (i.e. Sinai) and where the *Injeel* (New Testament), the Psalms amongst other revelations (i.e. the Holy Land).

Interestingly the immediate revelation (chapter *Quraysh*) takes a distinctive look at a contemporary connection between Makkah on one side and Islamicjerusalem and the *Land of Barakah* on the other. This was of a more materialistic connection of the merchants' route from Makkah to Historical Syria in the summer (and in the winter to Yemen). This is developed in subsequent verses that link the route to specific areas in and around Islamicjerusalem. Moreover, what can be deduced from the sequence of revelation is the indication that the spiritual connection is a new dimension to this forgotten relationship (established by Abraham and earlier prophets), being revived through a link from Moses to Jesus to Muhammad.

These were not the only instances; a multitude of verses were revealed about prophets who dwelled on its lands, sometimes with descriptions of the areas they were in or going towards. In addition to references to the land itself, such as the unravelling of events in the Day of Judgment when the trumpet is blown from *a place so near*, in chapter Qaaf (Qur'an 50:41), to be the Rock of Bayt al-Maqdis as various exegetes argue (El-Awaisi 2014). Other prophets from Arabia and further afield were being referred to by this stage, many of whom have a connection with Islamicjerusalem, such as Lot, David, Solomon, Job, Isaac, Ishmael, Zachariah, John amongst others. Some of these prophets had a brief mention at

this stage and were detailed in later verses. One that had very detailed description at an early stage was the story of Moses and the Israelites and their exodus from Egypt. Also, the story of Mary and the birth of Jesus as well as the story of Zachariah and the birth of John.

LAND OF BARAKAH

The Qur'an mentions this land in a number of verses. The first mention of the *Land of Barakah* -based on the sequence of revelation- is while discussing the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt in in chapter *al-A'raaf* (Qur'an 7:137). This was followed years later, around the time of the Night Journey, of the verse on Al-Aqsa being the source and centre of the *Barakah* of this region (Qur'an 17:1). This would have been followed the following year by a further reference to the *Land of Barakah* specifically talking about the link between it and Yemen in chapter *Sabaa'* (Qur'an 34:18), following a lengthy discussion of the story of the King Prophet David and his son Solomon. This would have been followed by two verses referring to this land, both in chapter *al-Anbiyaa'* (Prophets). The first mentions the migration of prophets Abraham and Lot to the *Land blessed with Barakah for all* (Qur'an 21:71). The next mention is ten verses later, in reference to King Prophet Solomon using the wind to travel to the *Land of Barakah* (Qur'an 21:81).

LAND OF PROPHETS

Out of the twenty-five prophets named in the Qur'an, the majority are related to Islamicjerusalem. Either they were born, dwelled, visited, migrated to, ruled or died in this blessed region. Many of the stories are presented in vivid detail in the Qur'anic text. One chapter that includes a lot of factual information on the land and the prophets who dwelt in it is chapter *Maryam* (Mary), which according to al-Zarkashi and other Qur'anic scholars was revealed before the Night Journey (620CE); it talks of Zachariah's prayer niche (Qur'an 19:11), as well as Mary's (Qur'an19:16) understood to be within the al-Aqsa Mosque. In addition to the place where she conceived Jesus (Qur'an 19:16-7) and the place she gave birth to him (Qur'an 19:22-23), there are various other verses that also talk of Jesus and his mother. One that details features of the place of

residence is in chapter *al-Mu'minun*, it talks of the high ground with flowing water (Qur'an 23:50).

Another of the Prophets that is mentioned numerous times in the Makkan chapters is Prophet Lot. He is first mentioned in chapter *Qaaf* and re-appears in following chapters (i.e. *al-Qamar, Saad* and *al-A'raaf*). Again, before the Night Journey reference is made to where he resided and preached and questions what remains of the destroyed cities that were still visible to the passers-by (in chapter *al-Furqaan* and repeated in chapters *al-Hijr and al-Saafaat*).

Moreover, after the Night Journey further verses were revealed naming more prophets. This is especially apparent in one of the late Makkan revelations, which is chapter of *Al-Anbiyaa'* (Prophets) which notes the names of eighteen Prophets, all of whom are related to Islamicjerusalem, strengthening the concept that Islamicjerusalem is *the Land of Prophets.* Thus, having a chapter named *Al-Anbiyaa'* and all Prophets named were related somehow to Islamicjerusalem is strong evidence of this. The last reference in this chapter is to Prophet Muhammad as being but a mercy for the worlds (*lil'alameen*).

