

Landmarks for Muslims in Times of *Fitnahs*¹

Khutbah Topic

His Eminence Sheikh Saleh Ibn Muhammad Āl-Tālib –may Allah protect him– delivered last Friday’s khutbah titled “**Landmarks for Muslims in Times of *Fitnahs*.**” In the khutbah, he spoke about *fitnahs* and how the Muslim is expected to behave in order to sidestep them. Using evidence from the Holy Qur’ān and the *Sunnah*, the Sheikh demonstrated the magnitude of *fitnahs* and the perils of being ensnared therein. He also said that once wrapped in obscurity, the Muslim should resort to the Holy Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* as well as to experienced scholars.

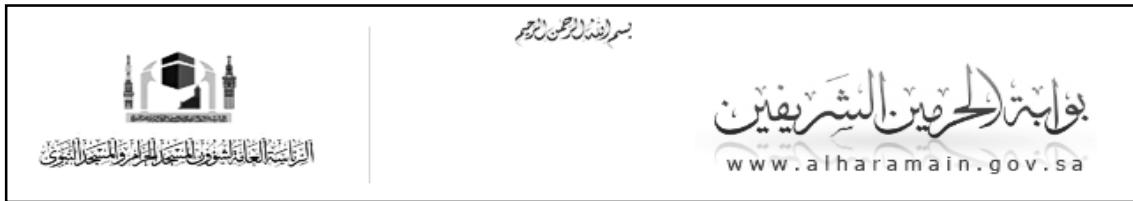
Part One

Praise be to Allah, praise that is followed by pure salutations! He is the source of assistance, for there is none but Him whose support is hoped for in times of distress and disasters. On Him we rely, and sufficient unto us and unto all creatures is Allah! I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship save Allah alone with no associate, and I bear witness that Muhammad (ﷺ) is Allah’s Servant and Messenger. May Allah send His *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy), Peace and Blessing onto him, his family, his offspring –the most honourable of all offspring– his Companions (رضي الله عنهم) who were endowed with pure inner souls, and all those who follow their footsteps righteously till the Day of Judgement.

Now then,

Do observe *taqwa* (fear of Allah) sincerely and hold fast to the non-severable bond of Islam:
﴿ O you who believe! Fear Allāh (by doing all that He has ordered and by abstaining from all that He has forbidden) as He should be feared. [Obey Him, be thankful to Him, and remember Him always], and die not except

¹ The Arabic word فتنة (fitnah, pl. فتنان) carries many meanings: affliction, civil strife, discord, dissension, enticement, infatuation, intrigue, ordeal, riot, sedition, temptation, trial.



in a state of Islâm [as Muslims (with complete submission to Allâh).] [Āl-Imrân: 102]. In fact, Allah will protect, suffice, gratify, and shelter anyone who observes *taqwa*.

(The Sheikh cites a line of poetry celebrating *taqwa*):

Observing *taqwa* means optimal provisions stored for days ahead,
And Allah has further provisions for him who best observes *taqwa*.

Servants of Allah!

Abdurrahman Ibn Abd Rab Al-Kaaba narrated: *"When I got into the Mosque, I found Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-Āass sitting in the shade of the Kâaba and people gathered around him. I joined them and sat near him. So, he said, "We were once on a trip with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ); so we stopped by (some place) on our way. There were those of us who were fixing their tents; others were competing in throwing arrows; and still others were taking their camels and horses out to pasture. Then, the herald of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) suddenly cried: "gather for prayer." So, we gathered in front of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) who said, "There was no prophet preceding me who was not bound to guide his Ummah (community) to what is best for them, and warn them against what is the worst evil for them. Your present Ummah was destined to experience wellness and stability during its first generations but its later generations will witness afflictions and incidents that you would abhor. Fitnahs will follow in succession; some will seem milder compared to others. Whenever a fitnah befalls a believer, he says, 'This time, it is going to be fatal.' But it soon drives away. Then, a further fitnah follows, and again the believer says, 'This fitnah (will finish me) ... this fitnah (will finish me), and so on and so forth.' Whoever wishes to be removed away from Hellfire and admitted into Paradise should ascertain that when he faces death he shall persist in remaining a believer in Allah and in the Last Day, and that he treats people the way he likes himself to be treated ... (until the end of the Hadith)."* [Narrated by Imam Muslim]

O believers!

