



Hyder Gulam

A Legal Point of View

The Do Not Call/Knock Registers

There are a number of opportunities that the Muslim community should be aware of regarding the Federal and State Govern-

ment's 'Do Not...' initiatives. This short article will discuss these, and how these Do Not Call/Knock registers can help the Muslim community to reduce unwanted sales solicitation at the privacy of their home, or on their private/domestic telephone numbers.

1. Do Not Call

The Do Not Call Register allows you to

reduce the number of unwanted telemarketing calls you receive. Once you register your home phone or mobile numbers, telemarketers are required, by law, to stop calling you. Telephone numbers can be registered only if they are used primarily for private and domestic purposes, and you cannot register a business number or fax.

Some public interest organisations, such as charities, political parties and educational institutions, are exempt from these laws and are allowed to make calls to numbers listed on the register. These exemptions are in place to ensure these organisations can continue to provide services to the community. Businesses with which you have an existing relationship may also call you, although you

can contact a business directly at any time to advise that you do not wish to receive telemarketing calls from them in the future.

The Do Not Call Register Act 2006, makes it illegal, in the absence of your consent, for any non-exempt telemarketer in Australia or overseas to contact a number listed on the register. If you want to register or want any more information about the Do Not Call Register, visit the following website at www.donotcall.gov.au, or call 1300 792 958.

2. Do Not Knock

Do Not Knock is a Victorian Consumer Affairs initiative for people who are sick of sales people door knocking at their home. It is a way to say no to door to door sales.

The Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC) has released a "Do not knock" sticker, which warns sales representatives that they are in breach of the law

if they knock on a door to which the sticker is affixed.

You can download a copy of the sticker at the Consumer Affairs website (<http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au>) or contact me and I will send you a 'Do not knock' PDF door sticker (PDF, 19.7KB).

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Religious intolerance has become too much a part of modern life. It is a fact of life, though, that good people, of whatever faith, do not poke fun or try to insult one another's religion.

On the contrary, we find that real people of faith are keen to get to know each other better and to learn from each other. Goodness, wherever it is to be found, comes from God. Where else would it come from?

We should never feel threatened by goodness. It is only a threat to us when our own faith is weak or lukewarm and it shows up our own shortcomings.

Since the very beginning, Islam has taught respect for the beliefs of others. We see it in the teaching and the practice of Islam right through history. Indeed, it is the sign of a Muslim that he or she respects the religion of others, and their Books and their Prophets. Those who teach otherwise, Muslim or not, are distorting the message of Islam.

Muslims are no more or less perfect than anyone else. They believe, though, that the message they follow is a perfect message and is meant for the whole of mankind. Islam is perfect and it has existed since the beginning of time.

Whilst some Muslims, throughout history, have not always lived up to the beauty of its message, Islam itself has nothing whatever to be ashamed of.

It is an absolute basic belief of Islam, though, that people of other religions should be free to believe whatever they wish. In the Quran, which Muslims believe to be the word of God, you can read what means,

[Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error: Whoever rejects Satan and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy handle, that never breaks, and Allah heareth and knoweth all things.] (Al-Baqarah 2:256)

In another place, God says what means, [Wilt thou (Muhammad) then compel mankind, against their will, to believe?]

(Yunus 10:99)

The Example of Madinah

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) lived side by side with Jews and polytheists. In Madinah, he made treaties with both, guaranteeing their freedom of religion and joining with them in a pact to defend the city.

It was not that they were Jews or poly-

theists that made the Muslims eventually fight them, but because they broke the terms of the treaty and sided with the enemy which was attacking the city.

It is, in fact, one of the hallmarks of the way Prophet Muhammad dealt with others, believers and non-believers, that he would listen very carefully to what they had to say, and he would ask, "Have you finished?" before giving an answer.

He set the bench mark very high by showing Muslims that if they engage in dialogue, they must listen with great respect.

The Example of Jerusalem

When the second of the four rightly guided Caliphs, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, entered Jerusalem in 638 AD, he entered the city on foot, out of respect for the holiness of the place.

His first action was to clear the rubble and the debris from the area of Al-Aqsa Mosque and to cleanse the whole sight with rose water.

There was no bloodshed. There was no slaughter. Unlike the slaughter of 70,000 men, women and children which accompanied the arrival of the Crusaders in 1099, the Muslims entered the city peacefully, signing a treaty with the Patriarch Sophronius, which guaranteed their rights to worship, their lives and their property.

The Patriarch, no doubt acting upon his lived experience in the city, asked that no Jews be allowed to live in Jerusalem. Salah Al-Din, known as Saladin in the West, lifted this injunction when he retook Jerusa-

lem from the Crusaders in 1187.

Those who wished to leave were guaranteed their safety. Those who wished to remain were allowed to do so.

In fact, allowing religious minorities to live within the Muslim state would be a test of how faithful the Muslims were to their high calling as a "mercy to mankind".

Prophet Muhammad said,

He who unfairly treats a non-Muslim who keeps a peace treaty with Muslims, or undermines his rights or burdens him beyond his capacity, or takes something from him without his consent; then I am his opponent on the Day of Judgment. (Abu Dawud)

The Example of Spain

There is a period in the history of Islam which is lovingly known to Muslims as the Golden Age of Islam. This was the period of the Muslims in southern Spain, which lasted for centuries.

During this time, Christians and Jews held high office in the royal court. It was only when the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, retook the Muslim cities in the south that mosques and synagogues were burned down and Muslims and Jews were either expelled or forced to convert.

Sultan Mehmet II officially recognized Patriarch Gennadius II as leader of the Orthodox peoples throughout the Ottoman Empire following the capture of Constantinople in 1453.

In the same year, he granted to the leader of the Jewish community (the Chief Rab-

bi) the title "Hahambasha", or Chief Wise Man. Both actions show the respect for other faiths which was to symbolize the Ottoman rule.

The Example of Palestine

We have only to look at Palestine under the Ottoman Empire, to see that this was the greatest period when the region knew peace. Christians, Muslims and Jews lived together happily in the holy city of Jerusalem.

Finally, a word of hope in our own day from the city of Edinburgh in Scotland. Some weeks after the Israeli attack on Gaza in January 2009, there was a rise in anti-Semitic attacks and hate crimes in many countries.

In Edinburgh, the synagogue of the United Hebrew Congregation was attacked by vandals, allegedly protesting against the war on Gaza. The response from the Scottish-Islamic Foundation, Scotland's largest umbrella organization for Muslims, was swift: "We will guard the synagogue for you", they said, if it proved too difficult for the Jewish community to do so.

What better example can we give of Muslim attitudes to other faiths than that? The Muslims of Scotland were prepared to guard the synagogue of the Jewish community.

Muslims believe that God (Allah) is the Lord of all people on earth. He is not just the God of the Muslims. Because of this, Muslims have a very great responsibility to act with justice and kindness to all those who have not yet come to the fullness of truth, which Muslims believe was revealed in the message of Islam.

Muslims have a responsibility to teach the world about Islam. In the Quran we read,

[Thus We have made of you a nation justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves.] (Al-Baqarah 2:143)

Religious intolerance has no place in our world. Muslims and others should know that it has no place in Islam, either.

Idris Tawfiq is a British writer who became Muslim a few years ago. Previously, he was head of religious education in different schools in the United Kingdom. Before embracing Islam, he was a Roman Catholic priest. He now lives in Egypt. For more information about him, visit www.idristawfiq.com.



Towards a better understanding of Islam

Idris Tawfiq

Religious Tolerance in Muslim History