

MEDIA STATEMENT

3 April 2017

Media Statement on the case of Mr Nalla Mohamed Abdul Jameel

1. The case of Mr Nalla Mohamed Abdul Jameel, imam of Masjid Jamae Chulia has caused some disquiet in our community. Many had not heard or understood what the imam actually said.
2. The imam recited a verse from the Quran (2: 286), but he also added a supplication in which he sought God's help against the Jews and Christians. The added supplication is not from the Quran and does not constitute part of the divine message.
3. As the imam explained in his public apology, he used the words from a text that originated from his village in India. The Quran is in fact replete with messages of forgiveness and compassion, and calls for dialogue and reconciliation with Jews and Christians, who are respectfully referred to as "People of the Book".
4. The words used by the imam have no place in today's Singapore where all communities live in peace and harmony. Supplications written by past scholars living in a different era, as well as exhortations from religious texts, must always be contextualised.
5. An imam is in a position of authority and influence. When this supplication was recited by the imam and made public, it made our Jewish and Christian friends wonder why they were being targeted. It also caused confusion and suspicion among non-Muslims and damaged the image of Islam and Muslims.
6. This incident is a reminder to all of us that we cannot take for granted the peace and harmony that we enjoy. We look to our asatizah to provide religious guidance on how Muslims ought to live fulfilled lives in modern, multi-religious Singapore. For this reason, Muis' Code of Ethics obliges all asatizah to ensure that our religious teachings are always sensitive to Singapore's context.
7. Muis' guidance to imams is to recite supplications in positive ways seeking God's help to restore justice, peace and harmony so that, for instance, communities affected by strife and disaster can rebuild their lives. In this regard, there should be no doubt that one can still pray for Muslims who are victims of oppression and wars.
8. Our laws protect all citizens, and ensure that all religious communities can live out their faith in peace. Hence, our laws must be applied fairly and impartially, regardless of race or religion.

9. Society is also governed by norms and values as well as ethical standards that we cherish as a society. We strongly urge the community to refer any matters of concerns to the proper authorities, instead of posting on social media. As we can see from this episode, the sensationalist and irresponsible use of social media will sow discord within and across communities.
10. The warnings issued to the two individuals are a strong reminder on what Muis has always stressed: that the use of social media must be tempered with wisdom and *adab* (ethics and civility).

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