Whenever the dormant tribulations of *fitnahs* are resuscitated and the sable nights of ordeals grow unrecognisably obscure, whenever the *Ummah* experiences phases during which many people are induced into error and *fitnahs* grow ferociously blind to the extent that a lot of people become dubious to truth, in such case the Muslim becomes in dire need for landmarks to guide him, for lighthouse to regain orientation and for stars to show him the way. This is mainly because, for any Muslim, the dearest possession is the soundness of his faith. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: *"A time will come when the best property for a Muslim will be a flock of*

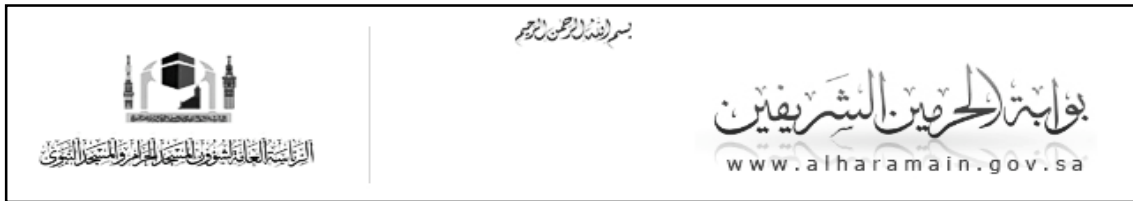
sheep which he drivestomountain tops and places of rainfall so as to flee with his religion from fitnahs." [Narrated by Al-Bukhari]

Fleeing from *fitnah* takes place when resorting to Allah, the Almighty. This is in conformity with Allah's (ﷻ) words: **﴿So flee to Allâh (from His Torment to His Mercy - Islâmic Monotheism).﴾** [Ath-Thāriyât: 50]. He (ﷻ) also says: **﴿Is not Allâh Sufficient for His slave?﴾** [Az-Zumar: 36]

Ibn Al-Qayyim –may Allah have mercy on his soul– said, “*Divine sufficiency is dependent upon the nature of the individual's servitude through worship; the more obedient you are to Allah, the more you will be endowed with divine sufficiency.*” This is why the Prophet (ﷺ) instructed people to worship Allah in times of *fitnahs*. He said, “***Worship in times of turmoil equals hijra (migration) to join me.***” [Narrated by Imam Muslim]. Therefore, congratulations for the believer who resorts to prayers and worship while others remain busy with forms of tumultuous agitation and eager to hunt for news and track rumours. Congratulations for those who feel secure and tranquil by the remembrance of Allah when souls are anxious and hearts are disturbed.

One night, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) suddenly woke up frightened and said, “***Glory to Allah! What has Allah revealed from His hidden coffers? What afflictions have befallen His creatures? Who could wake up the occupants of the chambers*** (he means his wives so that they could perform night prayer). ***Many a veiled*** (i.e. enjoying Allah's blessings) ***woman in the herein will be reduced to nudity*** (punished for not obeying Allah and being thankful to Him) ***in the hereafter.***” [Narrated by Imam Bukhari]. In this *Hadith*, there is evidence that performing night prayer is one of the major ways of escaping *fitnahs*. In fact, before revealing the verses dealing with trial, Allah (ﷻ) says: **﴿O you who believe! Seek help in patience and As-Salât (the prayer). Truly! Allâh is with As-Sâbirin (the patient ones, etc.).﴾** [Al-Baqarah: 153]

Worship is full of secrets, among which are the following: it represents the provisions for the wayfarer, the spiritual supplies for the soul, and the light for the heart. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) used to hurry to perform prayer whenever he happened to face some serious matter. He (ﷺ) urged believers to perform pious deeds since they protect them from *fitnahs* before they take place and save them from them when they do take place. Thus, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, “***Proceed to good deeds. There will be fitnahs as dark as stratified nocturnal obscurity; a believer in the morning swiftly becomes an unbeliever in the evening and a believer in the evening swiftly becomes an unbeliever in the morning. He***



would sell out his religion in exchange for trivial mundane gains.” [Narrated by Imam Muslim]

Thus, he who is equipped with sufficient *taqwa* and good deeds will deserve salvation, bearing in mind that according to Allah’s laws governing the universe, Allah never disappoints a servant who seeks refuge with Him. It is said: “*Prevent fitnahs by observing taqwa.*” This is confirmed by Allah’s (ﷻ) verse: **﴿O you who believe! If you obey and fear Allâh, He will grant you Furqân[(a criterion to judge between right and wrong), or (Makhrâj, i.e. making a way for you to get out from every difficulty)]...﴾** [Al-Anfâl: 29]

O Muslims!

