

Corruption: its consequences and how to combat it

Part One

Praise be to Allah! Praise be to Allah, the Supreme, the Almighty, the Most Bountiful and Most Gracious! Far be it from Allah to have an analogue or anyone equal unto Him! Be He exalted from having a match for Him or a supporter! I praise Him (ﷻ) for His completed bounties, and I thank Him for saving us from His wrath and vengeance. I bear witness that there is no deity (worthy of worship) except Allah alone with no partner, a testimony whereby a believer aspires to feel secure on the Day of Judgment and anticipates a privileged position in the Hereafter conferred on him by Allah; and I bear witness that our Master and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is His servant and Messenger. His Lord taught him what he did not know, and made of his nation the best one ever. May Allah send His *Salat* (Graces, Honors, and Mercy), much Peace and Blessing on him, on his kind and virtuous family who, thanks to this religion, attained prestige and power, on his honorable and blessed who were, in enjoining what is right and good real brothers and staunch supporters, on the *tab'în* (the contemporaries of the Companions of the Prophet [ﷺ] after his death), and on all those who follow their footsteps in righteousness; *«... those who, when they are reminded of the Ayât (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat.»* [Al-Furqān: 73].

O Muslims!

I advise you, O people, and myself to fear Allah. So, fear Allah –may Allah have mercy on you– and seek the help of your Lord to overcome preordained tribulations of life. Make your love of others prompted solely by the love of Allah, observe His rights in your duties towards your religion. Do not overestimate or rejoice at any good acts you may do, neither underestimate any evil acts, no matter how small they are, you may commit. Draw lessons from what befell bygone generations, and think deeply about the destiny of the two groups: a group in paradise enjoying Allah's love and satisfaction, and another group in hell suffering from Allah's repulsion and dismissal. *«Then, when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no kinship among them that Day, nor will they ask of one another.»* (101) *«Then, those*

whose scales (of good deeds) are heavy, they are the successful﴾ (102) ﴿And those whose scales (of good deeds) are light, they are those who lose their own selves, in Hell will they abide.﴾ [Al-Mû'minûn: 101-103]

O Muslims!

When a righteous Muslim occupies a decision-making position, he is –Allah willing– the honest guardian of the resources of the country and people; he safeguards the rights, disseminates justice, works conscientiously, and preserves the nation's gains. In fact, a loyal person holding a responsibility is not only intrinsically righteous but also motivated by the drive of helping others being righteous. He enjoins righteousness and forbids corruption.

Islam considers control (in the sense of inspecting human actions with reference to a set of religious values) is a responsibility assumed by the individual and the community alike. This is the real significance of *ih̥tisab* in its encompassing and broad sense which includes both external inspection and self-inspection in order to protect the individual, society, institutions, and the State. It protects them all –Allah willing– from corrupting and being corrupted. *﴿Those (Muslim rulers) who, if We give them power in the land, (they) enjoin Iqamat-as-Salât [i.e. to perform the five compulsory congregational Salât (prayers) (the males in mosques)], to pay the Zakât and they enjoin Al-Ma'rûf (i.e. Islâmîc Monotheism and all that Islâm orders one to do), and forbid Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism and all that Islâm has forbidden) [i.e. they make the Qur'ân as the law of their country in all the spheres of life]. And with Allâh rests the end of (all) matters (of creatures).﴾ [Al-Hajj: 41]*

“Whoever in your community notices a vicious deed shall change it using his hands; if he cannot he shall do that using his tongue (speech); in default of all that he shall do it with his heart, and that is the lowest degree of faith.”¹

﴿The believers, men and women, are Auliyâ' (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another; they enjoin (on the people) Al-Ma'rûf (i.e. Islâmîc

¹ This is a famous hadith by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

Monotheism and all that Islâm orders one to do), and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (i.e. polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all that Islâm has forbidden); they perform As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât), and give the Zakât, and obey Allâh and His Messenger. Allâh will have His Mercy on them. Surely Allâh is All-Mighty, All-Wise.) [At-Tawba: 71]. In another hadith: “*Allah does not inflict torment on a community because of the (evil) deeds perpetrated by its elite, except when the community notices the munqar (i.e. repulsive acts) spreading among them in the whole society without denouncing it despite their capacity to do so; once they behave in the like manner, Allah will then inflict torment on both the whole community and the elite.*”

O Muslims!

The function of *ih̥tisab* is to control the reinforcement of ethical standards in the fields of morality, religion, politics, society, administration, economy, etc. Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence define *ih̥tisab* in the following terms: “*Ih̥tisab consists in enjoining ma^crûf (good) if its renunciation becomes manifest and denouncing munkar (evil) once it manifests itself in people’s actions. This strategy aims at making justice prevail, spreading morality, combating corruption and dishonesty, and protecting honesty and ethical conduct.*”

Dear brothers!

Ih̥tisab is an ethical control whose purpose is essentially advisory; that is to say, providing guidelines for all types of societal activity or individual action. It seeks to reinforce the fundamentals of religion, confirm the principles of the *Shara^c* (الشريعة)², consolidate moral standards, upgrade the level of performance, appraise competence, fostering wise conduct, and give due respect to both individual and communal interests in this world and the Hereafter.

The conscientious worker, employee, or citizen, by their faith in their Lord and their internal religious restraint maximally enhance their professional performance, insist on rejecting wrong practices in the workplace, or report them to executive staff that has the power to prevent them.

The conscientious worker is endowed with enough sincerity in his religious beliefs, honesty in the workplace, loyalty to his society, and eagerness to protect public interest that prompts him or her to act properly and seriously, in addition to realizing higher productivity and experiencing a feeling of discontent with corruption and delinquency.

² *Sharia* or *Shar^c* is a term referring to a body of jurisprudential rules, drawn from the Holy Quran and authentic *Sunnah*, regulating various human activities in a Muslim society: moral, civil status, business transactions, etc.

That is, dear brothers, because corruption, in all its forms, is a kind of deviant behavior among individuals as well as communities. The corrupt person perpetrates wrong doings and torts in order to realize illegitimate financial gains or undeserved professional merit. This leads to prohibited earnings as well as to the weakening of the state system, its institutions and establishments.

Corruption is a deviant mode of conduct characterized by volatility, evasiveness, clandestine practices and surrounded by secrecy and panic. It is pervasive in every sphere of life: in religion, politics, economy, societal affairs, culture, and administration.

Corruption is complicity, embezzlement, conspiracy to facilitate the perpetration of illegal acts and wrong practices. Corruption is a repugnant exploitation of personal, official, and social resources. It aims to gain illegitimate profits and privileges, as well as prohibited gains for the wrongdoer and his accomplices around him. It is also a form of abuse of power and authority, which is in total contradistinction to religious rules, ethical standards, and the law in force.

Corruption is a malignant disease resisting boundaries and challenging barriers. It affects all types of societies, without discriminating between developed and underdeveloped ones, though to various extents. In the Holy Quran, the verse reads as follows: *﴿Evil (sins and disobedience to Allâh) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds), that He (Allâh) may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return (by repenting to Allâh, and begging His Pardon).﴾* [Ar-Rûm: 41]

O Muslims!

Each act aiming at making the civil service departments or private business organizations deviate from the original objectives for which they were initially established is by definition corruption, crime, and treachery.

With corruption, priorities in state programs are disturbed, state projects and plans are held back, society's resources are squandered and its sources of wealth are overexploited. Due to corruption, the performance of public services declines, projects lag behind, the execution of plans is destabilized, productivity drops, public interests are lost, motivation for work wanes, respect for time disappears, law enforcement is disturbed, and impartiality is shaken to give way to injustice.

Corruption leads to neglecting risks which are likely to affect peoples' lives in their nutrition (food and drinks), medical and educational facilities, transport logistics, security systems, and access to public services.