THE NIGHT JOURNEY
The Night Journey (620CE) was a turning point in the Prophethood of Muhammad, after this Journey to Al-Aqsa Mosque Muhammad's achievements were growing from strength to strength. The Night Journey must have affected him very positively as it was a turning point for both him and Islam. What was it about the Night Journey that inspired this change? One of the major things is the meeting of the prophets, as is documented in the *Hadith* literature. Prophet Muhammad has been retelling and acknowledging these prophets as his own brothers; *"The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one."* (Bukhari 2001, vol.4: 167). This gathering of the prophets in an ancient place of worship must have been a phenomenal experience for the final messenger and prophet. It is widely accepted from the authentic *Hadith* narrations that he met eight Prophets in the various levels of the heavens during his ascension. Al-Askari argues that it is evident that most if not all these prophets were related to

Islamicjerusalem; this is very clear in the cases of prophets Jesus, John, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Aaron and could be related to Adam as the initial builder of Al-Aqsa Mosque (al-Askari 2008). In the Al-Aqsa Mosque as he was leading the prayer, he mentions two main names when he recalls the experience, namely prophets Moses and Jesus (Muslim 1954, vol.1:156). This is in addition to the narration where he sees Prophet Moses praying by his grave on the route to Islamicjerusalem (Bukhari 2001, vol.4: 157). This experience of meeting all these prophets and leading them in prayer, illustrates the connection with this land as well as the idea of the continuation of their message. This, besides establishing the Muslim connection to this land as the inheritors of these prophets, does also establish Christian and Jewish entitlement as followers of some of these prophets.

LIL-'AALAMEEN

This term meaning, for *'all the worlds'*, is mentioned well over sixty times in the Qur'an to refer to various matters. It is first mentioned in the first chapter of the Qur'an, *al-Fatiha,* where it states that *"God is the Lord of al-'Alameen"* this refers not just all humans but goes beyond to other worlds such as *jinn*. The word *'Alameen* is the plural of *'Alam*, which may be translated as world. Some exegetes mention various worlds, such as the animal world; however, others reject it and narrow it to those who have intellectual abilities, i.e. humans and *jinn*. This can be supported by a verse in chapter *al-'Ankabut* which talks about thoughts and specifically hidden thoughts in the chest (Qur'an 29:10), thus those who possess the ability to think of both humans and *jinn*. Since this paper concentrate on the human dimension further discussion of other dimensions to the meaning of this verse is beyond the scope of this paper.

Al-'Alammen is mentioned frequently in the Qur'an, however *Lil'aalameen* (for all the worlds) is mentioned thirteen times, in various chapter both in Makkah and Madinah. This includes reference to the Qur'an being *Lil'aalameen* (Qur'an 25:1), and the guidance emanating from the Ka'bah is also *Lil'aalameen* (Qur'an 3:96). What is especially interesting is one of the earliest reference in chapter *al-Rum* referred to the creation of the heavens and the

earth and the diversity in languages and colours is a sign *Lil'aalameen* (Qur'an 30:22). Thus, acknowledging the issue of difference and this being the basis of the creation as is argued by Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi that: "*Muslim core sources consider diversity and plurality to be the basis of everything apart from God*". He quotes a Qur'anic verse that underlines this: "*…Had God willed, He would have made you one single nation…*" (Qur'an 5:48). El-Awaisi further quotes a verse that notes the reason for making people in various nations and tribes is to get to know one another *(li-ta'arafu)* (Qur'an 49:13). Accordingly, this diversity is a central part of God's plan for humanity, to be different, yet celebrating it (El-Awaisi 2008).

The terminology *Lil'aalameen* transcends religions, races, class and all things that divide people. This terminology is probably the most inclusive in the Qur'anic discourse. Terms like believers, Muslims, People of the Book, refer to specific divisions and exclude some. One might argue the term *Naas* (people) is the most inclusive, it is in reference to humans, but restricts it to them. The term *'Aalameen* transcends to include much more and beyond just humans, thus it may be argued to be the most inclusive Qur'anic terminology.

