

THE ROLE OF MUSLIMS IN ELECTING LEADERS

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا
وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ
لَهُ.

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا
عَبْدَهُ وَرَسُولَهُ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ
وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَمَنْ تَبِعَهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ.
أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

يَتَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمْنَتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ
أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ
مُسْلِمُونَ.

Let us all increase our obedience towards Allah the Almighty by doing everything that He prescribes and avoiding all that He prohibits. Hopefully we will be granted forgiveness by Allah the Almighty in this world and in the Hereafter.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Election is a process of choosing leaders who will form the government of a country. For a country that practices democracy like Malaysia, the country's leadership will be determined through an election. Every citizen who has registered as a voter has the right to vote for his preferred leader.

The majority of Muslim scholars agree that every Muslim should play a role in the voting process. They also believe that electing a leader in a country is an obligation and it is sinful if we do not fulfill our responsibility as voters.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said in a *Hadith* which was narrated by Imam Abu Dawud:

إِذَا خَرَجَ ثَلَاثَةٌ فِي سَفَرٍ فَلْيُؤَمِّرُوا أَحَدَهُمْ

Which means: *When three (Muslims) travel together, then appoint one person as a leader.*

The scholars also agree that choosing leaders through a democratic and election is a worldly affair that is allowed. This is based on a fiqh (**fiqh** is a section of Islamic law which deals with acts of Muslim that include both worship and daily life actions) في الأصل الإباحة which means 'all things are permissible (unless it is expressly forbidden)'. Elections are similar to the concept of allegiance (bai'ah). Some scholars believe that elections can be considered as a way of helping each other in goodness and virtues as Allah the Almighty mentioned in the Quran in Chapter 5 (Surah al-Maidah), Verse 2:

وَالْعُدْوَانَ الْإِثْمَ عَلَى تَعَاوُنُوا وَلَا وَالْتَقَوَى الْبِرِّ عَلَى وَتَعَاوُنُوا

Which means: ... *And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

According to a recent report, about 1.8 million Malays who are eligible to vote have not registered as voters. The majority are young people, including civil servants.

This is disappointing and it shows how neglectful some of us are towards our responsibility to choose our leaders.

In our election system, every registered voter plays an important role in determining representatives for each parliamentary constituency and the State Legislative Assembly. The democratic system also gives freedom to anyone to compete in the elections if they meet the requirements. Consequently many individuals with different ideologies and types of personal characters will emerge as candidates. Thus, the voters are responsible to choose the best candidate to lead them at both levels: at the State Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies.

In carrying out our responsibilities as voters, we must understand the characteristics of individuals who are eligible to be appointed as leaders. The Quran and the sayings (*Hadith*) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) provide useful guidance. Based on the guidelines of the Quran and *Hadiths*, a leader must be a person who has Islamic monotheistic faith, obeys Allah and His Messenger, performs his obligatory prayers, fears Allah in all of his actions, always adheres to the Quran and *Hadiths*, does not betray trust, does not cheat, is not selfish, enjoins good and forbids evil, etc. Allah the Almighty says in the Quran in Chapter 22 (Surah al-Hajj), verse 41:

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٤١﴾

Which means: *[And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakah [tithe] and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.*

When Prophet David (Daud) was appointed as a leader, Allah the Almighty said to him (Quran 38:26):

يٰۤاٰدٰوُدُ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيْفَةً فِى الْاَرْضِ فَاَحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ
الْهَوٰى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَضِلُّوْنَ عَن سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
شَدِيْدٌۢ بِمَا نَسُوْا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٣٦﴾

Which means: "O David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah ." Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account.

We must not choose a leader from among those who are known for their immorality, who like to follow their own desires or who have been involved in corruption. We should choose a leader who is noble, who is sincere to serve the people, who is fair, who is willing to accept criticisms from others, and who is not from the those who like to beg for position.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

To conclude, let us all fulfill our obligations by registering to vote and exercising our right to vote on election day. Neglecting our responsibility to vote may lead to dire consequences. Do we want to be led by people who cannot be trusted, who do not know how to govern, or by nonbelievers who are clearly against the law of Allah? Choose a Muslim leader who is capable of fulfilling the mandate of Allah, carrying out his obligations and defending the welfare of the people who are being led. Let us pay attention to Allah's warning in the Quran in Chapter 4 (Surah an-Nisa'), verse 144 :

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَتُرِيدُونَ
أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا ﴿١٤٤﴾

Which means: *O you who have believed, do not take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. Do you wish to give Allah against yourselves a clear case?*

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لِيْ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْءَانِ الْعَظِيْمِ، وَنَفَعَنِيْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيْهِ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ
وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيْمِ، وَتَقَبَّلَ مِنِّيْ وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ. أَقُوْلُ
قَوْلِيْ هَذَا وَاسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيْمَ لِيْ وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ،
وَالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوْهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ.