

[TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets [.].]

<http://www.amasumi.net/14-%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%B3%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%88%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA>

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Honourable Minister of Intelligence, Hujjatu'l-Islam Gholam-Hosein Mohseni-Ejeie

With respectful greetings; in early 1376 [1997], a dear friend brought me a documentary which depicted the beheading and massacre of human beings by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Watching those gruesome images left me utterly bewildered. I spent days and nights thinking about those crimes, and was baffled by the fact that there is no mention of or protest against such acts. Is it possible that no one had seen the footage?! What was evident was the damaging effect such acts create in the minds of people around the globe against Islám, insofar as such violence was carried out in the name of Islám; whereas we had learned, “Is religion but love?”

What words, written or spoken, could have explained such crimes? And how could the world be convinced that, in fact, Islam respects and upholds human dignity? What article, what book, what lecture, etc., could erase the ugly image that some, who call themselves Muslims, have displayed of Islám and continue to do so?

It was on these grounds that I decided that instead of writing a book or an article, etc., I would utilize the universal language of art and thus rise up to battle against the betrayal of Islám and the violation of its beauty—not by words, but rather by deeds, inasmuch as “two hundred words do not measure up to half a deed”. For this reason, I engaged in producing calligraphy of the sacred Torah, the first Holy Book and the Mother Book of both Judaism and Christianity. I put all my efforts into beautifying the text, and asked an esteemed artist friend to help me with the illumination and gilding.

In 2001, with the confirmation of the Almighty, the book was completed and I offered it as a token effort of peace and humanity to the world. This effort was received enthusiastically by many thinkers around the world, who bestowed kindness upon me in various ways. However, in Iran, as I had expected, not only was there no acknowledgment, but I faced many objections and attacks. However, what puzzled me and took me by complete surprise was, one: the raid on my office by the Security Office of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, to stop me from continuing my work, by the “master of discourse on civilizations”, during the year which was designated as the year of discussions about civilizations (apparently he thought that he was the sole recipient of the book!); two, the 2 billion تومان offer to me from some individuals or entities organs to abandon the work. These two incidents were more sad and baffling to me than anything I had been faced with.

For this reason, among others, I moved my workplace and began rendering calligraphy of King David's Book of Psalms in Persian and Hebrew. This is while all elements and currents joined

hands to depict Islám and Muslims to the world in the most dark and ugly way. In such crisis, last year, I completed the calligraphy and illumination of the Book of Psalms and offered it as my contribution to humanity, and immediately after, I began to produce a manuscript of the Bible in English.

Mr. Muhsini, my only motivations are seeking peace, love towards humanity, reconciliation among people, and respect for religions, and I was not thinking of anything else. I did not get involved in politics. During the time that many of my colleagues (in the past eight years) were, in one way or another, involved in politics and playing political schemes, I was isolated in my space, rendering my calligraphy, and had no other involvement, inasmuch as I was engaged in something far more meaningful than those struggles. I still have no interest in politics. This is not to say that I do not understand politics. More than anyone, you are aware of my political stance.

Mr. Muhsini, let me be blunt in saying that I value and respect humanity and human beings and it makes no difference to me what a human being believes in or what religion he or she adheres to. I respect Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Bahá'ís, etc., even non-believers who believe in the principles of humanity. I love them dearly and kiss the hands of each and every one of them. Unlike some, I do not see non-Muslims as mere animals grazing on this earth!!! I have no animosity towards anyone. Whoever displays human dignity, regardless of their religion or faith, I bow my head before them and hold them dear. Equally, whoever has abandoned their human dignity, regardless of their religion or faith, I reject. I am, to the limits of my own capability, knowledgeable on the subject of religion and able to provide solid arguments for positions I take and efforts I make. However, I do not expect [those] who have wrapped themselves in their cocoons without any knowledge or consideration for my actions, to charge at me, and not with logic or reason, but with the attitude of a demagogue, and throw various accusations at me. For years, I listened to accusations and attacks and remained silent, not because I had no answer, but because I hoped that the narrow-minded dogmatists would take hold of themselves and realize that in the age of the global village a new rhetoric must be adopted. Alas, [but you shall not make those who are in their graves to hearken].