This term was used in one chapter in three different verses and this will be the focus of the following discussion. This is chapter al-Anbiyaa' (prophets), quoted earlier. The first instance refers to the *Land of Barakah*, it is mentioned with reference to the migration of Abraham and Lot being "*saved to the Land where We [God] have placed Barakah Lil'aalameen*" (Qur'an 21:71). This land is thus blessed for not only Muslims, Christians and Jews but rather *for all humans* as can be undersood from the Qur'anic text. The location where Abraham and Lot settled is blessed for all. This was within the region of the Holy Land; the verse however keeps the reference quite general to encompass much more than this region into the wider of the *Land of Barakah*. The exegetes explaining the *Barakah* have discussed the various dimensions of it, both spiritual and material. The spiritual would affect believers; however the physical *Barakah* does not differentiate between a believer and a non-believer, and is therefore for all (El-Awaisi 2007). However,

linking the *Barakah* of the land to all humankind (and beyond), has been overlooked by nearly all classical and modern exegetes, they mostly concentrate on the story of the migration of Abraham and Lot and none of them stop at the final word nor attempt to explain it. This as Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi argues is the basis for the Muslim inclusive vision implemented by Caliph 'Umar when he entered the region and the city in the seventh century.

This verse also illustrates that this land had possessed *Barakah* during the time of Abraham and thus can be deduced that it was so even before his era. This may be argued to date back to the establishment of al-Aqsa Mosque, the source of the *Barakah,* forty years after the establishment of the Ka'bah during the time of prophet Adam (El-Awaisi 2007).

What is interesting in this chapter is that there is another mention of the *Land of Barakah* with regards to the story of Prophet Solomon and his travels using the power of the wind to travel back and forth to this land. Another interesting fact is the mentioning of the term *Lil'aalameen* in the case of Prophet Jesus and his mother and also for Prophet Muhammad. The first instance states:

> And She who guarded her chastity [Virgin Mary], We breathed into her from Our *Ruh* and made her and her son [Jesus] a sign *Lil'aalameen ….* (Qur'an 21:91)

This verse states that both Mary and Prophet Jesus were made a sign for all worlds; the names of both are well recognised across the world. The verse talks of them both as a single sign for everyone, exegetes dilibrate on this as a unique sign; that is not to be repeated and is for the entire worlds of humans, jinn and angels to ponder over. The latter verse refers to Prophet Muhammad:

> And We have sent you [Muhammad] not but as a mercy *Lil'aalameen...* (Qur'an 21:107)

This verse refers to Prophet Muhammad being a mercy for all believers and unbelievers. It is interesting that within the same chapter, this term was first used for this land then for a prophet and his mother who were born and dwelt on its land. Then refers to a prophet born in another land but came to this holy land and

met all prophets in its most sacred site. It is important to note that this chapter is ordered close to the end of the Makkan period and after the Night Journey. Thus, trying to map out associations with this Holy Land and the followers of the latest divine revelation.

MUSLIMS IN THE REGION

After establishing these strong connections between early Muslims and this land through the *Qiblah*, the legacy of Prophets and even through following political struggles within the region, Muslims began to bring this holy land within their realm. It is argued that Prophet Muhammad started a lengthy process for the takeover of Islamicjerusalem from an early stage of his prophethood. This culminated with ordering and leading the biggest army towards its land at the end of his life. Moreover, the complete takeover did not occur until the reign of the second Muslim Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, five years after the death of Muhammad. This takeover was very different from the previous conquests to the city and region. Both history and archaeology testify to the peaceful takeover of this land by the Muslims. Abu-Munshar argues the main inhabitants of the region were Christians; however, they belong to various theological schools and were from various background, their attitudes to the Muslims differed from one another; however, he argues the majority of the Christians were in favour of the Muslims over the Byzantines down ethnic lines (Abu Munshar 2006; 2014). He quotes the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Michael the Syrian, that: "*The God of vengeance, who alone is the Almighty ... raised from the south the children of Ishmael [i.e. Muslims] to deliver us from the hands of the Romans.*" (Abu Munshar 2006:67). This shows how Muslim religious tolerance appeared more attractive to native Christians than connections with Byzantium, which enforced its own version of Christianity. Therefore, as argued by Armstrong it was not surprising for the Nestorian and Monophysite Christians to welcome the Muslims and prefer their rule to that of Byzantium (Armstrong 1996:232, Abu Munshar 2006).

Indeed, 'Umar's assurance to the people of Aelia granted protection of churches and properties, which was unheard of at the time. The conqueror would usually sack everything, as was

experienced throughout the region twenty years earlier with the arrival of the Persians.   What is interesting is that during the Muslims takeover life seems to have went on for the many Christians living in the region. Churches were still being built as the Muslim armies were coming through and some were completed during or just after the Muslims took over the region as is argued by Robert Schick (2008) and Abu Assab (2012).