Corruption destabilizes moral values, which are based on the principles of truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, equal opportunity, and equal distribution (of wealth). It also fosters negative thinking, a sense of irresponsibility, malicious intentions, a feeling of victimization—which leads to a state of psychological congestion, envy, tension, depression, and loss of hope of reformation.

Corruption gives priority to personal interests and makes them control decision-making. It undermines true loyalty to what is right, to the nation and the state. It reinforces hideous sectarianism –be it based on jurisprudential doctrine, tribal origin, or political affiliation. Corruption, therefore, threatens moral integrity and the entirety of society's stable and morally valid system of values.

Corruption triggers a number of dangerous problems that jeopardize social stability, security, people's value system, and the sovereignty of political regimes. It is in close relation with organized crime and economic felonies, known today as “money laundering.”

Corruption impedes the implementation of appropriate plans and positive strategies. In addition, it represents an obstacle to the efforts of change in the right direction. Corruption even subverts states and institutions, squanders riches, decays the administrative system, and goes hand in hand with forms of delinquency, repulsive conduct, and societal as well as moral evils.

Dear brothers!

Corruption manifests itself through many forms, various aspects, and diverse channels. There is a whole range of corrupt conduct: theft, bribery, abuse of power and prerogatives, divulging confidential professional data, hiding information which is meant to be public whether in financial or occupational matters, forgery, tampering with documents, credentials, and statutory decisions, disrespect for work and office hours (late arrival to the place of work and early leaving), inefficiency in performing one's work duties, doing personal reading during working hours, receiving guests having no relationship whatever with business, fabricating excuses, concocting justifications, avoiding to carry out instructions and to follow regulations and guidelines, negligence and lack of motivation, abstention from active participation, abusive spending of public funds on furniture and office equipment (however insignificant the amount might be), excessive organization of events (like receptions), financial mismanagement, launching illusory business projects, manipulating (legal) tenders and technical specifications, among other forms and guises that resist any final listing in an inventory of items.

O Muslims!

If this is the case, it is imperative to combat corruption and stand up to it and, conversely, it is our obligation to commit ourselves to the virtues of righteousness, reform, integrity and transparency, for these are most amenable –Allah willing– to goodness, success, security, tranquility, and the prevalence of justice.

Fighting corruption is not the duty of a specific party or class of people. It is rather the responsibility of all on the moral grounds of faith, ethics, honesty and liability.

Integrity and impartiality in carrying out reform are features that would help preserve for nations their prestige and dignity, consolidate the bonds between them and their citizens and instill trust within the organs (of government) and its systems. The principle of integrity gives government leaders yet greater impetus to fight corruption with all its forms; administrative, financial and moral. The criteria of integrity include faith, honesty, impartiality, clarity and transparency. It is within an atmosphere of integrity that the spirit of honest and honorable competition can develop towards yielding the best, the finest and the most propitious of outcomes.

O officials!

Part of helping carry this out is to make clear for employees their obligations, issue work instructions for them, enlighten them about their rights, engage organized awareness activities and encourage them to help uncover the corrupt.

Other ways of fostering such an atmosphere include reforming, corroborating and enhancing the monitoring and controlling systems at work in terms of their competencies; dispensing with administrative bureaucracy; consolidating accountability at the administrative, regulatory and financial levels; enacting strict regulations in the face of corruption and enforcing them with firmness, justice and impartiality; avoiding unsolicited courtesy for its debilitating effects; bolstering administrative reform programs and granting them priority; expanding the scope of equity and equal opportunity for all on the basis of merit: *«The best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy.»* [Al Qasas: 26]. Enhancing integrity requires instilling the values of devotion to one's work such as observing the importance of time, righteousness and ethical conduct including honesty, trust and sincerity. Promoting the spirit of integrity also requires having good faith in the other, after Allah, in addition to loving Allah and seeking His assistance; observing public interest; possessing that genuine sense of responsibility; treating all with confidence while imparting an atmosphere of freedom of opinion and expression and one of transparency.