Among the forms of resorting to Allah is supplicating and imploring Him. Allah (ﷻ) says: **﴿And indeed We seized them with punishment, but they humbled not themselves to their Lord, nor did they invoke (Allâh) with submission to Him.﴾** [Al-Mū’minūn: 76]. He also says: **﴿When Our Torment reached them, why then did they not believe with humility?﴾** [Al-An’ām: 43]

Among the supplications is seeking refuge from *fitnahs*; this is affirmed in the *Hadīth* narrated by Zaid Ibn Thabet (رضي الله عنه) that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, “**Seek refuge from fitnahs, both overt and covert.**” [Narrated by Imam Muslim]

Servants of Allah!

Among the landmarksguiding the Muslim and providing him with relief is to follow Allah’s firm signs as well as His constant *sunan* (laws governing the affairs of the whole universe). Instances of such firm signs and constant *sunan* include: verification prior to action, sanctity of human blood, keeping to the Revealed Book and to the *Sunnah*, anticipating the adverse repercussions of certain human actions, as well as identifying advantageous and disadvantageous courses of action along with classifying them in accordance with the principles of religion rather than personal desires and mundane worldly incentives. Allah (ﷻ) says: **﴿O you who believe! Obey Allâh and obey the Messenger (Muhammad SAW), and those of you (Muslims) who are in**

authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allâh and His Messenger (SAW), if you believe in Allâh and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.﴾[An-Nissâ': 59]

From the above, we realise that the truth consists in whatever coincides with Allah's instructions and His Messenger's teachings whereas *fitnah* means whatever runs contrary to both of them. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says, "***There will be afitnah.***" "So, what are we supposed to do", they asked. He answered, "***You then return to your initial state of affairs.***" [Reported by Tabarani]

In the *Hadîth* narrated by Al-Irbâdh Ibn Sâriyah (رضي الله عنه), Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is reported to have said, "***I advise you to observe taqwa (fear of Allah) and to show deference and obedience even if your ruler is an Ethiopian slave. Indeed, whoever outlives me will definitely notice much divergence. So, hold fast to my Sunnah and the tradition of the rightly guided caliphs after me. Stick to that and never relinquish your grip/bite on it. Be cautious and make sure not to follow inventions (in religion), for every invented belief or rite is sheer fabrication, and sheer fabrication means misguidance.***" [Sound Hadith reported by the authors of *Sunan Books*].

Allah enjoins probity and forbids corruption. In this regard, one's judgment may sometimes be right and sometimes wrong. Among Allah's firm signs, there is the sanctity of human blood. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says, "***Whoever is capable of eliminating any hindrance to his admission into Paradise virtually occasioned by smearing his hands with bloodshed he may have perpetrated should proceed to do so.***"

O servants of Allah!

In times of *fitnahs*, the Muslim is faced with a multiplicity of news and rumours, and thus truth gets confounded with falsehood. This is essentially because of the increased impact of printed and audiovisual media, the spread of electronic websites and data networks, along with the ease of communication, the rapidity of news transmission, the fast dissemination of lies, and people's audacity to tell lies with no feeling of embarrassment or fear of Allah. Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had said, "***It is enough evidence to say that somebody is telling lies if he talks about all he hears.***" [Narrated by Imam Muslim]

Omar Ibn Al-Khattâb (رضي الله عنه) said, "***Beware of fitnahs! The work of the tongue in times of fitnah is similar to that of the sword.***" Another version goes like this: "***There will be afitnah in***

which the work of the tongue is more severe and cruel than that of the sword.” [Reported by Imam Ahmed, Abu Dawood, and IbnMajah]

In reality, proper conduct requires verification and patience, lenience and forgiveness in times of *fitnahs* and sudden changes in life conditions, consulting experienced and wise scholars, and avoiding taking decisions alone. A safe person is the one who is spared all such ordeals. Thus, it is not necessary for you to have your own say in every problem or your opinion on every incident. Allah (ﷻ) says: *«When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they make it known (among the people), if only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly)...»* [An-Nissā': 83]