Within the Assurance of 'Umar, he also establishes the Qur'anic principle of *"no compulsion in religion"*, thus allowing freedom of choosing and practising ones' religion. This was reflected in the continuation of the Christian inhabitants being the majority in the holy city for centuries to come (Nor 2011). Not only did Christians welcome the new Muslim administration, Jews who were expelled from this land from the second century were allowed to live in Islamicjerusalem under the new administration. The re-admission of the Jews is another testimony to the Muslim's understanding of the concept of *Lil'aalameen*. These Islamic principles as El-Awaisi (2005) argues helped 'Umar successfully create, develope and manage *a new multicultural environment in Islamicjerusalem where differences among its people were not only acknowledged and recognised but accepted, respected, valued, and protected.*   A society for the first time consisting of the followers of the three monotheistic religions, living side by side in a shared holy space.

The city and the region seem to have had reached a major turning-point in its history with the arrival of Muslims. It was transformed from being a place where nations fought over exclusive hegemony; it was now becoming a region that was accessible to all, fulfilling the Qur'anic Islamic vision for this land.   Karen Armstrong's remarks on this juncture that, *"Umar was faithful to the Islamic inclusive vision. Unlike Jews and Christians Muslims did not attempt to exclude others from Jerusalem's Holiness…"* (Armstrong 1997:14). Not only this but Muslims remained the minority and did not try to make this city their capital in order to protect its sanctity as a space for all. There was protection of the rights of non-Muslim and a sense of continuity as Muslims did not change much within the administration, even coins were minted in Greek and using known names to its Christian inhabitants (Nor 2011).

It would have been expected that major changes would have taken place after the Muslim conquest as was the general practice of conquest. Nevertheless, there were no major changes affecting the urban structure in the city and the region, after the Muslim arrival, except for the monumental reconstruction of al-Aqsa Mosque enclave, which lied outside the city's walls (Al-Ratrout 2004). In the rebuilding of the ancient sacred site, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Muslims incorporated several of the inclusive notions and their connections to previous prophets. They reconstructed the prayer niches of Zachariah and Mary, the cradle of Jesus and named various structures and gates after prophets and biblical figures they felt were also part of their heritage (Armstrong 1997). Even the verses within the structures were taken to reflect much of this, often misunderstood to be blasphemous. Moreover, Christian and Jewish places of worship thrived side by side to the mosques. The refusal of 'Umar to pray within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, fearing later Muslims might take the church, demonstrated the deep understanding of inclusivity and veneration for People of the Book and their places of worship (Abu Munshar 2007). Indeed, their protection as an Islamic principle (Qur'an 22:40) led to their continuity and is a testimony of the multicultural and multi-religious character of the local urban society created by Muslims.

Abu Munshar refers to a later juncture in the history of the region that reverted conditions back centuries. The crusades were undeniably a major setback to what had been achieved amongst the followers of the three monotheistic religions. Muslims, Jews and indigenous Christians suffered at the hands of the crusaders and were not allowed to reside within Islamicjerusalem. Native Christians were part of this fabric and as T. W. Arnold puts it: *native Christians certainly preferred the rule of the Muhammadans [Muslims] to that of the Crusaders, and when Jerusalem fell finally and ever into the hands of the Muslims (A.D. 1244), the Christian population of Palestine seems to have welcomed the new masters and to have submitted quietly and contentedly to their rule* (cited in Abu Munshar 2006:73). Salah al-Din on the other hand was faithful to the Muslim inclusive vision and did not try to make the Holy Land exclusively Muslim, as the Crusaders had done, slaughtering

savagely all those within the walls of the city when they entered it. He allowed the re-admission of Christian sects as well as Jews into the holy city. He however insisted on the departure of the European invaders but allowed them to come to preform pilgrimage. It was proposed to Salah al-Din, by some of his generals, to destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in order to stop Christians access to the city. This was rejected by Salah al-Din as it does not fit with the Islamic tenets and the binding assurance of Umar (Abu Munshar 2007). He reinstated the inclusive vision allowing freedom of access to places of worship as well as practice of religious rituals to both Christians and Jews.

The liberation of Salah al-Din instigated the third crusade, bringing more crusaders from Europe to "liberate" the Holy Land from Muslims. In his negotiation with King Richard, the desired Christian exclusive access to the whole region and the expulsion of all Muslims was the initial proposition of Richard. Salah al-Din on the other hand was more tolerant and understood the importance of the shared holiness. Salah al-Din's correspondence with Richard shows how important this region was for him as a Muslim detailing the connection with its religious heritage. His celebrated quote *"al-Quds is ours as much as it yours"* (Ibn Shadad 2000:151), is testimony to this inclusive vision. Polat adds that when Richard understood that he cannot retrieve all the land and understood the inclusive vision of Salah al-Din, he conceded his initial proposition and wanted to share the land with Muslims (Polat 2015: 251-252). Salah al-Din insisting on full Muslim sovereignty but an all-inclusive access was comprehended by Richard who in the last proposition submits himself to Salah al-Din as well as his nephew, Henry, together with his troops to be under Muslim command. Later signing al-Ramlah peace treaty and departing back to England (Polat 2015: 265-284).