After all –may Allah protect you– the problem resides not in the laws, regulations and texts, but rather in the administrations, communities and minds.

I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan: ﴿*But seek, with that (wealth) which Allâh has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and forget not your portion of lawful enjoyment in this world; and do good as Allâh has been good to you, and seek not mischief in the land. Verily, Allâh likes not the Mufsidûn (those who commit great crimes and sins, oppressors, tyrants, mischief-makers, corrupters).*﴾ [Al Qasas: 77]

May Allah make the Great Qur'ân and the guidance of Muhammad (ﷺ) beneficial to me and to you!

Having said this, I ask Allah to forgive my sins, yours and those of all the Muslims; so ask Him for forgiveness, for He is the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Part Two

Praise be to Allah! Praise be to Allah, the only One to possess perfection and the most beautiful of qualities. There is no God but Him, the All-Hearing! I praise Him (ﷻ) and I thank Him for His ever-flowing and abundant blessings. I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah, alone, with no partner; a witness that, with His satisfaction, will hopefully earn me the highest position in Heaven. I also bear witness that our Master and Prophet Muhammad is the servant and Messenger of Allah, and our guide to righteousness and savior –Allah willing– from delusions. May Allah send His *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Blessings, Mercy), Peace and Blessing upon him, his virtuous and generous family and Companions, as well as on those who followed him righteously for as long as the earth and the heavens exist and until the Day of Judgment!

O Muslims!

The goal of protecting integrity and its proponents and fighting corruption and the corrupt is not exclusively restricted to tracking down the guilty and the corrupt. Rather, it includes –along with this– the effective dissemination of awareness as to the extent of damage that could be incurred by corruption, at the religious, political, financial, security, cultural and social levels. This is to be implemented within the framework of comprehensive reform programs, with the cooperation of monitoring systems from both the public and private sectors, the involvement of the entire community with all its institutions, and the surveying of views, comments, suggestions, and objections at the level of employees.

In this regard, the media has an active role to play by helping promote the right kind of awareness, information and facts with accuracy, investigation, impartiality and veneration; by

showing restraint in issuing allegations against individuals or institutions and by praising those who deserve to be praised and commending the righteous, the honorable, and those demonstrating good performance and positivity at work (such people –thank Allah– are numerous in the Muslim world). This role of the media also includes maintaining good and positive relations between coworkers, nurturing the spirit of cooperation and discouraging fault-finding among them, in addition to giving prevalence to trust and good faith in the other.

So fear Allah –may Allah have mercy on you– and set right yourselves and follow the path of righteousness, *﴿... and do not do mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, and invoke Him with fear and hope. Surely, Allâh's Mercy is (ever) near unto the good-doers.﴾* [Al Aa'raf: 56]

This being said, I advise you to send your *Salat* and peace on the mercy and blessing Allah bestowed on you, your Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the Messenger of Allah, as Your Lord commanded you to do in His wise Book where He so truthfully and graciously said: *﴿Allâh sends His Salât (Graces, Honours, Blessings, Mercy) on the Prophet (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and also His angels (ask Allâh to bless and forgive him). O you who believe! Send your Salât[1] on (ask Allâh to bless) him (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islâmic way of greeting (salutation i.e. As-Salâmu 'Alaikum.﴾* [Al Ahzab: 56]

O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Blessings, Mercy), Peace and Blessing on Your servant and Messenger, our Master and Prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), the beloved and the chosen one; on his virtuous and immaculate family and on his wives, mothers of the believers. O Allah! We seek Your satisfaction with the four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, and Ali; the Prophet's Companions and followers and those who followed them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment. O Allah! We seek Your Satisfaction with us as well, as You are Most Forgiving, Most Generous, and Most Beneficent!

O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims, and fail polytheism and polytheists! O Allah! Let down tyrants and infidels and all other enemies of Islam!