Justice and equity must also be observed. Allah (ﷻ) says: *«And whenever you give your word (i.e. judge between men or give evidence), say the truth.»* [Al Anam: 152]. Allah (ﷻ) also says: *«And let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety.»* [Al Māedah: 8]

Contrarily to this, there are people who, in times of *fitnahs*, would not hesitate to harm the believers in their honour and dignity. They would hone their tongues and sharpen their pencils in order to humiliate the righteous, stir confusion among common Muslims, forge facts and incite *fitnah* and disunion, bearing in mind that the most dangerous of all is *fitnah* in religion. In this context, Allah (ﷻ) says: *«Verily, those who put into trial the believing men and believing women (by torturing and burning them) and then do not turn in repentance (to Allah), then they will have the torment of Hell and they will have the punishment of the burning fire.»* [Al-Burūj: 10]

A Muslim must avoid being one of those whom Allah has vilified in the following words: *«They follow but a guess and that which they themselves desire,*

whereas there has surely come to them Guidance from their Lord.﴾[AnNajm: 23]and﴿But they have no Knowledge thereof. They follow but a guess, and verily, guess is no substitute for the truth (28). Therefore, withdraw (O Mohammad ﷺ from himwho turns away from Our Reminder(this Qur'an)and desires nothing but the life of this world (29). That is what they could reach of knowledge. Verily, your Lord it is he Who knows best him who goes astray from His Path, and He knows best him whjo receives guidance.﴾[AnNajm: 28-30]

When in doubt or ambiguity, a believer must seek to avoid confusion. However, once matters are clear, he must side with what is fair and right; rather he must put in the effort towards unveiling the truth. Therefore, he must not thwart the oppressed who are entitled to a certain right under the pretext of avoiding *fitnah*. To this effect Allah (ﷻ) says:﴿And if two parties or groups among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both. But if one of them outrages against the other, then fight you (all) against the one that which outrages till it complies with the command of Allah. Then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Verily! Allah loves those who are equitable.﴾[Al Hujurāt: 9]

May Allah bless you and me by the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and benefit us with their verses and wisdom! Having said this, I ask Allah, be He exalted, to forgive me and you!

Part Two

Praise be to Allah, Guardian of the believers! No aggression must be carried out save against oppressors. I bear witness that there is no deity except Allah alone with no associate, Allah, the Ultimate Truth. I also bear witness that Mohammad (ﷺ) is His Servant and Messenger. May Allah send His *Salat*(Graces, Honours, Mercy), Peace and Blessings upon him, his family, and all of his Companions!

Now then,

Amidst the political conflicts taking place in the Muslim world and given the ambiguity that is infesting the social communications networks where nobody knows who is writing what and for what purpose, justice may run scarce and people may be carried away along the path of confusion undeterred by legality or values. Therefore, it is necessary to observe self-control and restraint first before taking any action, in accordance with Allah's (ﷺ) following words: *“O you who believe! If a fasiq (a liar; evil person) comes to you with any news, verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done.”* [Al Hujurāt: 6]

The Prophet (ﷺ) warned against *fitnahs* when he said: *“There will be fitnahs, at which time the sitting person will be better than the standing one, and the standing one will be better than the walking one, and the walking one will be better than the running one. And whoever will look towards those fitnahs, he will be overtaken by them. Therefore whoever finds a refuge or a shelter, he should take refuge therein.”* [Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim]

Some of the *salaf*² said: *“When fitnah stake place, minds are taken away and hearts are defeated.”* At first a *fitnah* would seem suspicious, but when it's over it becomes all too evident.

Ibn Taymiya –may Allah bless his soul– said: *“When fitnah strikes, the rightful would be unable to ward off the impudent and no one would be saved from it (fitnah) except those that Allah chooses to make invulnerable to it.”*

O Muslims!