Both Umar and Salah al-Din were successful in establishing peaceful coexistence and mutual respect in this holy land. Acknowledging others and allowing joint sharing of the holy, achieved what no one was able to realise. Indeed, later Muslim rulers such as the Ottomans followed the same vision, acknowledging other, accepting differences and encouraging

diversity. The Ottoman inscription on al-Khalil Gate (or Jaffa Gate), *"Lailaha ila Allah, Ibrahim Khalilullah (there is none worthy of worship except God, Abraham is the close friend of God)"* is a testimony of the respect to differences and forging a shared ground.

CONCLUSION

Islam has set a new criterion for such a holy region, which is very much contested and fought over, and was able to foster peace. The idea of accepting difference and acknowledging diversity and sharing the sacred space with all, made this least-ideal place to be the ideal model for multiculturalism and thus engagement. The most inclusive Qur'anic concept, *for all (Lil'aalameen),* made this region a centre of blessing; turning it from a hotbed of conflict into a source of hope for coexistence and harmony. The finest application of this vision by Muslims, following periods of exclusion and conflict, were during the times of 'Umar, who set the standards, and later Salah al-Din.

Muslims however were not always faithful to this vision; there were cases where Muslim rulers violated these teaching and breached the pacts and amnesty given to all dwellers on this land. Al-Hakim, the Fatimid Caliph in Egypt, is a prime example of this, destroying Christendom holiest shrine and oppressing not only Christians but also Sunni-Muslims. The ideals were not always adhered to, various wars have been fought and violence has returned to the region. Moreover, it is important to note that over the last fourteen hundred years, there have been interruptions to this peace, though not for long. If it is calculated in a percentage it calculates to be around ten percent of the lengthy periods of peace and prosperity.

I will conclude with a quotation from the founder of this model, Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi who argued in his keynote address on Islamicjerusalem as a model for multiculturalism and cultural engagement to the tenth International Academic Conference on Islamicjerusalem Studies on 4 February 2008 that:

> Islamicjerusalem had always held the key to war and peace in the region. Whenever it has been blessed with security and peace, the

whole region has enjoyed peace, security and stability. There is no doubt that settling the issue of Islamicjerusalem in a way that ensures justice and restores the rights of its people holds the key to world peace and regional stability. One can argue that, to achieve global peace and stability, it is necessary to have peace and stability in Islamicjerusalem. Until this is achieved the entire world will not rest. Peace and stability in that region would bring about global peace and stability. Indeed, Islamicjerusalem acts as a centre for peace and for conflict in the world...

What was the basis of that original peace and stability (at the time of Umar)? He argues that it was the concept of *'Adl* (justice). Justice is therefore a pre-requisite for peace and stability. The formula which has been produced on the peace process negotiations for the current conflict in the Muslim Arab world in the last decades is based on the Arab and the Palestinian point of view of *peace for land*, and on the Israeli point of view, *peace for security*. It maybe argued that neither viewpoint is an appropriate formula. The exchange of land will not bring peace and security. In addition, imposing security will not bring peace. The formula based on understanding the history of the region should be that neither peace nor security will be established without justice. Accordingly, the formula should be *peace for justice* which will lead to preserving human dignity and tolerance. In other words, justice is necessary before peace can be achieved.

Indeed, achieving peace today in Palestine will reshape and ensure peace for the whole region. Yet for the last century the city of peace has been turned into a city of war. Starting with the British occupation in 1917 and then the Zionist occupation has brought back remanences of the crusades, reverting to a history of exclusion. At the heart of the conflict lies Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque, that has been the nucleus of many uprisings against both the British and Zionists. The Zionist policy of Judaising Jerusalem and propositions for temporal and spatial divisions of al-Aqsa Mosque will only provoke further turmoil in the whole region. The established historical equation for stability, peace and prosperity is something we need to comprehend, in order to be able to replicate it in today's world; reconciling the followers of Abraham to coexisting side by side again. Indisputably, reviving the unique

inclusive vision of Islamicjerusalem is greatly needed today. Acknowledging others and accepting diversity in a diverse land is thus the key to making a difference in our contemporary times, where exclusivity has reverted to be the trend.

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