I hope you do not, like others, say, “Your efforts have hurt the religious sentiments of your ecclesiastic brothers.” How is it that when a group who claim to be Muslim, shouting “Allá-u-Akbar” in a Koranic tone in front of the camera, behead other human beings, the religious sentiments of our ecclesiastic brothers are not hurt; and it does not bring them to shout “O, Islám!?” How is it that my holy brothers—who are just short of issuing a ruling on what sort of underwear people should wear—remained silent?!!! As soon as one person suggested that we should love and respect one another, their religious sentiments were hurt!!! God is my witness that, on many occasions, the petty slogans of some of our so-called scholars have penetrated my heart like a dagger, but my patience is no more and my cry reaches up to the heavens. Have I demanded anything from anyone? Have I insulted anyone? Have I done anything other than try to depict the reasonable face of Islám, the face which has been so badly sullied by some that the waters of great oceans are unable to clean and purify it? What have I done to deserve such insults and slanders, and now for them to be making attempts on my life? Damn this ignorance and prudery. “I take refuge with my Lord, and your Lord, from every proud one who believeth not in the Day of Reckoning.”

What I cannot fathom is what harm there is in peacefulness and respecting other religions and faiths (regardless of the truth of their claim!), that some have made it their mission to create hatred and animosity against people of other faiths. Who would stand to lose his livelihood or his daily bread as a result, to justify such massive wrath (especially in these last few months) against some books?!!! I fail to understand what any religion has ever gained from all the cursing and profanity,

and for demanding the death of this or that group. What has ever come out of such aggression, let alone the glaring political and socio-economic results of such attitudes?!!! The Prophet of Islam, as testified by the Qur'an, has prohibited Muslims from fighting against their armed enemies. How is it then that some individuals, under the banner of being religious, exude, from their words to their actions and mannerisms, such hatred and spite?! Is the promotion of one's religion, in the era of technology and globalism, possible through causing terror and holding up batons of condemnation!

I wish that hate propagandists and the self-righteous would emerge from their corrals to observe and evaluate the social outcome and international ramifications of their deeds. Alas, by the time they come to understand the truth, it will be far too late.

Any effort towards the annihilation of books, such as the Torah, Psalms, or the Bible, or attempt against my humble life for rendering such work, speaks of the deep animosity of those people or groups who consider themselves representative of a religious group or the Ministry of Intelligence, against followers of other religions and humanity as a whole, regardless of who is behind such efforts. And the head of the government, of whose cabinet you are a member, whether knowingly or otherwise, has fanned the flame of such extremists and endorsed their efforts, while holding on to his slogan of "kindliness"!

In any event, some of those perpetrators claim that they are from the Ministry of Intelligence, of which you are its director. Should those who make such threats actually carry out their mission, even though I doubt that you personally have an active role in this, I will humbly say here in no uncertain terms that I will hold you, the Ministry of Intelligence, and the "esteemed" government of Mr. Ahmadinejad, directly responsible for anything that should transpire.

You know me better than anyone else. By the grace of God, I have no earthly attachments. I am not indebted to anyone. I have not invaded anyone's property and have not confiscated what is not mine. I have not sullied my soul with the temptation of the flesh, and have not submitted to earthly desires. I pride myself on the fact that to this day, my eyes and heart are as pure as the day I was born. I hold universal views and my work speaks of that, and I have nothing to hide. I have no claim of infallibility, and confess that like other human beings I have made mistakes and have been far from perfect. However, my mistakes have not caused suffering to others and I have never oppressed a soul. This humble soul spent eight years of his time, life and money to produce these works, and in so doing did not receive any assistance from any organization or person, nor hold any expectation of encouragement or confirmation from anyone in this country. However, I will not allow any soul or group, with any motivation or ill intention, associated with any group or organization, to destroy my work, or to impose his or its petty views on me. By this I will stand to my last breath, and I will not keep silent either, inasmuch as these works are not solely mine, but belong to humanity and civilization.

I do not expect your endorsement of me. What I do expect from you, as the Minister of Intelligence, however, is to follow up this matter and identify the instigators and initiators of such threats and deal with them according to the law.

O God, confirm us in being humans, to live like humans, to die like humans, and bestow upon us the ability to love all Thy creation.

The End

Al-Raji, Abdol-Hamid Masoumi Tehrani

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