Patience is the believer's means to avert *fitnahs*. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: *“Ahead of you are days which will require endurance, in which showing endurance will be like grasping live coals. The one who acts rightly during that period will have the reward of fifty men who act as he does. He (one of those present) said: 'Messenger of Allah, the reward of fifty of them?' He replied: 'The reward of fifty of you.'”* [Narrated by Abu Dawood and Ibn Majah]

Abu Al-Sha'thā was reported to have said: *“We went out with Abi Mass'ūd Al Ansari (رضي الله عنه) and said to him: 'Give us a tip.' He replied: 'You must observe taqwa (fear) of Allah and*

²The Salaf are the first generations of Muslims, who included the Companions and followers of Mohammad (ﷺ) at the time.

hold on to Muhammad's congregation, for Allah –be He exalted– would not unite such congregation on perversion. Allah's religion is but one, so beware of making it multi-faceted. You must observe taqwa of Allah and have patience until a righteous man is at ease and a dissolute man is gotten rid of."[Narrated by Al-Hākim in his 'Al-Mustadrak' (a book of Hadith); he (Al-Hākim) said: 'This is asound Hadith inaccordancewithImam Muslim'.]

O servants of Allah!

There are still trials and *fitnahs* in this life, so arm yourselves with patience to defeat such calamities. Patience does not mean the willingness to settle for less and surrender to alienation, but the resolve to devote oneself to faith and to doing what is required by Sharia law, and this is laudable indeed.

In this age, it is important for Muslims to remain optimistic and hopeful, to avoid despair and firmly believe that those who observe *taqwa* shall have the upper hand in the end, for weread in the Holy Qur'ān: **﴿...and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you.﴾**[Al-Baqarah: 216]. In this context, it is equally important to remember Allah's wisdom in bringing about trials.

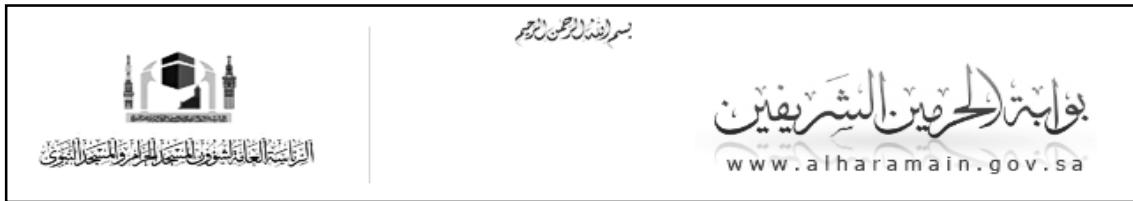
There must be blazing events that would steer the believers back towards their faith just as much as they have pulled away from it, retributions that would make them seek refuge with their Creator just as much as they have alienated themselves from Him, and earthly disasters that would call upon them to revert to that which brought glory and might to your *salaf* and predecessors. After all, hardship is always followed by relief.

Signs of victory are looming in the horizon while the causes thereof keep coming and going. Our hope in Allah is so immense and boundless.

It must be known that those *hadiths* of *fitnahs* and epic encounters are mentioned by way of prompting consideration (on the part of the believers) and setting warning. Such *hadiths* include those of *Al-Dajjāl*³, *Al khasf*⁴, and wars. There should be no assertion as to the applicability of certain news on a given incident, for this is part of *Ilm Al-Ghaib* (knowledge

³ Al-Masīh ad-Dajjāl (Arabic for "the false Messiah"), is an evil figure against whom the Prophet (ﷺ) warned the Muslims. He is to appear pretending to be Al-Masīh (i.e. the Messiah) at a time in the future, before *Yawm al-Qiyamah* (the Day of Resurrection).

⁴ The swallowing of the earth and all that is on it



of the unseen and unknown), and it is not allowed to speak instead of Allah while having no knowledge.

O Allah! We seek Your protection against misleading *fitnahs*! O Allah! We seek Your protection against misleading *fitnahs*! O Allah! Keep away from us all forms of disgrace and *fitnahs*, apparent or concealed!

This being said, send (O you Muslims) your *salat* (Graces, Honours and Mercy) and peace upon Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (ﷺ), al-Hāshimi al-Qurashi, the best and most honest of Allah's creatures.

O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, honours and Mercy), Peace and Blessing on Your Servant and Messenger, Muhammad, his good and pure family, his magnanimous and auspicious Companions and those who followed them in righteousness until the Day of Judgement!

