

Muharram A Sacred Month - Waqf a Sacred institution

Hijri New Year Mubarak: May Allah grant you and your friends and families the best for the coming year. Aameen.

Muharram is the first month of the Hijri calendar. This year ie 1431 the 1st of Muharram (Islamic New Year) coincides with the 18th December 2009. The 10th day (Ashura) falls on 27 December 2009.

Muharram literally means forbidden, but also means sacrosanct or sacred. According to tradition, Muharram is the *Shahr Allah* - the Month of Allah - one of four sacred months after Ramadaan in the Islamic Hijri calendar. The Noble Prophet Muhammad (*peace and salutations on him and his family*) recommended that Muslims fast on the day of *Ashura* (10th) and also the 9th or the 11th. It is also recommended that Muslims increase their *sadaqah* or charity during this month and especially on the day of Ashura. We also remember the ultimate sacrifices made by our predecessors in this month and on the day of Ashura. May Allah be pleased with them.

The National Awqaf Foundation of South Africa (Awqaf SA) , in its quest to revive the sacred institution of Waqf has chosen the sacred month of Muharram to heighten awareness and to encourage the ummah to give and sacrifice purely for the pleasure of Allah. This also accords with a December 6 recommendation of participants to the Southern Africa Waqf Training Course.

What is a Waqf? A waqf (*pl: awqaf*) is a Sadaqah Jariyyah (recurring/ongoing charity) - a voluntary charitable endowment - a permanent , irrevocable gift to Allah from ones personal belongings or wealth in the form of cash or property for a Shariah compliant cause. The capital donation that one makes is maintained and retained and only the income generated out of the capital invested in commercial and/or property assets is used for charitable purposes perpetually. Hence the concept *sadaqah jariyah* or continuous charity.

Waqf making was recommended, approved, and practised by the Prophet (*peace and salutations on him and his family*). It was also practised by the noble Sahaba (*May Allah be pleased with them*) and the generations that followed.

Why Waqf? Waqf has been through the centuries one of the cornerstones of the Islamic Economic system. It provided education, health services, water, travelers lodges, clinics and hospitals, animal care, environmental protection, mosques, madressah, universities, and several other public utilities. It was in fact a decentralized privatization of public amenities that were run by the private sector rather than inefficient bureaucratic governments. Moreover, Waqf provided for the needs of progenies and families by the creation of family waqfs (*waqf lil aulad or waqf ahli*). **Indeed waqf was a major contributor to the Islamic Gift Economy promoted and propagated by the Noble Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (saw) and to the growth and development of Islamic Civilisation which still benefits humanity to this day.**

Make a Waqf this Muharram. Do it for any Islamic charitable or humanitarian cause. Make it for your local masjid/madressah, school, for planting trees, for providing education, for the poor and needy , for your family, or for any other cause that you are passionate about. Make a Waqf with your time, skills, energy, resources and wealth - solely for the pleasure of Allah.

Awqaf SA calls upon all institutions, masjid, imams, and the media to create a heightened awareness about the Sacred institution of Waqf during this Sacred month of Muharram.

For more information, enquiries and to donate:
website: www.awqafsa.org.za email: info@awqafsa.org.za

telephone: +27(0)118378669 mobile: +27(0)828768027
international fax: +27880118378669
South Africa only fax: 0865149644

For more information about Muharram also visit:
www.islamsa.org.za; www.jamiat.co.za ; www.mjc.org.za