O Allah! Grant us safety in our homelands, and set right our *Imams* and Guardians! O Allah! Entrust our government to those who fear You and seek Your satisfaction! O Lord of the Worlds!

O Allah! Grant our *Imam* and Guardian a success of Your own! Honor him with Your obedience and make Your word the uppermost through him! Make him an asset to Islam and Muslims! Grant him sound health and wellness! Guide him, his deputy, his brothers and his aides to do what You love and please, and lead them to righteousness and piety!

O Allah! Help the Muslim leaders to abide by Your Book and to follow the *Sunnah* of Your Prophet, Mohammad (ﷺ)! Make them a blessing on Your faithful, and make unity among them on the grounds of righteousness and truth! O Lord of the Worlds!

O Allah! Make for this nation (the nation of Islam) a matter (an affair) of rationality (guidance) where the people of piety are honored and those of sins are guided, and where virtue is promoted and vice is prevented! Verily, You are able to do all things!

O Allah! Save our brothers in Syria; unite them; spare their bloodshed; heal their patients, bless the souls of their dead, and shelter their homeless. O Allah! Unite them and set right their affairs. O Allah! Turn their concerns and distress into relief, and their inflictions into wellness. O Allah! Help them defeat their enemy and Yours!

O Allah! Do punish the tyrants in Syria, for they have laid waste the land, oppressed the people and harmed them! O Allah! They have gone too far in destruction and killing! O Allah! Do punish them as You are more than a match to them! O You, the Strong, the Invulnerable! Disperse them and turn the tides against them!

O Allah! Do punish the usurpers and occupiers among the Jews, for You are capable of so doing! O Allah! Give them a taste of Your sturdiness that is so inevitably destined to strike the offenders. O Allah! We pray You to drive them off to their own detriment, and we seek refuge in You from their evils!

O my Lord! You are Allah, and there is no deity but You! You are the Opulent and the Self-Sufficient while we, humans, are destitute! O Allah! Send down rain upon us! O Allah! Send down rain upon us! O Allah! Send down rain upon us and do not make us despondent! O Allah! We turn in repentance to You, as You are All Forgiving! Do send down upon us pouring rain, and make that an incentive for us to bolster our obedience and subservience to You! Make it a message for us, though temporary.

O Allah! We are but creatures of Yours! We pray You not to make our sins stand in the way between us and Your grace! Oh Allah! Do make what You pour down upon us an aid for us to obey You. *﴿In Allâh we put our trust. Our Lord! Make us not a trial for the folk who are Zâlimûn (polytheists and wrong-doers) (i.e. do not make them overpower us).﴾* [Yunis: 85]. *﴿Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is*

good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire!﴾ [Al Baqarah: 201]

O servants of Allah! ﴿Verily, Allâh enjoins Al-‘Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allâh Alone - Islâmic Monotheism) and Al-Ihsân [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allâh, totally for Allâh’s sake and in accordance with the Sunnah (legal ways) of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a perfect manner], and giving (help) to kith and kin[1] (i.e. all that Allâh has ordered you to give them e.g., wealth, visiting, looking after them, or any other kind of help), and forbids Al-Fahshâ’ (i.e. all evil deeds, e.g. illegal sexual acts, disobedience of parents, polytheism, to tell lies, to give false witness, to kill a life without right), and Al-Munkar (i.e. all that is prohibited by Islâmic law: polytheism of every kind, disbelief and every kind of evil deeds), and Al-Baghy (i.e. all kinds of oppression). He admonishes you, that you may take heed.﴾ [Al Nahl: 90]

So, remember Allah and He shall remember you, and be grateful to Him for His blessings and He shall give you more of them. ﴿... and the remembering (praising) of (you by) Allâh (in front of the angels) is greater indeed [than your remembering (praising) of Allâh in prayers. And Allâh knows what you do.﴾ [Al-‘Ankabut: 45].