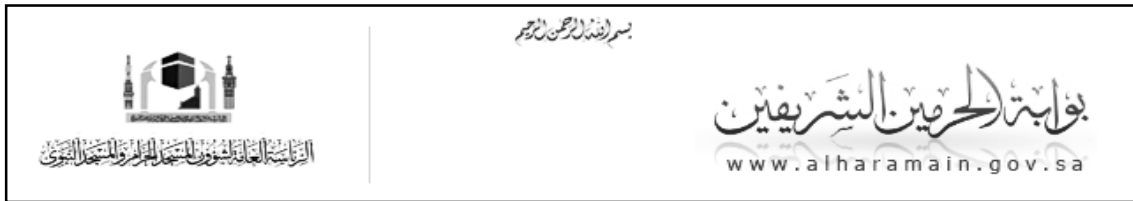
O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims and fail tyrants, atheists and corruptors!

O Allah! Foreordain for this *Ummah* (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 *al-ma'rūf* (promotion of good deeds) is promoted and *al-munkar* (promulgation of evil deeds) is prevented, O Lord of the worlds!

O Allah! Make preoccupied with their own evil those who wish to harm Islam and Muslims! Turn their plots and their cunning against them and make that the cause of their own destruction, O Lord of the worlds!

O Allah! Grant victory to the *Mujahideen* in Your Cause! O Allah! Grant victory to the *Mujahideen* in Your Cause in Palestine and wherever they may be! O Allah! Lift their siege, set right their conditions and suppress their enemy!

O Allah! Alleviate the suffering of our brothers in Syria! O Allah! Put an end to their affliction! O Allah! Speed up their relief! O Allah! Have mercy on them, for they are too weak! Mend their breakage, O You, the charitable, the benevolent! O Allah! Spare their blood, reassure them, preserve their dignity and honour, feed the hungry among them, strengthen their stamina, bring them closer together, and grant them power and victory over their oppressors!



O Allah! Set right their conditions, unite them around righteousness and protect them against the evil doers among them! O Allah! Defeat the tyrants and oppressors and those who side with them! O Allah! Grant victory to Your Religion, Book, the *Sunnah* of Your Prophet and Your believing servants!

O Allah! Liberate Al Aqsa Mosque from the oppressors' injustice and the occupiers' aggression!

O Allah! Set right the conditions of our brothers in Egypt and everywhere! O Allah! Unite them around truth and righteousness, set right their conditions, and protect them against the evil doers among them!

O Allah! Guide our leader to do whatever you love and accept! O Allah! Guide him to piety and righteousness! O Allah! Grant him, his Crown Prince, his brothers and assistants success to do what is good for the people and the country!

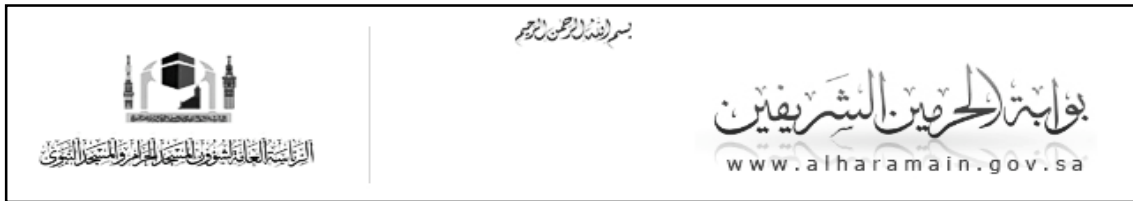
O Allah! Grant success to all the leaders of Muslims in order to govern by Your *Sharia* and follow *the Sunnah* of Your Prophet (ﷺ)! O Allah! Make them a blessing on Your true servants!

O Allah! Make safe and prosperous our country and all Muslim countries around the world! Protect us against the evil of wrongdoers and the maliciousness of the lecherous!

«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], *«Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and our transgressions (in keeping our duties to You), establish our feet firmly, and give us victory over the disbelieving folk.»* [Al-Imran: 147]

O Allah! Forgive our sins, cover our flaws, make easy our affairs and fulfill our wishes in what pleases You!

O Allah! Forgive our sins, those of our parents, our grandparents, our wives and children! You are indeed All-Hearing!



O Lord! Accept from us, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing! Accept our repentance; You are the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful!

Glorified be Your Lord, the Lord of Honour and Power! You are free from what they attribute unto You! May peace be upon all the Messengers! And all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds!